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Heritage Politics in Timor-Leste: Ambivalent Perspectives from Venilale

Carolina Maria Sofia Boldoni

PhD in Anthropology: Politics and Display of Culture and Museology

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Resumo

Este trabalho analisa os processos de patrimonialização em Timor-Leste, desde uma perspetiva antropológica. O objetivo da tese é examinar as tensões e ambivalências em relação ao património, tanto a nível institucional como nas práticas culturais quotidianas, centrando-se nas zonas cinzentas e nas intersecções entre as práticas discursivas normativas relativas à criação do património, desenvolvidas quer a nível governamental quer a nível local, nomeadamente na zona de Venilale, na região de Baukau. A investigação baseia-se em 15 meses de trabalho de campo etnográfico multi-situado, entre a sub-região de Venilale, a região e a cidade de Baukau e a capital do país, Díli. Os instrumentos analíticos oferecidos pelo quadro teórico dos 'Critical Heritage Studies' (Estudos Críticos do Património) são centrais nesta análise, que reconfigura o património como um conjunto de práticas ativas e processos discursivos desenvolvidos por diferentes atores sociais, entre os quais instituições governamentais, decisores políticos e representantes locais. Os entendimentos locais sobre a transmissão de bens e recursos, permitem ultrapassar as tensões dicotómicas entre o património natural e cultural e o património cultural material e imaterial, subjacentes à perspetiva ocidental sobre o património.

Palavras-chave: Património; Timor-Leste; Estudos Críticos do património; património cultural intangível; transmissão do património

Abstract

This thesis analyses the East Timorese heritage-making process, from an anthropological perspective. The aim of this thesis is to examine the tensions and ambivalences towards heritage, both at an institutional level and in everyday cultural practices, by focusing on the grey areas and intersections between the normative discursive practices developed by governmental apparatuses and local ways of conceiving heritage, particularly in the Venilale area, in the Baukau region. The research is based on 15-month of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork between the sub-region of Venilale, the region and town of Baukau and the capital city of the country, Dili. The analytical tools offered by the theoretical framework of the Critical Heritage Studies are central in this analysis, which reconfigures heritage as a set of active practices and discursive processes developed by different actors, among which governmental institutions, policymakers and local customary representative. Local understandings regarding the transmission of valuable goods and resources allow to overcome the dichotomic tensions between natural and cultural and tangible and intangible cultural heritage, underlying the Western perspective on heritage.

Keywords: Heritage; Timor-Leste; Critical Heritage Studies; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Timor-Leste studies; Heritage transmission

Table of Contents

Preliminary linguistic notes

There are three languages spoken in the Venilale subdistrict: Kairui-Midiki, Makasae and Waima'a. Makasae belongs to the Papuan linguistic *phylum*, while the other two belong to the Austronesian linguistic family. Unfortunately, there are no census data about the number of speakers within the Venilale subdistrict (total population around 16,000 inhabitants); however, we can count the total number of speakers of each language within Baukau: 9,000 of Kairui-Midiki; 74,000 of Makasae; and 20,000 speakers of Waima'a.[1] While Makasae is predominantly spoken in the districts of Baukau, Laga and Vikeke (total speakers, approx. 100,000), Kairui-Midiki is spoken between Baukau, Manatuto and Vikeke (total speakers approx. 10,000), while Waima'a is spoken only within Baukau (Williams-van Klinken and Williams 2010). These are, of course, partial data, since they do not take into consideration migrations: there are certainly speakers of these three languages living in other regions of the country, as well as in other parts of the world, too.[2]

During my fieldwork, the language I did speak ordinarily and fluently was the national language, Tetun, the orthography of which has been standardized by the *Institutu Nasionál Linguística* (Instituto Nacional de Linguística; INL 2002). I tried to learn Makasae as well as Kairui-Midiki, the languages spoken by the two families that hosted me – with poor results. However, I can understand simple sentences, as well as express basic needs. These were not the languages I normally spoke during my research. The major obstacle for me was the fact that there are no manuals to learn them, since they are predominantly oral languages.[3]

As Timor-Leste is a multilingual country, as well as a territory that has experienced different foreign administrative governments, loanwords are common in all the languages present in the area. Therefore, Portuguese, Bahasa Indonesia and English loanwords are present in Tetun; as well as Tetun, Portuguese and Bahasa Indonesia loanwords being present within Makasae, Kairui-Midiki and Waima'a. As a result, in this thesis, italicized words and sentences indicate the use of one of these languages, following these indications: Bahasa Indonesia (B.I), Kairui-Midiki (K-M), Makasae (M.), Portuguese (Pt.), Tetun (T.) and Waima'a (W.). Finally, all the translations in the text are mine, unless otherwise specified.

Since the thesis contains discussions about potentially sensitive issues, I decided not to identify my interlocutors by their real names, without regard to their public and social position and status. As a result, the names present in these pages are pseudonyms. I do realise that this prevent me from acknowledging their role and contribution for the final results of my research, but I remain convinced that the protection of their privacy is more important.

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[1] *Cf*. https://www.statistics.gov.tl/category/publications/census-publications/2015-census-publications/volume-2-population-distribution-by-administrative/, last accessed 15.11.2020.

[2] Almost the 18% of the total national population migrated to another region within Timor-Leste and nearly 2000 people born in Baukau migrated to a foreign country. *Cf*. National Statistics Directorate (2016). *Timor-Leste Population and Housing Census 2015: Population Distribution by Administrative Area* – Vol. 2 ('Internal Migration' and 'Population living abroad'). Available at http://www.statistics.gov.tl/category/publications/census-publications/2015-census-publications/volume-2-population-distribution-by-administrative/, accessed on 15.11.2020.

[3] For a comprehensive bibliography of the grammars of Timor-Leste's languages, see http://www.tetundit.tl/Publications/Bibliography%20of%20East%20Timorese%20languages%202018.pdf, accessed on 15.11.2020.

Glossaries

Institutions' glossary

ABRI	Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (B.I.) Indonesian Armed Forces
AECID	Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (Es.) Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development
AFD	Agence Française de Développement (Fr.) French Development Agency
APODETI	Associação Popular Democrata Timor-Leste (Pt.) Popular Democratic Timorese Association
ASDT	Associação Social Democrata Timorense (Pt.) Timorese Social Democratic Association, later FRETILIN (see Chronology)
ASSEPOL	Association of former political prisoners
CAMSTL	Centro Audiovisual Max-Stahl Timor-Leste (Pt.) Audiovisual Max Stahl centre
CNRM	Conselho Nacional da Resistência Maubere (Pt.) National Council of the Maubere Resistance
CNRT	Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor (Pt.) National Congress for the Reconstruction of Timor-Leste
CRRN	Concelho Revolucionário da Resistência Timorense (Pt.) National Council of the East Timorese Resistance
DIT	Dili Institute of Technology
F-FDTL	FALINTIL - Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste (Pt.) Timor Leste Defence Force
FRETILIN	Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente (Pt.) Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor
FoV	Friends of Venilale Association
ICOMOS	International Council of Monuments and Sites
IPAD	Instituto Português de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento (Pt.) Portuguese Institute for Development
KNTLU	Komisaun Nasionál Timor-Leste ba UNESCO (T.) National Timor-Leste Commission of UNESCO
NUREP	Núcleos de Resistência Popular (Pt.) Popular Resistance Cells
OPMT	Organização Popular da Mulher Timorense (Pt.)

	Popular Organisation of the East Timorese Women
PIDE	Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado (Pt.) International and State Defense Police
RTTL	Rádiu Televizaun Timor-Leste (T.) Timor-Leste Radio and TV
SEAC	Secretary of Arts and Culture
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
UDT	União Democrática Timorense (Pt.) Timorese Democratic Union
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNTATET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
UNTL:	Universidade Nasionál Timor Lorosa'e National East Timorese University
ZEESM-TL	Zonas Especiais de Economia Social de Mercado de Timor-Leste (Pt.) Special Zones of Social Market Economy of Timor-Leste

Acronyms

AHD:	Authorised Heritage Discourse, as defined by Laurajane Smith (2006)
ICH:	Intangible Cultural Heritage, as defined by UNESCO (see https://ich.unesco.org, last accessed 20.12.2020)
PNG:	Papua New Guinea
WHL:	World Heritage List, as defined by UNESCO (see https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/, last accessed 20.12.2020)

Tetun glossary[4]

adat	(B.I.) the set of unwritten and customary laws that are supposed to govern all aspects of the life of a person
ahu	lime powder derived from crushed coral, to be swiped on the teeth before chewing *bua malus*
ai hun	root of a tree
ai-kamii	candlenut tree
ai lulik	potent tree

[4] The terms are in Tetun, unless otherwise specified.

aitukan-bee manas	*lit.*, firewood and hot water; it symbolises the efforts to raise a girl child and the goods and money that the in-laws (wife-takers) should give to the wife-givers for the wedding of a daughter.
aldeia	(T. and Pt.) village, hamlet
ameasadu	endangered
ami	us
amo lulik	*lit.*, master of the *lulik*; priest
ani tula	(M.) I don't want to
arbiru	random
arte colonial	(Pt.) colonial artwork
assimilados	(Pt.) someone of mixed European and indigenous heritage
aswain	warrior
aten brani	lit., courageous (brani, B.I.) liver (aten). The expression means fearless person.
atrasado	(Pt.) backwards; uncivilised
avô	(Pt. and T.) grandfather; a way to address to old people
bai loron	dry season, between May and October in Timor-Leste
bainaka	guest
barlake	the sets of goods usually exchanged between the extended families of the bride and the groom, before a wedding
baze de apoiu	support base
batar foun	recent harvested corn
bee matan	spring of water
beiala (sira)	ancestor(s)
beiala sira nia tempu	ancestral time, mythical times when the ancestors were alive
beik	backwards, ignorant
belak	traditional necklaces with golden disk
bibi	goat
bua	a berry of palms botanically classified as *Areca catechu*. *Bua* describes both the berry and the plant
bua malus	*lit.*, areca nut and betel leaf. A very common practice in Timor-Leste, consisting of chewing areca berries and betel leaves (see Ch. I).

buibere	women/female guerrilla fighter
civilizado	(Pt.) civilised
dai	(M.; K-M.; W.) potent agencies foreigners
Daralata	(M.) *lit.*, wide and flat (*dara*) land/place (*lata*); the name of the village where I conducted the first part of the fieldwork
Deroho	(K-M.) *lit.*, lemon tree; place of origin of the family that hosted me in Waikulale
ema	people, human beings
ema boot	unimportant people (in terms of economic, political and social power and status)
ema kiik	important people (in terms of economic, political and social power and status)
Escola do Reino (Pt.)	Kingdom School, historical building in Venilale
etu	*lit.*, cooked rice; meal
fahi	pig
fatin abrigu	hiding place
fatin istóriku	historical site
fatin natureza	natural sites
fatuk	stone
fatuk lulik	potent stone
fatuk no ai	*lit.*, stone and tree; *fig.*, expression to describe the beliefs towards nature and ancestors
fetosan	wife-takers
fetosan umane	exchanges between wife-givers and wife-takers
Finadu	the ancestors' day, overlapping with the Catholic All Saints and All Souls' Day
foho	*lit.*, mountain; mountainous areas; *fig.*, rural area
funu	struggle; fight
fuik	wild
gentio /gentiu	(Pt. and T.) commonly used during the Portuguese colonization of the country, it defines non-Catholic and non-converted people; (Pt.) *lit.*, heathen.
hakiak	teenager
hakoi	to bury

halulik	to turn something *lulik*
hamulak	invocations and prayers to the ancestors
hare foun	ceremony of the rice harvest
harohan	pray the Catholic God
hirus	angry
husu lisensa	a ritual to ask permission to the potent agencies, spirits and ancestors
ligadu ba malu	to be intertwined
jerasaun foun	young generation
jerasaun tuan	old generation
kaben	to get married; to have sex
kalén	tin, used for constructions
karau	water-buffalo and cow
katana	machete
katuas	married and elder(s)
knua	small hamlet
kohe	basket of woven palm leaves containing areca nuts for *bua malus* offered to guests
kore metan	the ritual celebrating the end of mourning
Kristu Rei	Christ the King
kretek	typical aromatic cigarettes containing cloves, common in Indonesia and Timor-Leste
kuda	horse
kultura	culture (see chapter III)
labarik	child/children and also unmarried/young people
lia mate	*lit.*, ritual words to be performed for the death of a person. Funerary ceremonies
lia moris	rites and ceremonies connected to life
lia nain	keepers of the traditional knowledge
lisan	(or. Arabic) customs
liurai	East Timorese rulers during the Portuguese colonisation
lulik	potent, dangerous, forbidden
malae	foreigner

malus	scientifically classified as *piper betle*, a common plant growing in Timor-Leste
mama	to chew
manda	to oblige, command
masyarakat adat	indigenous people
matan dook	local ritual experts and oracles
mate	dead/death
matenek	smart
maubere	or. a Mambae name; guerrilla fighter and synonym of East Timorese citizen
menina	(Pt. and T.) unmarried girl, miss
modernizadu	turned modern
moderniza ona	already modern
modernu	modern
morteen	traditional necklace
munisipiu	municipality
musan	*lit.*, seed; *fig.*, money
nahe biti	reconciliation process; customary and traditional tribunals
nain	owner; lord
Nain Feto	Holy Mary
natureza	(Pt. and T.) nature
oan hakiak	foster daughter
oma gau há	(M.) *lit.*, landlord; males, descendants of a House
omafalu	(M.) *uma lulik*
omarae tufumata	(M.) *fetosan-umane*
original	original
orijinalidade	authenticity
osan	money
osan mean	gold and golden objects
osan mutin	silver and silver objects
patrimóniu	heritage

Ponte Natureza	Natural Bridge
preman	(B.I.), from English 'freeman'. In Timor-Leste, pro-Indonesia militias.
primu	cousin
postu administrativu	subregion
rai	land
rai nain	potent spirits and agencies inhabiting the landscape
rede clandestina	(Pt. and T.) clandestine network, the popular unarmed front of the resistance movement against the Indonesian military occupation (1975-1999)
reformasi	(B.I.) reform
re'in	kiss/to kiss
restus mortais	mortal, human remains
rikusoin	resources (see Ch. I)
rikusoin natural	natural resources
rumah adat	(B.I) potent houses
salah	(T. and B.I.) mistake
sasaan lulik	potent objects belonged to the ancestors and representing the power and the alliances between *fetosan* and *umane*, as well as between the ancestors and natural elements
sau batar	corn harvest
saudozu	late lamented, referred to the veterans and ex-combatants of the fight for the independence, fallen in the battle. From the Portuguese *saudoso*.
sira	them
subriñu	nephew
substritu	sub-region
suku	big village
surik	traditional sword
tais	traditional hand-woven cloth
tempu udan	rain season, in Timor-Leste usually between November and May
terus	suffering
tiu	uncle

tuir	to follow
ukun rasik aan	common expression meaning national independence, referred to the liberation of Timor-Leste from the Indonesian military occupation (see final Chronology)
uma la'a	(M.) traveller; women. Women are supposed to get married, live in their husband's house, belong to their husbands' Houses, hence are called as 'travellers'
uma	*lit.*, house's building. *Fig.*, household; origin group
uma fukun	an origin group
uma hein	keeper of the *uma lulik*
uma kain	household
uma laran	both inside the house and, most often, the household's members
uma lisan	synonym of *uma lulik*
uma lulik	potent building and physical representations of the House, meant as a social entity (see Introduction and Chapter I)
uma lulik kalén	potent building built with tin and cement
umane	wife-givers
subar fatin	hiding place

Introduction

The aim of my research is to explore the East Timorese heritage-making process from an anthropological perspective. My research is based on 15-month of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in the rural areas of Venilale and on meetings and interviews in Dili and in Baukau with representatives of national institutions involved in the recognition of heritage in Timor-Leste. In 2016, the East Timorese national government officially initiated the process of recognising national heritage by ratifying three UNESCO conventions,[5] therefore providing me with a unique opportunity to examine the heritage-making process as it was being implemented. On the 18th May 2016, the government ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (National Resolution nº 6/2016, 9369-9391), as well as the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (National Resolution nº 7/2016, 9391-9411), and finally the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (National Resolution nº 8/2016, 9411-9440).[6] In March 2020, through the Secretary of Arts and Culture (SEAC) and the East Timorese National Commission to UNESCO (KNTLU), Timor-Leste submitted the application for *tais* – traditional hand-woven textile – to UNESCO, to be inscribed as Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in urgent need of safeguarding.[7] The ratification of these conventions intertwined national and cultural heritage agendas, creating policies defining what heritage is. How do these ratifications define heritage? What are the policies put into place as a consequence and how do they describe heritage, cultural objects, cultural practices and traditions? The ratification of the conventions implies that domestic policies would need to be harmonized with the UNESCO standards and the obligation to protect 'traditional' customs. So how does the government cope with the international standards regarding heritage? And what do these policies mean for the communities affected by them and how do they impact on the way people relate to one another and to state institutions concerned with heritage-making?

My understanding of what heritage is has been shaped by my critical engagement with the theoretical work of Laurajane Smith (2006) and, more broadly, with the so-called Critical Heritage Studies theoretical framework.[8] Laurajane Smith suggests that the UNESCO Conventions "may be understood as authorizing institutions of heritage, as they define what heritage is, how and why is significant and how it should be managed and used" (87). With the expression "Authorised Heritage Discourse" (AHD) Laurajane Smith defines "the dominant Western discourse on heritage (...) that

[5] See https://web.archive.org/web/20171025213345 /http://www.cultura.gov.tl/sites/default/files/serie_i_no_19_unesco_3_6.pdf, last accessed on 30.11.2020.
[6] http://www.mj.gov.tl/jornal/public/docs/2016/serie_1/SERIE_I_NO_19.pdf, last accessed on 30.11.2020.
[7] *Cf*. https://ich.unesco.org/en/assistances/tais-traditional-textile-01563, last accessed on 30.11.2020.
[8] See later, the "State of the art" section.

works to naturalize a range of assumptions about the nature and meaning of heritage" (4). Smith's conceptualisation is paramount for this thesis. I suggest that the national policies regarding heritage developed by the East Timorese government, echo the international AHD. According to Smith, AHD focuses on the tangible dimension of heritage and is informed by concepts involving the celebration of aesthetics and monumentality. Smith outlines alternatives to the AHD, defining heritage as a "cultural process that engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present" (44). Smith aims to put local ways of conceiving heritage at the centre of her analysis, as bottom-up alternatives to the AHD. Initially, my research was moved by the same ideal. However, the Venilale context suggests that national discursive practices around heritage and local ways of conceiving and transmitting heritage do not stand in opposition to one another, but rather they have a dialogical and often ambivalent relation. As Angie Bexley and Maj Nygaard-Christensen (2013, 403) pointed out, East Timorese nation-building has to be understood more as a frictional, yet collaborative project, rather than a clash between social actors and paradigms. On the one hand, international and national institutions create and provide policies that often fail to take into consideration local ways of conceiving heritage and traditions; however, on the other hand, local perspectives can be ambiguous and extremely diverse too.

My thesis will show that heritage is not given, but instead created and produced through policies and practices, both at an institutional and a grassroots level. I am going to examine specific governmental institutions and national reports and policies that embody what I define as the East Timorese AHD. My aim is to examine the tensions and ambivalences towards heritage, both at an institutional level and in everyday cultural practices. This thesis thus focuses on the grey areas and intersections between the normative discursive practices developed by governmental apparatuses (the AHD) and local ways of conceiving heritage, particularly in the Venilale area. I analyse the uses of heritage in Timor-Leste, as well as the diverse actors involved, both in official as well as in everyday life settings and practices. I take into consideration the intersections between current East Timorese national heritage-making processes and both the current UNESCO international conventions and former colonial policies over heritage. I aim to engage with heritage in critical terms, proposing a new understanding and approach to it, focusing on the intangible and shared social meanings of the cultural practices handed down by one generation to the next.

In Timor-Leste, the national and governmental institutions developing strategies and policies for the recognition and protection of heritage are the Secretary of Arts and Culture (SEAC), with its main office in Dili and local headquarters in each region of the country, as well as the *Komisaun Nasionál Timor-Leste ba UNESCO* (T., National Timor-Leste Commission of UNESCO, KNTLU). SEAC was

created with the 5th Constitutional Government (2012-2015).[9] The country has been a member of UNESCO since 2003, and in 2004 an UNESCO Antenna Office was based in Dili.[10] However, KNTLU was officially established only in 2009 and since its first steps, all projects have been coordinated together with SEAC.[11] In 2009 the government signed Resolution 24/2009, the first National Cultural Policy (*Politika Nasionál ba Kultura*, T.).[12] As the national resolution nº 24/2009 states, heritage is included within the national development plan, which is reconfigured as part of the development agenda of the country (*Plano Estratégico de Deselvolvimento 2011-2030* 2002, 74-82; 171-182).[13]

So, what is the national AHD in Timor-Leste? We find some indications about what heritage discourse is being authorised in Timor-Leste in the *Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030* (*Plano Estratégico de Desenvolvimento*, Pt.), which is a government action plan that was approved in 2002, and that started to be implemented in 2011. This colossal programme aims to strengthen the nation socially and economically, improving social capital and infrastructures as well as the national economy in less than 20 years. The literature regarding the East Timorese development policies often juxtaposes the ambitious government's plans with the ways in which ordinary people imagine their well-being and prosperity for the future, especially in the rural areas of the country (Meitzner Yoder 2015). Often this dichotomy is suggested by metaphors of light and shadow, where the dark would represent local culture and traditions, perceived as an impediment to development, while the light portrays the progress of the future, represented by the developmental NGOs plans (Shepherd 2018). Lisa Palmer (2018), also using the same metaphor (the light representing the world of progress and the shadow the world of the ancestral beings), stresses the importance of understanding local cosmologies, and the importance of the negotiations between 'custodians of traditions' and ancestral knowledge and top-down policies developed by the government.

The *Strategic Development Plan* reveals a more ambivalent perspective over what the governmental apparatuses define as 'traditions'; and it refers to heritage protection and implementation both in the 'Economy' section (where heritage is included within the tourism section) (2002, 171-182) and in the 'social capital' section, where education is considered a fundamental part in order to develop the heritage sector and knowledge (17-37). Cultural 'traditions', 'traditional' arts and craftmanship are considered as fundamental for the development of tourism, besides being

[9] *Cf*. http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=11254&lang=en, last accessed 30.11.2020.
[10] *Cf*. https://en.unesco.org/system/files/countries/Importing/tls_facts_figures.pdf, last accessed 30.11.2020.
[11] *Cf*. https://web.archive.org/web/20160320142830/http://unesco.org.tl/tl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=34, last accessed 30.11.2020.
[12] *Cf*. Polítical Nacional da Cultura, Resolution nº 24/2009, 18th November 2009. See http://www.mj.gov.tl/jornal/?q=node/1816, last accessed 30.11.2020.
[13] *Cf*. http://timor-leste.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Timor-Leste-Strategic-Plan-2011-20301.pdf, last accessed 30.11.2020.

described as capable of strengthening national sentiment (74-81). However, 'traditional' ways of cultivating and fishing are described as characterised by a lack of planning (130-132) and considered underdeveloped activities (158-159), and 'traditional' justice as well as 'traditional' ways of conceiving gender relationships (56-58) are accused of violating fundamental human rights (216). Thus, the *Strategic Development Plan* considers traditions as part of the national development; however, it also describes customs and traditions as brake on the national development. The ambivalence of the governmental institutions towards 'traditions' is going to be discussed throughout the chapters of the thesis, especially in relation to tourism, which is a key goal of the development plans related to heritage policies.

Ambivalences are central in this thesis. In Timor-Leste, the national AHD, of which the *Strategic Development Plan* is one of the many embodiments, does not have a single and unambiguous voice: on the contrary, the voices shaping the national AHD are many, often discordant voices, even within the very governmental institutions shaping the AHD, namely SEAC and KNTLU. We can identify what the national AHD is, by looking at governmental reports and policies related to culture and traditions (see Gárate Castro 2010; SEAC and KNTLU 2017; UNESCO Jakarta et alii 2015). Interviews I carried out with policymakers, as well as SEAC and KNTLU publications will be discussed throughout the thesis, so to deepen the understanding on the national AHD. By analysing these, my aim is twofold. On the one hand, I focus on the implicit problematic assumptions within the AHD; on the other, I examine the different voices shaping the East Timorese AHD. As it has been shown by a number of scholars (see Graham, Ashworth and Turnbridge 2000, 11-16; Harrison 2013; Smith 2006, 16-28), the heritage concept was developed in the Euro-American milieu between the 18th and the 19th century and was intimately related to the birth of nation-states as well as to nationalism. This is when many of the central assumptions underlying the concept of heritage took shape, such as the emphasis on monuments, tangible heritage, and the fact that objects and sites recognised as heritage are supposed to be aesthetically pleasing (Smith 2006, 10-15). When the concept of heritage was exported from the Western milieu to the rest of the world, these assumptions were also applied (Byrne 1991; Prabha Ray 2019; Winter 2014; Winter and Daly 2012). This is also the case in Timor-Leste, where the way in which the East Timorese AHD is currently being framed by policymakers reveals problematic assumptions and biases produced by the way that policies are implemented. We find, for example, the dichotomic distinction between tangible and intangible heritage, as well as the one between natural and cultural heritage. Moreover, tangibility, monumentality and authenticity are a paramount element of local 'traditional' handicrafts. My aim in this thesis is to analyse East Timorese heritage not as a surrogated version of the Western perspective on heritage. In contrast to these definitions, I propose to conceptualise heritage as a peculiar way of transmitting knowledge and values from one generation to the next – a definition that I derive from the way in which heritage was conceptualised in Venilale.

In this way, the context of Venilale and local ways of conceiving and transmitting heritage helped me to question the very ontology of heritage itself.

The ambiguities discussed in the course of the thesis concern different tensions that I came across during my fieldwork in Timor-Leste. The local ways of transmitting and conceiving heritage helped me to question the dichotomy between tangible and intangible heritage, as well as that between natural and cultural heritage, both implied in the UNESCO AHD and the East Timorese official policies regarding heritage. In Tetun, the official national language together with Portuguese, the word heritage is translated as *patrimóniu* (T.), a linguistic calque from the Portuguese *património* (Pt.). However, this is a technical word, used only in the documents produced by SEAC and KNTLU and is not used in everyday language by ordinary people in Dili or in Venilale. This thesis proposes a translation into a more understandable term of the word *patrimóniu* (T.): namely *rikusoin* (T.). Literally translatable as 'resources' or 'riches', *rikusoin* has to be understood in its emic meanings, denoting common goods and resources, central to the process of heritage transmission within Timor-Leste, specifically in Venilale. The goods referred to as *rikusoin* are valuable items often exchanged during rituals and ceremonies, occurring during paramount moments of life, such as marriages, funerals, harvest and sowing. Commonly, the term *rikusoin* is used to refer to collective material belongings and goods, transmitted from the older to the younger generations within a descendant group. Often, these goods and resources are considered potent (*lulik*, T.),[14] charged with ancestral powers, such as for example swords (*surik*, T.), traditional clothes used during weddings and funerals (*tais*, T.) and drums, but also cows (*karau*, T.), special trees (*ai lulik*, T.), stones (*fatuk*, T.) and springs of water (*bee matan*, T.). Common and everyday practices, such as chewing betel nut and areca leave (*bua malus*, T.) are also considered as *rikusoin*: betel and areca are in fact considered among the most ancient gifts and practices handed down from the ancestors to the present generations. *Rikusoin* intertwine both natural and cultural dimensions, representing goods, natural and cultural resources, as well as social and cultural practices. In addition, the concept of *rikusoin* is intimately linked to that of cultural transmission. What are the characteristics of the *rikusoin* transmitted? And how do *rikusoin* gain meaning and significance in a given social and ritual context? *Lulik* objects and goods often interact between the cultural/social dimension and the natural one, creating a cultural landscape of meanings that, I suggest, characterises heritage as interpreted within Venilale. Therefore, this thesis proposes considering cultural transmission as a paramount element of heritage, within the Venilale's reality.

[14] Throughout the thesis, I use potent as a synonym of *lulik* as suggested by Judith Bovensiepen (2014a). For a more comprehensive understanding of the term 'potent' in the Eastern Indonesian area, see Catherine Allerton (2013).

By highlighting the intangible and social dimensions of the potent houses (*uma lulik*)[15] as well as considering as heritage not just the crafts suggested by the AHD, but also the *rikusoin* as they are conceived locally, this thesis aims to focus on the importance of the social dimension and meanings that these objects, practices, natural and cultural elements have for the people who safeguard and transmit them. *Uma lulik* are 'traditional' architectures, representing social entities comprising several generations – from common ancestors to the future generations. Throughout this thesis, I will describe these social entities as 'Houses', with a capital H, following the suggestion that was first given by the anthropologist Claudine Friedberg (1982).[16]

The House is a paramount cosmological as well as social category within East Timorese society that is going to be discussed later in the introduction, as well as in the first two chapters of the thesis. The current East Timorese post-colonial and post-independence heritage-making process recognises *uma lulik* architectures as symbols of the national heritage.[17] Similarly, other crafts, such as pottery, 'traditional' textile (*tais*, T.) and other objects are also considered as central elements of the 'traditional' East Timorese identity, stressing the authenticity of some artifacts over others (Gárate Castro 2010; UNESCO Jakarta et alii 2015). This thesis questions the centrality of tangibility and authenticity, and it proposes focusing on the universe of social and cultural meanings embedded in *rikusoin* and Houses, as primarily social elements.

Since cultural practices and the social dimension are so central to the thesis, another concept that I will question throughout the thesis is the one of 'community'. Community is a paramount element in the text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH; UNESCO 2003), as well as a concept mentioned in Resolution 24/2009, the first formal and official national document establishing a conceptual political framework regarding the definition and protection of National Culture and Heritage in Timor-Leste (Sousa 2017, 432). As Christoph Brumann pointed out, in the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, ICH is linked to communities and to identity in a very unproblematic way, as if there was a good and harmonious connection between these three concepts. In addition, despite the fact that the Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH describes local communities as the main agents and promoters for the existence and safeguarding of their own ICH, the actual relevance of small communities in the heritage decision-making process is actually quite irrelevant (2015). By analysing

[15] *Uma lulik* are frequently called also *uma adat* and *uma lisan* in Timor-Leste. In Indonesian, they are generally referred to as *rumah adat*. During my fieldwork, all my interlocutors used the terms *uma lulik*, *uma adat* and *uma lisan* interchangeably to refer to potent houses' buildings.

[16] Friedberg proposed the term House to describe a social entity among the Bunak, in Timor-Leste. See also Sousa (2010b).

[17] See Resolution 24/2009, National Policy of Culture, at http://www.mj.gov.tl/jornal/?q=node/1816, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

local social dynamics within the Venilale context, as well as fractures and tensions I could observe, I question the idea of homogeneity implied in the idea of 'community'. What is a community in Timor-Leste? Is it a household, a village, a House? What are the diverse perspectives in a community? Who are the leaders and what are their roles? By asking these questions, I interrogate the very idea of 'community' as it is implied by AHD as a uniform, unitary and peaceful entity. I do this by analysing some of the power dynamics as well as the frictions existing within households, and among villages (*suku*, *aldeia*, T.) and between different 'custodians of traditions' (*lia nain*, T.) of the Venilale context. The analysis helps in the understanding of local social conflicts, such as generational and gender gaps and the distance between urban and rural areas of the country. I discuss the power and prestige that the local 'custodians of traditions' (*lia nain*, T.) detain and how this power interacts with government power and policies, counter-arguing the idea of a strong contrastive dynamic between so-called AHD and bottom-up and grassroots alternatives.

Finally, in order to illustrate the ambivalent relationship between the state and the population living in the rural areas of Venilale further, I discuss some of the national and official commemorative practices, celebrating the recent East Timorese past and, most importantly, the birth of the Timor-Leste as a country. As in any other nation, Timor-Leste has its own 'origin myth' of the country too, in which the distress endured by the population during the Portuguese colonisation and especially during the Indonesian occupation, is related to the heroic actions of those who fought for the independence of the country. As mentioned, the origin of heritage is intertwined with the origin of nation-states, being part of nation-building as well as of nationalism. Due to the tragic and violent past endured by the East Timorese population, the notions of 'struggle and 'suffering' (*funu* and *terus*, T.) have to be considered as paramount elements that underlie the conceptualisation of the birth of Timor-Leste as a nation (Arthur 2019). The 'heroes' are celebrated not just with official ceremonies but also with material compensation to the families who lost their relatives in the fight for the national liberation. I aim to question this narrative, the actors celebrated by it, but also – and most importantly – the actors who are left out of the narrative of the 'myth of origin' of the nation, in Chapter IV. However, the ambiguity does not lie in the fact that the 'myth of the nation' excludes groups and citizens with its narrative – such as, for example, women and young people. Rather, the ambiguity lies in the very celebration of the national heroes.

The state and governmental institutions put a huge effort into the commemoration of the heroes of the nation, whose mortal remains are expected to be buried in the national cemetery of Metinaro, and other local "heroes" cemeteries scattered throughout the country. In this way, though, these heroes are implicitly removed from their kin and social contexts, where celebration of the dead, commemoration of the ancestors and burial practices are paramount elements of the customary 'tradition'. For the local traditional beliefs and practices of conceiving death, a dead person is firstly a

relative, a member of a House and of a village, and then also a national hero. Despite both perspectives, the national and the local, recognising their dead as heroes of the nation, the clash lies in the different ways of conceiving death and burial commemorations. What is supposed to be conceived as a symbol of national unity, the heroes who helped create the nation, actually break up the actors involved, showing the plurality of perspectives shaping Timor-Leste as a nation. Examining the key issues of *rikusoin*, community and commemoration – and the ambivalence between the state discourse and local practice – this thesis consists of four chapters, which are divided as follows.

Chapter I: Translating Concepts

The first chapter ascertains to what extent Tetun words and concepts related to specific cultural practices can be considered as intangible cultural heritage in Timor-Leste. Central to this chapter is the concept of cultural transmission, which I identify as a paramount element in the understanding of heritage itself. By extensively discussing the meanings of the word *rikusoin* (T., *lit*. resources), I propose the term as a Tetun translation of the word heritage, and as an alternative to the word *patrimóniu* (T., heritage. Calque from the Portuguese *património*). I suggest that the distance between *rikusoin* and *patrimóniu* is not just a lexical matter, but it reveals different ways of conceiving the very nature of heritage. National and international AHD focus on the division between natural and cultural heritage, as well as on that between tangible and intangible cultural heritage; Venilale's context made me question these divisions. I chose the word *rikusoin* precisely because it helps in the overcoming of the dichotomic tension between natural/cultural as well as tangible/intangible, better translating the ways in which heritage is conceived and transmitted in the Venilale area. I propose the everyday practice of *bua malus* (T., chewing areca and betel) as the first example of intangible cultural heritage in Timor-Leste, in a provocatory stance against the tangibility and the monumentality implied by the national and international AHD. *Bua malus* is in fact one of the most common practices of rural communities throughout Timor-Leste, overcoming linguistic and ethnic differences. *Bua malus* is considered the most ancient and common symbol of sociability; an ancient practice handed down from the ancestors until nowadays. Although negative stereotypes were ascribed to the practice since the Portuguese colonisation, being deemed backwards, unhealthy and impolite, it still represents the most common practice performed in the rural areas of the country to welcome someone, as well as a fundamental ritual in more official circumstances.

By exploring the cultural and social significance of specific practices, goods and natural resources, I discuss the meaning of *rikusoin*. *Rikusoin* can be special goods, objects, places or natural elements which are considered relevant and significant within a House – the social entity. These are often connected to land and land inheritance. Some of the *rikusoin* are often stored in the *uma lulik*,

being incorporated into the intangible *lulik* potency, but they can also be element of the natural landscape and are believed to be part of the resources belonging to a House, remnants of the activities of the ancestors and ancestral spirits over the wild nature (such as potent stones, fields or springs of water). *Rikusoin* can also be communal goods (cows, *tais*, etc.) exchanged between wife-takers and wife-givers during paramount moments of life, such as marriages and funerals. Due to the ambivalent nature of *rikusoin* and their paramount importance in cultural transmission, I then suggest that the UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Landscape category might appropriately define the Venilale's multiple ways of conceiving heritage.

Chapter II: Local frictions, identities and traditions

The second chapter discusses the concept of 'community', which is central, both within the text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, as well in the East Timorese national Resolution 24/2009. In both these documents 'communities' are presented as the agents which create and safeguard ICH. Discussing the many ways in which a community can be defined in Venilale, I question the very definition of 'community', as intended by both international and national AHD. This chapter then discusses some of the social tensions and power dynamics I observed during my fieldwork in Venilale, both at the household level, within *aldeia*/*suku* (T., village) and then at a broad sub-regional level. I focus on the social pre-eminence and status of the *lia nain* and old men over women and young people, both within households, villages, sub-regional, regional and national apparatuses. *Lia nain* are often considered representatives of the communities where they live by the local and national state and governmental institutions. Their social status and prestige are preeminent, and this affects gender inclusion and social equality. How do these tensions and social imbalances interact with the national and international perspective over heritage that focuses on a unitarian and univocal ideal of 'community'? How can heritage be made inclusive?

Chapter III: The Politics of heritage[18]

The East Timorese Resolution 24/2009, the first formal and official national document establishing a conceptual political framework regarding the definition and protection of National Culture and Heritage in Timor-Lestes, is also the first governmental document presenting *uma lulik* as symbols of the national East Timorese heritage (Sousa 2017, 432). The aim of this chapter is to explore the so-

[18] An earlier and short version of Chapter III was published in *E-Cadernos CES*, under the title "Uma Lulik as Heritage: Authorised Heritage Discourse in Timor-Leste" (see Boldoni 2020). I thank the editorial board of *E-Cadernos CES* for allowing me to reprint parts of the article published in their journal.

called national Authorised Heritage Discourse and highlight the conflicting powers embedded in it. National AHD in fact focuses predominantly on the tangible dimension of the *uma lulik*, proposing – and sometimes imposing – policies over their protection and construction of the potent houses, based on the use of 'authentic' materials. In addition, the dissertation points out that the regional Bureau of SEAC in Baukau does not seem to be involved within the national policies developed from the central governmental apparatuses (*i.e* SEAC and KNTLU), creating tensions between the capital city and the regional areas. The regional context helps to understand that the national East Timorese AHD is not characterised by a univocal and unambiguous voice, but rather by multiple voices. The context made me question some of the perspectives raised by the so-called critical heritage studies literature, namely the authors who stress the dichotomic distance between AHD and so-called counter-heritage (Byrne 2014) or subaltern heritage (Smith 2006, 35-41). The East Timorese context made me realise that within the same AHD there can be many perspectives. Open and divergent frictions exist among the representatives of SEAC and KNTLU (representing the national AHD in Timor-Leste), and not between governmental apparatuses and the local population. The chapter suggests that the distance between the central state AHD voice and regional ones correspond to the distance between the central governmental institutions of Dili and the regional rural areas, namely those of Baukau and Venilale. Far from being a problem concerning only the heritage-making process, the gap between the urban centre (Dili) and the rural peripheries is a larger and broader national development issue.

Chapter IV: Nation-building between official and unofficial narratives

The last chapter focuses on the disconnections between government institution discourses and practices and those produced on a more local level. The topics are the commemorative practices, both national and official and local and unofficial, connected to the national liberation. By presenting the ethnographic recounting of a *saudozu* (T., late lamented) reburial I attended in Venilale, I suggest that local communities sometimes use customary practices as political tools to deploy as alternatives of government discourse and practices. In Venilale, ancestral traditions over reburials follow customary practices that do not allow the separation of the mortal remains with the territory (and cultural landscape) where that life was lived. However, the governmental and national institutions assume that the human remains of a 'hero of the nation' should be buried in the 'heroes' cemeteries. These two perspectives clash, revealing gaps between the narrative deployed by the state institutions over the national liberation and local interpretations of the violent recent history of the country. Finally, the conclusion opens up issues related to alternative ways of conceiving heritage, mostly non-Western and distant from the AHD perspective.

Methodology and ethnographic context

I visited Timor-Leste for the first time in 2013, for a brief field research of only 4 months, which then led to the writing of my master's thesis. It focused on the recent and troubled history of Timor-Leste. In particular my work concerned the *Rede Clandestina* (Pt., clandestine network), the popular unarmed front of the resistance movement, against the Indonesian military occupation (1975-1999) (Boldoni 2014). I was lucky enough to visit various places in the country, besides the capital Dili, where I spent most of the time, in particular, the area of Venilale, where I lived for about a month. It was the first time outside Europe for me. Still vivid in my memory is the first impact: sheet metal houses, bumpy streets, and the perception that there were exponentially more young people than elders – unlike the country I come from, where perhaps sheet metal houses do not exist anymore (almost), but the murmuring of old people is infinitely more incumbent than the shrill and vital voices of children.

In January 2017 I then returned for a 15-month fieldwork. Dili seemed to me to have grown incredibly and be even more populated than it already was in 2013. Shops, small businesses and street vendors were scattered around the streets from Comoro to Cristo Rei, but also international chain shops, even a mall and a multiplex cinema. It is now very easy – albeit rather expensive – to find a flat or even a room to rent in Dili, with all possible comforts: running and hot water, electricity, good furniture, gas cookers and air conditioning. The road to Baukau, the only one existing to get to Venilale, was under renovation. The journey from Dili to Venilale (150 km), which in 2013 took me over 2 hours by car and 4 hours by public bus, between 2017 and 2018 lasted 4 hours by car, up to 8 hours by bus. The distance between Dili and the *foho* (T., the mountainous and rural areas of the country), which in 2013 already seemed abysmal, was even greater in 2017. In the two houses where I lived in the Venilale subregion, the first in Daralata (February 2017-August 2017) and the second one in Waikulale (September 2017-March 2018), even though electricity was present, blackouts were very frequent, even leaving the population without light for days, with food deteriorating in the fridge, with no possibility of recharging mobile phones and therefore, possibly, without being able to call any emergency number. The only time I heard the sirens of an ambulance in Daralata (an hour and a half away by car from the nearest hospital, 30 km), the whole village had come out from their houses, intrigued by that unusual noise. My hosts and neighbours whispered "ema mate" (T.), someone died. "Here people go to the hospital to die, *menina*" – the sarcastic, tight-lipped comment many people made. As if this was their way of introducing me into that place – all of them well aware that I came from a place where ambulances take very little time to transport patients to hospitals and where the roads are well paved.

*

Timor-Leste is divided into 13 regions, which are Oekussi-Ambeno, Bobonaro, Kovalima, Ermera, Liquiçá, Ainaro, Aileu, Dili, Manufahi, Manatuto, Vikeke, Baukau and Lautém.

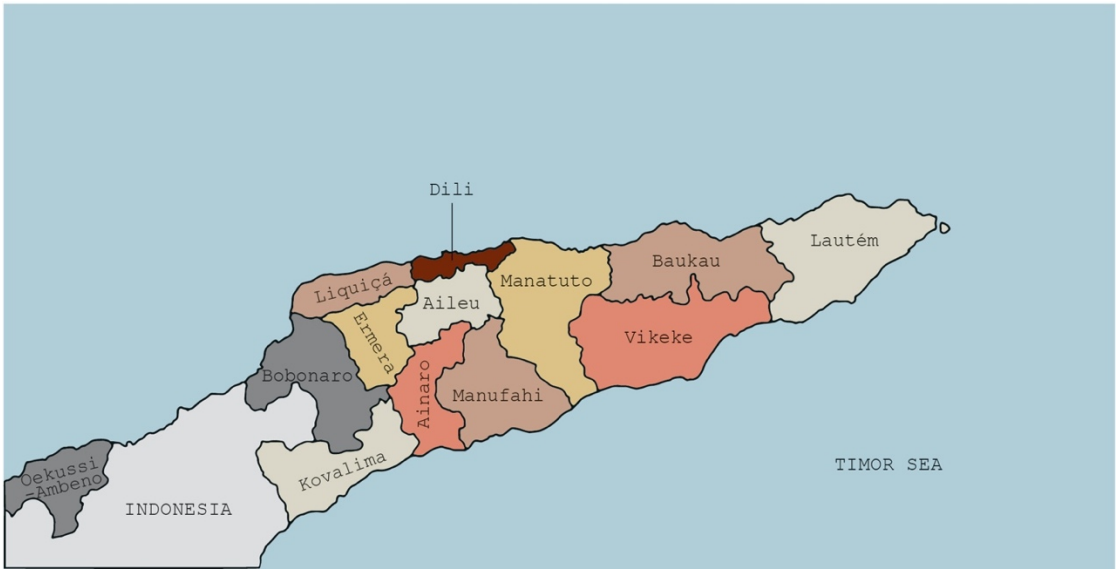

Figure 1 Administrative map of Timor-Leste

Every region is divided into sub-regions and each of them is formed by *suku* (T., big village). These are divided into *aldeia* (Pt. and T., hamlet) and each of them is usually shaped by *knua* (T., small hamlet). My fieldwork was mostly based in the Venilale sub-region of the Baukau district.

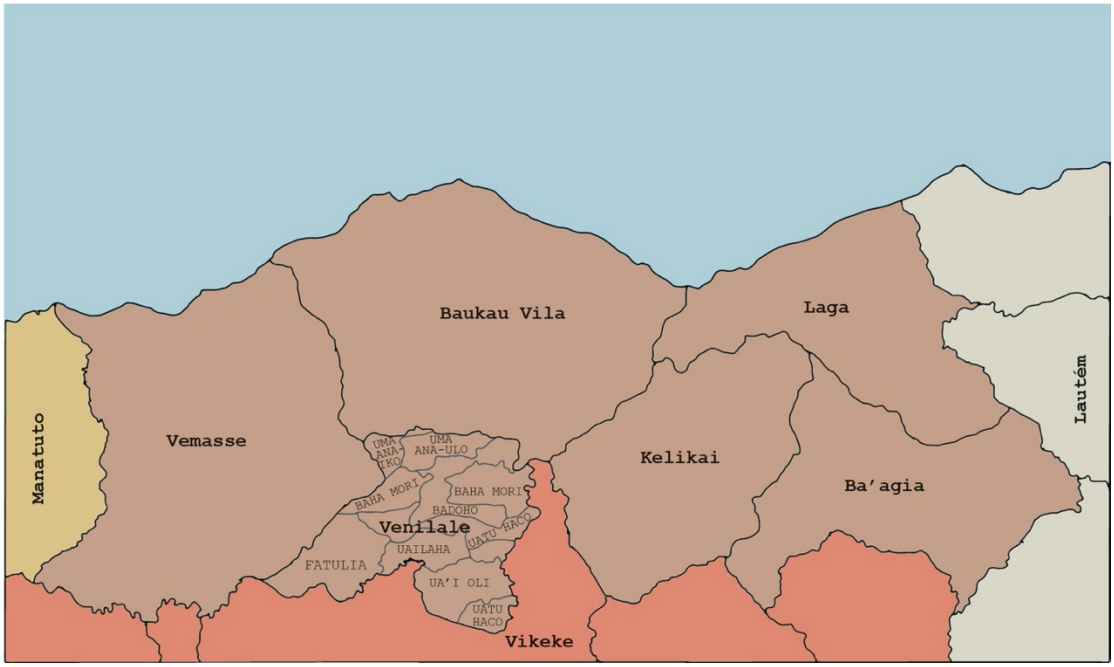

Figure 2 Baukau's subregions

The Baukau's subregions are Baukau Vila, Kelikai, Venilale, Vemasse, Laga and Ba'agia. Venilale has eight *suku*: Badoho, Baha Mori or Bado Mori, Fatulia, Ua'i Oli, Uailaha, Uatu Haco, Uma Ana-iko and Uma Ana-ulo. There is a total of 35 *aldeias* in Venilale. I spent the first part of my fieldwork in Daralata (February-August 2017), an *aldeia* comprised in the Uatu Haku *suku*[19] and the subsequent part in the Waikulale *knua* (September 2017-March 2018), comprised in the *suku* of Badoho.[20]

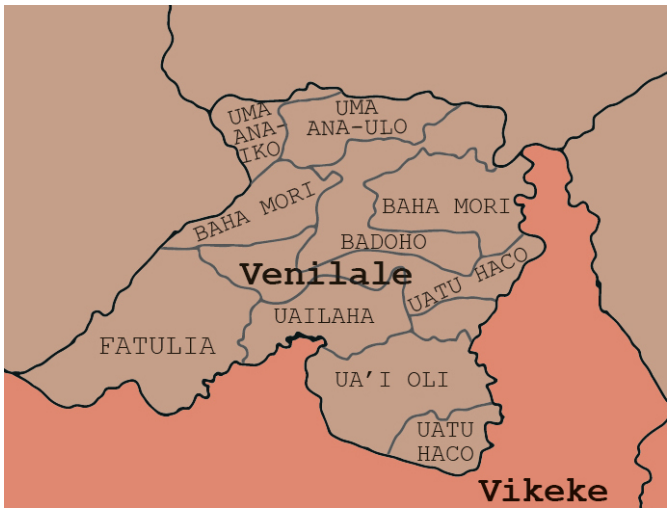

Figure 3 Venilale's *suku*

My fieldwork path went from participant observation in the rural areas of Venilale to more formal dialogues and interviews with representatives of governmental institutions, in Venilale, Baukau and Dili too. All the interviews I conducted and the majority of the conversations I had both in Venilale and in Dili were in Tetun. I rarely used English, only with some of my peers who had studied abroad and who lived in Dili; and Portuguese only when it was specifically required at the *Universidade Nasionál Timor Lorosa'e*, (T., Timor Lorosa'e National University, UNTL) and in the primary school in Daralata (see below). The interviews I present throughout the thesis were all conducted with the consent of my interlocutors. Some of them were recorded, with the permission and approval of my interlocutors.

One of the most interesting aspects of the East Timorese context and, consequently, of the research itself is the fact that the different institutions engaged in heritage-making were in the process of shaping the so-called AHD during the time I spent in Timor-Leste. It was a privilege to be able to picture this peculiar moment, in which both national and local institutions were working in order to create new policies related to local and national heritage. It is a process that will surely take time, not just because Timor-Leste is a newly born nation, but also because the priorities of the country are

[19] The *aldeia* shaping Uatu Haku are Uatu Hasa, Lia Bala, Ossogori, Uaitalibu.
[20] The *aldeia* comprised in Badoho are Ua'i Bobo, Ua'i Kana, Uataula, Uatubela Oli, Uma Ana Iko.

many: the health, education, economy and infrastructures sectors need to be developed and improved. As concerns the heritage-making process, national plans have dissimilarly reached the regions, among which that of Baukau. This thesis intentionally gives more importance to the participating observation within the rural areas than within the institutions because I believe that the complexity of everyday rural dynamics is paramount in order to understand how to engage with heritage in more inclusive and bottom-up perspectives.

At the beginning of my fieldwork in 2017, I stayed for a month in Dili, the capital, to improve the rusty Tetun I had learned in 2013. I attended the Tetun course at the Dili Institute of Technology (DIT) where the teachers, who were very helpful, customized the lessons for me, knowing that my plan was to move to Venilale the following month. Therefore, the teachers trained me for the potentially helpful vocabulary and conversations in the *foho* (T., mountainous and rural areas of the country), which, according to them, were so distant from the chaotic life of the capital Dili. While the lessons for the white foreigners (*malae, T.*) who came to Dili to work in NGOs were based on Tetun economic, legal and political vocabulary, the lessons customised for me were based on agricultural activities and tools, kinship and family vocabulary, rituals and traditions. At the end of the lessons, the teachers often asked me if I was really sure I was going to live in Venilale. They wanted to make sure I was ready for that experience. They kept telling me over and over that I would have to wash my clothes by hand, help around the house and cook on the fire and not with the cooker and gas cylinder, like in Dili. I would have to go and get water very early in the morning and probably share my room with other people, "because in Timor-Leste nobody sleeps alone at night". I would eat rice three times a day and bread and meat would be rare. They were also afraid of the fact that I was an unmarried white woman in the *foho*. One of the teachers at DIT was from Venilale and his first language was Makasae. He thought it would be helpful to equip me with some basic Makasae vocabulary. The only expression he ever taught me was *ani tula*: “It means ‘I don’t want to’ in Makasae... just in case any man talks or touches you, just say *ani tula* and they’ll stop their bad manners”. Nobody thought I was ready for that experience and they were all worried about me. Furthermore, they were worried about the reaction of the local population, namely men, would have towards a *malae* woman as I am.

In the meantime, I met my local supervisor at UNTL, Professor Vicente Paulino, with whom I preferred to talk to in Tetun, to practise it but also to show him that I was really interested in talking to everybody, and not to preclude the possibility of an interview or a chat because of the language. Despite my efforts to speak Tetun to anyone I met, the professor preferred to use Portuguese with me, and above all, he insisted that I speak Portuguese with his students, being a Portuguese teacher himself. He invited me to many conferences organized by UNTL, and he also invited me to give two lectures to his students. He always explicitly asked me to speak Portuguese – both during the lectures

and during the conferences.[21] Unlike the DIT teachers, he was not surprised about my fieldwork in Venilale. His questions were more about the choice of the area of the country. He was originally from a western part of the country, while I would be moving to the east and he was afraid he would have not been able to help me understand specific cultural phenomena of that area of the country. Although Timor-Leste is a very small country, both geographically and in terms of population density, the linguistic and cultural diversity is vast and traditions, rituals, ceremonies, vary from area to area.

DIT teachers, students at UNTL and other East Timorese interlocutors I met during the first month of my presence in Dili were all particularly reassured by the fact that my privileged contact in Venilale and gatekeeper was Father Eligio Locatelli, an Italian priest who celebrated his 60 years of presence in Timor-Leste and his 80 years of life in 2017. I had already met him in 2013, since the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website advises Italian citizens travelling to Timor-Leste to contact some local religious communities where Italian priests and nuns live. It is also relatively easy to find East Timorese priests and nuns who speak Italian. Most of them have in fact studied in Italy, usually at the Pontifical University of Rome. Since there is no Italian Embassy in Timor-Leste, the Italian government seems to rely on God or, at least, his representatives on earth. Ironically, Father Locatelli was born 30 km away from my own hometown in Italy.

It is no small detail that I have had contact with the Catholic Church in Timor-Leste: priests and nuns were my first gatekeepers, both in 2013 and 2017. Most importantly, the Catholic Church has a long and vast presence within the territory, as well as an economic status and social prestige that are important to take into consideration when approaching the East Timorese socio-cultural dynamics.[22] However, despite the conspicuous presence of the Catholic Church in the Venilale area, I suggest that priests and nuns should be taken into consideration more as economic and social actors than just as religious guides. In the Salesian community of Fatumaka there is a seminary where young boys from all over the country study to become priests, and a well-renowned carpentry and mechanics' technical school. The school attendance is male-dominated, and the students enrolled can be hosted for the entire academic year. The institute is in fact a boarding school, with a canteen, football and basketball courts, dormitories, prayer rooms, etc. Then, in Venilale the nuns run a small medical clinic. They also run a hotel management secondary school, as well as an orphanage, where they host children that come from very poor families or children with disabilities. The spiritual and religious role of nuns and

[21] The conference Professor Paulino invited me to participate to are the 6th Timor-Leste Studies Association Conference, 29-30.06.2017; III Simpósio de Educação: Língua, Responsabilidade Social, Gestão e Liderança Escolar, 20-21.09.2017; International Conference on Culture and Education, 26-27.10.2017. Professor Paulino asked me to give three lectures, on the 18.09.2017; 01.03.2018 and 07.03.2018. The one I will refer to in Chapter I is the third lecture mentioned.

[22] On the importance of the Catholic Church in Timor-Leste, behind its spiritual power and how the authority of the Catholic Church intersects the local social, ritual and cosmological aspects, see Bovensiepen 2009, 331 and Palmer 2015, 157-161.

priests in Venilale is certainly important, but these Salesian communities also have a more practical and fundamental impact on the local communities. The agricultural cooperative run by the priests is one of the few salaried jobs in the area (especially for farmers and poor people). Priests and nuns offer schools that prepare teenagers for the labour market. The nuns offer cheap health care with their clinic and social assistance to families and children of the area with their orphanage. The spiritual and religious life of the rural communities of Venilale (which will be discussed in the first and third chapters) is syncretic, incorporating both Catholic and local indigenous ways of understanding the supernatural reality.

Father Locatelli was rather sceptical of my choice to go and live in Venilale too, but he did everything possible so that I could find a good welcome in Daralata, a small village in the southern part of Venilale, almost on the border with the region of Vikeke. Santana, my host, is one of the many workers of the agricultural cooperative run by the Salesian community of Fatumaka, where Father Locatelli lives. I was hosted from time to time in the Salesian community, especially when the priest gave me a ride to Dili by car. I would return to Dili about once a month for university conferences, cultural events or debates that interested me, but also just to spend the weekend away from the *foho*.

As I mentioned, I lived in Daralata from February to August 2017. I was hosted in this village by Mr. Santana, a middle-aged man who lives there with his wife Susana and their 3 grandchildren. Santana and Susana have 9 children, they have lived in Daralata since the 1980s. Actually, Santana is one of the founders of the village. The village of Daralata, consisting of a small school, a church and about thirty houses (most of them in wood or bamboo, others in cement) was built at the behest of the Salesian community of Fatumaka during the 1980s. The village is located adjacent to wide flat agricultural areas (*dara lata* in Makasae means a wide and uninhabited place), whose crops feed not only the boarding school of the Salesian community, but also the population of the area. Santana's family, however, like that of Susana, is originally from Liabala, a *knua* a few kilometres away. In 2013, when I met Santana for the first time for an interview, he told me that, during the Indonesian military occupation, that village enjoyed a strategic position. Daralata, in fact, is placed far from major settlements, and is located on the border between fields and forest, as well as on the southern border between the region of Baukau and Vikeke. This setting allowed relatively easy communication with the groups of pro-independence armed guerrillas hidden in the adjacent forests. Santana often gave hospitality to some guerrillas, unbeknownst to the Indonesian military. He agreed with the guerrilla fighters on exact places where he could leave food, weapons, radio equipment and messages hidden here and there in the fields. Santana was a member of the so-called *rede clandestina* (Pt. and T., clandestine network). In this way, armed resistance operations could continue smoothly, despite the fact that Santana was arrested, interrogated and tortured several times by the Indonesian military forces.

In 2017 I returned to deepen my understanding about the village as a privileged place during the Indonesian military occupation. I also wanted to understand to what extent relations between members of the independence struggle could be linked to kin-based relations. Were the *rede clandestina*'s members also relatives? What role did Houses play in the independence struggle? My hypothesis was a wild goose chase from the outset. My interlocutors did not want to talk about their relatives and family's positions during the Indonesian military occupation. Santana and his wife were constantly repeating to me the episodes which they had managed to get away with without being intercepted by the Indonesian soldiers. They wanted them to sound like funny jokes. However, when I asked who in their Houses and who among their relatives had participated in the independence struggle, their answers were vague. They kept repeating that they were the only ones of their families living in that area, despite the fact that we used to receive visits from relatives coming from the village and nearby villages.[23] One of the consequences of the Indonesian military occupation was precisely the breaking of family ties thought to be indissoluble, fights between brothers who still struggle to emerge, and that people do not want to remember.[24] I then decided to focus on activities that were relevant for my interlocutors.

Under the influence of the vast literature regarding Timor-Leste and Eastern Indonesia (Bovensiepen 2015; Clamagirand 1980; Fox 2006a; McWilliam and Traube 2011; Reuter 2006; Sousa 2010, just to mention a few examples), I left Portugal with the aim of engaging in the ritual ceremonies related to *uma lulik* and to origin narratives (I will present a thorough analysis of the references mentioned in the 'State of the art' section). However, during my fieldwork, it was very hard for me to engage with *lia nain* and I have never heard an 'origin narrative'. I never saw a chicken sacrificed in the name of an ancestral spirit. The only time I saw a slaughtered animal, it was a cow. I was offered a broth made with her liver, and my host Santana was asked to take the rest of the flesh to the market in Venilale, to be sold. I had nightmares for a week, thinking about the carcass lying on the grass, made purple by the blood of the animal. I was disappointed and I often felt like a failed anthropologist that was not able to engage with her interlocutors the same way as described in the literature I used to read. My first hosts have not even built their *uma lulik* and the second in Waikulale took me to their potent house only once, for the day of the dead – a Catholic celebration.

In Daralata, Susana wanted me to teach Portuguese at the local primary school: the reception of the teachers was incredibly warm, and I felt I was being somehow helpful to the community, despite my uneasiness in that role. I had never taught Portuguese to children, and some of the Portuguese

[23] Judith Bovensiepen points out a similar attitude of her interlocutors, who, instead of focussing on the memories connected to the Indonesian military occupation, preferred to feel connected with a much more distant past, the one of the ancestors (2015).

[24] On this topic, namely on the relations of the East Timorese people living in West Timor and their divided identities and memories, see Andrey Damaledo (2018; 2020) and Victoria Kumala Sakti (2017; 2020).

teachers did not understand Portuguese themselves. I felt awkward in that role, but the teachers were asking for help, and so for about a month, I taught in school. However, Santana was not happy with Susana's decision. He wanted to show me around and to show me his role in the community. He used to take me to the town hall meetings and to traditional ceremonies. Unintentionally, I caused disagreements between him and his wife. I was feeling embarrassed about the situation itself and also because Susana was constantly repeating that going around with an old man was not a good thing to do for a young woman like me. In order to settle the situation, I decided to go to the fields with Susana and other women of the area, among whom was Santana's older sister.

In the fields, I realised that there was a deep interrelation between people, territory, kinship and food. Domesticated and wild (*fuik*, T.) natural elements, although cohabiting within the same environment, had different social and cultural meanings to the people I was living with. The landscape started to be a paramount element of my observations, where both supernatural and natural elements were present. *Lia nain* might be not open in talking to me about the origins of their *uma lulik* and the bold inaugural *uma lulik* ceremonies, but the people I met in the rice-fields offered me *bua malus* to chew and they were concerned about the rains ruining their crops. As Janet Carsten suggests, anthropologists should focus on everyday activities and domestic life (1997, 20), and not just on ritual speeches and formal ceremonies. And this is what I mostly focused on during my research. However, rice-fields, springs of water, cows and *tais* were part of the same cultural landscape, in which natural and cultural elements were blurred and connected by social bonds as well as ancestral and potent agencies. Social reproduction was made possible through ritual activities. Therefore, everyday life and a more 'extraordinary, unknown and ancestral' world (Allerton 2013, 8) interacted together, shaping Venilale's sociality.

The work in the fields was the activity that marked the daily and annual routine of the people I lived with, representing subsistence and salary for most of the people living in Daralata and the nearby villages. Feeding cows, looking after the birth of goats, cooking food for pigs, dyeing the cotton skeins and turning them into *tais*; and also, participating in the *suku* meetings, customary meetings and ceremonies to settle fights, having family meetings before and after weddings and end-of-the-mourning ceremonies, to decide how many goats, pigs and cows were needed for the banquets and meals. These were the frequent activities I participated in during my fieldwork. I spent most of my days of the first six months of my fieldwork in the fields with my hosts, who constantly complained that the rice-fields were empty and that the young were busy studying in Venilale, Baukau and Dili. "Nobody wants to get their hands dirty anymore" was the refrain that people used to repeat: the fields were empty, to them. Being farmers was not just a humble, poor job, but it did not repay the effort. However, it was considered as necessary to keep the family alive: Susana spent her nights 'cleaning' the rice, dividing the grains of rice from the husk, falling asleep while doing it. The rice was supposed

to be taken to Dili, to her younger brother's house, who was hosting two of her children who were studying in Dili and to her son's house, whose wife had recently had a baby. Cows, goats and pigs needed to be fed so they could be killed for other relatives' funerals or weddings. By observing these journeys, my hosts' connections with their relatives in Liabala, Venilale, Fatumaka, Dili and other places of the country, I started to consider Houses not as permanent and settled social elements connected to one single place. Instead, the social dynamics and connections within the members of a House helped me to consider the importance of movements between places: Houses are scattered throughout the country, because Houses are not buildings. Houses are people.

My host family spoke Makasae (Papuan language) and welcomed me both as a guest and a daughter, similarly to the second one where I stayed in Waikulale (whose members spoke in Kairui-Midiki) during the last seven months of my research. This is the main reason why I will refer to my hosts as host-fathers and host-mothers. Certainly, sharing the same space and taking part in the same activities every day for such a long time also implied an emotional bond between us, but I am not arrogant enough to think that I was as a daughter to them, nor do I consider them as my parents. Rather, there was a mutual recognition of the roles we were mutually representing to each other in the domestic space, as well as in the village. They represented the authoritative figures in the house, and they considered me both as a guest, being a white European woman (*malae*, T.), but also as their daughter, since I was not married yet and I was alone in a foreign country, so they felt responsible towards me. In more public circumstances, such us at the market, at school or during public gatherings and meetings we were invited to, my hosts used to introduce me to people as a *menina* (unmarried girl, T. and Pt.) or foster daughter (*oan hakiak*, T.), so to be integrated in the local social fabric more easily.

The main reason why I lived with two different families is because one of the goals of my research was to explore the ethno-linguistic diversity of Venilale and understand the social configuration linked to it. Hence, I thought that living in different areas of the territory could be a good way of exploring these issues. The area surrounding Daralata is mostly Makasae, while the area where Waikulale is located is mostly Kairui-Midiki. Secondly, during the fieldwork, I had to come to terms with more practical reasons. Daralata is a very small village located very far from the Venilale centre. It took almost one hour by motorbike to get to the city centre; the road was not paved and during the rainy season moving around was dangerous. I did not have any private means of transport, so I had to rely on my host family's movements. The isolation was a quite important factor that did not allow me to get in contact with institutions and other relevant interlocutors, activities that I focused on during the second part of the fieldwork. As I mentioned, driving around with Santana was not perceived as a relevant activity for my research, but the fact of spending time with a married man raised some doubts

and questions within Daralata, Liabala and elsewhere. Susana often used to mention that people were gossiping about her husband and me.

I was being a burden to my hosts, and it would have been rude and selfish not to consider this factor. I agreed with Santana's family to look for other opportunities, namely looking for a room to rent. Unfortunately, I did not have any lucky finding a room until I met Fábio, one of the boys working in the Friends of Venilale Association (FoV) and Venilale tourists centre. After confirming to me that the only guesthouse available in Venilale was the nuns' community (which was not available for long periods of time), he suggested I stay at his place with his family. Fábio's family had already hosted *malae* (white foreigners, T.) in the past. In addition, he seemed interested in the topic of my research, mentioning that his uncle was a *lia nain* and for sure he would help me to broaden my knowledge about *uma lulik* and *lisan* (T., custom). I agreed with him: having a privileged position in the tourist activities in Venilale and having privileged access to customary knowledge would certainly help me better articulate some of the issues that I had started to explore in Daralata.

FoV is an association which was inaugurated in 2005, resulting from the partnership between the city council of Mansfield, in Australia[25] and Venilale. Fábio's family was among the founders of the association in Venilale and they welcomed and hosted the FoV representatives coming from Australia. FoV organises tours to visit some of the cultural and natural assets in the Venilale area. Being in close relation with such an important local asset was fundamental for my research. For this second part of the fieldwork, in fact, I had planned to focus on the tourist activities developed by FoV and how these were connected to local assets considered as heritage. Unfortunately, the *lia na'in* did not seem particularly interested in talking to me about *uma lulik* and *lisan*. However, Mr. Alex, Fábio's dad, was my privileged interlocutor during the second part of my fieldwork. Mr. Alex used to be the Venilale's *Xefe de subdistritu* (T., Mayor of Venilale) for 15 years, between the Indonesian military occupation and the restoration of independence (1988-2003). His authority was well known and respected within Venilale. His historical as well as administrative knowledge helped me to have a privileged insight into the social dynamics of the area. In addition, as Waikulale was close to the centre of Venilale (20 minutes' walk, less than 2 km), I was able to conduct interviews with the mayor of Venilale (*Xefe de subdistritu*, T.), as well as having conversations with other members of the political administration and other relevant interlocutors. The position of Waikulale allowed me to go more often to Baukau, the closest town and capital of the region, where I had a formal interview with the Representative of SEAC and other meetings with relevant interlocutors. During the second segment of my fieldwork research (September 2017-March 2018) I also increased my travels to Dili, so as to be able and conduct

[25] https://www.mansfield.vic.gov.au/directory/community/friends-venilale, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

interviews with SEAC and KNTLU representatives, as well as attending conferences at UNTL and other institutions, which were very relevant to my research.

The opportunity to consider the action plans related to heritage and tourism of KNTLU and SEAC both in Dili and in Baukau, as well as the heritage and tourism policies shaped by the local administration in Venilale, allowed me to observe both similarities and differences between them. The divergencies between all the different institutions I interacted with was fundamental to understanding the ambiguities within the same national AHD, which is central to the thesis. Despite the fact that it was not always easy to interact with the official institutions, however, I had the chance to interview all the institutional partners I had planned to. However, it was precisely the different reception from the institutions I collaborated with, that made me understood the different perspectives within the governmental apparatuses (see Chapter 3).

State of the art

One month before my departure to Timor-Leste I attended a conference by Professor Sara Niner in London at SOAS. There was a good number of scholars and researchers working on or interested in Timor-Leste and I was pleasantly surprised to see East Timorese students and scholars at the event too. Domingos was one of them. As every proper academic breaking-ice conversation, we started to talk about our respective research. He had just finished his MA in International Studies and he would have gone back to Timor-Leste within a month. I had just submitted my PhD research project and I was ready to leave Europe to Timor-Leste. I thought I was lucky to meet him, since I was also going to Dili in a month. I remembered how hard it was to find people talking English fluently, back in 2013, when I first visited the county.[26] I told him that I was going to Timor-Leste for a research about the local cultural heritage. Domingos, staring quite puzzled, asked me from which university I was from. I answered the Lisbon University Institute (ISCTE). He suddenly wide-opened his eyes and smiled at me, exclaiming "I see! You are going to study the Portuguese walls in Timor!".

*

Timor-Leste was the first nation born in this century. It is a country still under construction, which has received incredible attention in recent years - both because of its troubled history and its geo-political position. Timor-Leste is among the poorest countries in Asia; more than 40% of the

[26] The East Timorese citizens whose mother tongue is English are 7271; Portuguese mother tongue 1384; Bahasa Indonesia mother tongue, 2711. English is a non-maternal language for 5,000 citizens; Portuguese to 29,000; Bahasa Indonesia to 21,000 people. Source: National Statistics Directorate (2016). *Timor-Leste Population and Housing Census 2015: Population Distribution by Administrative Area* – Vol. 2 ('Languages'), available at http://www.statistics.gov.tl/category/publications/census-publications/2015-census-publications/volume-2-population-distribution-by-administrative/, accessed on 01.11.2020.

population lives under the poverty line and half of the population is illiterate (UNDP 2009). As Maj Nygaard-Christensen and Angie Bexley point out, many were the discussions over the East Timorese national identity between scholars and activists (Nygaard-Christensen and Bexley 2017, 2-4) and the majority of them were and are foreigners. Timor-Leste has been romanticized not just as the first country of the century, but a country born and almost resurrected from the ashes (Fox and Babo Soares 2003) of an undoubtedly violent and troubled past. Timor-Leste has in fact suffered a first colonisation from Portugal (1515-1974) and, immediately afterwards, a violent military occupation from Indonesia[27] (1975-1999). When finally, on 20th May 2002 the national independence was restored and the *República Democrática de Timor-Leste* was born, a new nation had to be rebuilt from scratch, hence a strong national development plan was needed.

The anthropological literature about Timor-Leste has developed mostly in the last decades, after the end of the Indonesian occupation in 1999, due to the restrictive political situation during that time, which precluded opportunities to conduct fieldwork research in the area, as the anthropologists Andrew McWilliam (2005) and David Hicks (2011) pointed out. In addition, the first anthropological studies were conducted only during the last century of the Portuguese colonisation, as highlighted by the anthropologists Lúcio Sousa (2010a, 39-42) and Maria Schouten (2001). And most of the studies conducted before the end of the Portuguese colonisation, were conducted by missionaries and administrative colonial representatives (Sousa 2010a, 40). However, with the Restoration of the Independence in 2002, the literature on Timor-Leste has flourished and there is a vast anthropological literature covering many different topics, included heritage. A valuable aspect to be taken into consideration with regards to post-independence research on Timor-Leste is the creation of the Timor-Leste Studies Association (TLSA), established in 2005.[28] Unlike other former Portuguese colonies, for whom similar associations have not been created, Timor-Leste scholars have the opportunity of sharing their research and knowledge of their fields of studies, often organising intellectual exchanges via conferences and edited volumes, often in different languages (English, Indonesian, Portuguese and Tetun). The TLSA includes many different disciplines and topics related to Timor-Leste: anthropology, archaeology, geography, history, linguistics, religious studies, but also agronomy, economics, politics and others.

Despite the many difficulties that Timor-Leste has been facing to become a strong country, with a sustainable economy, good infrastructures and a good education as well as health systems, the government has included national heritage as part of the national development plan from the very

[27] See CAVR (2006) and Taylor (1999) for details on the human rights violations conducted during the Indonesian military occupation, as well as on detailed statistical analysis on conflict-related deaths. For a detailed chronology of the events occurred between the 1970s until 2002, see the final Chronology.
[28] *Cf*. https://tlstudiesorg.wordpress.com, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

beginning (*cf.* Plano Estratégico de Deselvolvimento 2002). Heritage has in fact become a central issue of the national development, not just in Timor-Leste, but throughout Asia, as Tim Winter and Patrick Daly have pointed out (2012). What the authors call "heritage culture" (12) has shaped the contemporary social and political life and values of many different countries of the area, such as China, Indonesia, India and Thailand – just to mention some. Heritage has been often used by national governments as an emblem of policies revolved towards sustainability, through tourism, urban requalification, international aids and reduction of poverty (25). Heritage presents itself as a *trait d'union* between modernity and traditions. Winter and Daly's analysis is particularly relevant in this regard. These authors highlight the fact that the language of what they define "heritage culture" often moves from "previously constructed hierarchies of the traditional/modern", in what they define as "coloniality" of heritage (26), that echo previous colonial discoursive practices. Many of the national heritage policies throughout South East Asia capitalise "on a cultural economy of the exotic and primitive" (26), which origin has to be traced back to previous colonial categorisations. Other scholars, such as Denis Byrne (1991; 2014), Himanshu Prabha Ray (2019) and Christina Kreps (2009), analysing the heritage-making processes of many different countries in South and South East Asia have pointed out the preeminence of the Western and secular perspective on the safeguarding of local natural and cultural assets. Far from being governmentalities or *dispositifs* (Harrison 2016) developed in the post-colonial era, the policies regarding the protection of contemporary natural and cultural heritage throughout Asia are often the prosecution of previous colonial policies, that systematically deny the local and 'popular' regimes of values in which these objects are interpreted (Byrne 2014; Prabha Ray 2019).

I suggest that this perspective is helpful for the analysis of the current East Timorese heritage policies that the government has implemented and the traditional and cultural elements that both the state and other governmental and paragovernmental institutions have recognised as natural as well as cultural heritage. As mentioned earlier, a first ambivalence is within the government's gaze over traditions. Customs and traditional practices are presented within the development plan as reasons of the late modern development of Timor-Leste as a nation, but at the same time, other cultural elements are meant to be preserved and safeguarded, not just as symbols of the common national identity, but also for tourism purposes. The theoretical references I take into consideration in my thesis aim to bring together the so-called Critical Heritage Studies theory to discuss and question the Timor-Leste's heritage-making process – which has not been analysed through this lense yet. Concurrently, I suggest that some of the themes dicussed by the latest anthropological literature on Timor-Leste, as well as on Eastern Indonesia, can help understand some of the problematic assumptions of the national AHD. Namely, the anthropological literature can help in the understanding of *uma lulik*'s buildings as symbolic representations of origin groups, more than just monumental buildings. Secondly, many

scholars working on Timor-Leste as well as in other areas of Eastern Indonesia have pointed out the interconnections between the people and the place they inhabit, that are often inhabited by non-human agencies. On the one hand, this anthropological lense helps me to question the dichotomic division between cultural and natural heritage (see chapter I). Thirdly, some scholars have discussed the role of the ritual experts (*lia nain*, T.), pointing out both the existence of local disputes related to traditional knowledge, as well as the entanglements between local and national power and authority, embodied by local *lia nain*. These theoretical frames were helpful in order to question the idea of community implied by the national and international AHD, as well as the role of the 'experts' within the AHD.

Traditions, local beliefs and material culture have always been present in the literature concerning Timor-Leste, since the Portuguese colonisation of the territory. Lúcio Sousa points out that *uma lulik* have been extensively analysed by the anthropological literature on Timor-Leste since the Portuguese colonisation, focusing on the symbolic relations between the tangible dimension of the architectures and the social and ritual dimensions surrounding *uma lulik*. Throughout history, *uma lulik* have undergone different processes of scrutiny, from destruction to heritagisation, not just during the Portuguese colonisation (2017), but also during the Indonesian military occupation (Fidalgo Castro 2015). The ambivalence characterizing the late Portuguese colonisation is interesting to scrutinise. Portuguese missionaries and colonial administrators have tried to destroy *uma lulik*, both the buildings and the social, ritual and spiritual configuration they signify (Sousa 2017). In fact, not just the *uma lulik* buildings were destroyed, but the missionaries attempted to eliminate the spiritual beliefs attached to them (Bovensiepen and Delgado Rosa 2016; Delgado Rosa 2017; McWilliam, Palmer, Shepherd 2014).

Lulik - a term that has been translated as 'sacred', 'potent' and 'taboo', is a concept that finds correspondences across many East Timorese languages.[29] Josh Trindade defines *lulik* as "core of the Timorese value" (2012), representing a moral as well as a juridical source. According to Trindade, the word refers to the non-human realm containing the divine creator and the spirits of the ancestors, including sacred regulations that dictate relationships between people, people and nature, and people and non-human dimensions. Given its complex ontological nature, it is very hard to translate *lulik* with a single word that can take into consideration all of its semantic aspects, as some authors have pointed out. David Hicks (1976, 25) translates the word as sacred, as opposed to profane, from a Durkheimian perspective. Elizabeth Traube (1986), who conducted her ethnographic research among the Mambae ethnolinguistic community in the 1970s (immediately before the Indonesian military occupation of Timor-Leste), describes *luli* (Mambae) "not [as] an essence, but a relationship […], a boundary between

[29] For example, in Makassae *lulik* is translated as *falun*; in Fataluku as *tei*; in Kemak and Naueti, *luli*, and in Bunak *po* (McWilliam and Palmer 2014, 304). According to the International Linguistic Archive *Ethnologue*, 20 local languages exist in Timor-Leste, *cf*. https://www.ethnologue.com/country/TL/languages, accessed on 30.11.2020.

things" (143), to stress that *lulik* is not an inherent quality of a thing or being, but an attribute given by the same act of separation of the thing or being from the everyday life and world. Lúcio Sousa stresses the conceptual proximity between *lulik* and taboo, stressing the dangerous power that *lulik* might have and, at the same time, distancing it from the Catholic 'sacred' (Sousa 2010a, 31; 2017, 416-417). Alberto Fidalgo Castro and Enrique Alonso Población (2017) by analysing domestic and everyday circumstances, suggest that *lulik* should be understood as the codification of the appropriate ways of establishing relationships with other entities, people and spirits. Judith Bovensiepen (2014a) argues that *lulik* implies reciprocal relations and exchanges between humans and non-humans (ancestors, spirits, nature) through sacrifices, and as well between living human beings, since *lulik* is used to claim authority by some Houses over others. In her analysis, Bovensiepen stresses the importance of recognising differentiation and identification as key processes that shape the social practices surrounding *lulik*, valued as a moral source. She translates *lulik* as 'potency' or 'potent', stressing in this way its agency, being a vital energy able to animate places, *uma lulik* or objects, yet potentially dangerous and, hence, connected to prohibitions.

The term *lulik* has been subject to many foreigners' interpretations over centuries (i.e by missionaries, colonisers, anthropologists, NGOs workers) (McWilliam, Palmer, Shepherd, 2014; Tsuchiya 2019) and the term has been closely connected to how outsiders understood East Timorese cultural traditions. Kisho Tsuchiya (2019) remarks that the term "came to be understood as an essential part of the unique Timorese identity" in the recent post-independence period (94). The author also suggests that this "essentialist nativism" (94), as he calls it, is the historical result of the negative connotation assigned to the term by Portuguese missionaries, as *lulik* was to them a clear sign of pagan superstitions. David Hicks mentions that back in the 1960s, during his first fieldwork in Vikeke, people questioned his interest in what they considered 'backwards' and 'pagan' – namely, the rural and customary East Timorese culture (2017, 44). Discrimination directed towards East Timorese cultural values clearly emerges from the historical analysis of the Portuguese colonial documentation (Delgado Rosa 2017; Péllissier 2007, or. 1996; Tsuchiya 2019). The anthropologist Frederico Delgado Rosa (2017) has analysed different religious accounts from the last period of the Portuguese colonisation in Timor-Leste (c. 1910-1974). He discusses the Portuguese missionaries' interpretations of the local traditions and beliefs. These were often described as pagan or primitive practices, which hence had to be destroyed, especially the *uma lulik* and the objects stored in them. However, despite the missionaries' description of these beliefs as 'barbaric', in antithetical opposition to their Catholic counterparts, the missionaries translated *lúlic* (or. in Portuguese) as sacred, intangible and forbidden (38-41) admitting, in this way, the spiritual and immaterial importance of those beliefs but also, implicitly, creating a bridge between the Catholic sacred and the East Timorese *lulik*.

The Portuguese anthropological research conducted during the Portuguese colonisation focused on the analysis of supposedly 'primitive' characteristics of the East Timorese society. Fundamental, in this sense, was the *Missão Antropológica de Timor* (Pt., Portuguese Anthropological Mission), conducted between 1953 and 1954 by the anthropologist António de Almeida, along with Rui Cinatti and Mendes Corrêa, who developed extensive studies concerning the biological characteristics of the different East-Timorese communities, as well as their material culture features (Castelo 2017 633-635; Shouten 2001; Sousa 2010a, 39). On the one hand, physical anthropologists and Portuguese colonial administrators measured bodies and skulls in order to prove an allegedly biological racial diversity among human beings, as Ricardo Roque observes (2017). Roque conducted an incredibly interesting archival journey regarding a collection of East Timorese skulls stored in the Coimbra Museum, in Portugal, arguing the 'parasitic symbiosis' between the East Timorese and the colonial power (2010). Another important archive research concerning the missionary activities in Timor-Leste was conducted by Vicente Paulino. Paulino (2011) analysed the ways in which the traditional local culture was interpreted by the Catholic Church in the *Seara* journal, and, more generally, how the Portuguese colonial presence contributed to the East-Timorese nation-building process.

Local crafts such as *tais*, pottery, goldsmith works and bamboo carving were described as aesthetically pleasant and as 'proof' of the local 'ability', but at the same time 'backwards' expressions of the 'savage' mind of the 'indolent' East Timorese people (see Silva and Sousa 2015, 9-10). The aesthetics and the tangible dimension of objects and goods were considered the relevant aspect of the local material culture (Paulino 2015; Sousa 2017, 421-425), while the social and cultural meanings and values attached to them, were excluded or left aside from this kind of narrative. The climax of the analysis focused on the material dimension of the potent houses as expressions of the local handicrafts, is given by the volume entitled *Arquitectura Timorense*, result of the colonial 'scientific mission' (*missão científica*, Pt.), undertaken by Ruy Cinatti and other Portuguese researchers in 1958 (Cinatti, Almeida and Sousa Mendes 1987).[30] Cinatti analysed the local handicraft too, presenting them as 'artistic representation and motif' of the East Timorese identity (1987). The author's goal was to create a *repertoire* of the local art and craftmanship, so to register its presumed extinction (Silva and Sousa 2015, 16), perfectly in line with the ethnographies of that time, which aim most of the time was registering traditions and cultures that supposedly were disappearing. Christina Kreps, analysing different non-Western ways of preserving heritage (among which Indonesian examples), pointed out that the creation of lists and the 'rescuing' mission for the safeguard of ICH "echoes the sentiments behind 19th century 'salvage ethnography'" (2009, 203). In 2016 in the Museu Nacional de Etnologia of

[30] See also the recent review of the volume *Arquitectura Timorense* by Lúcio Sousa (2020).

Lisbon was inaugurated an exhibition entitled "Arquitecturas Timorenses: Miniaturas do Mundo" (Pt., East Timorese Arquitectures: Miniatures of the World).[31] The exhibition constitutes a tribute to the authors of the volume *Arquitectura Timorense* Ruy Cinatti, Leopoldo Castro de Almeida and António Sousa Mendes. Taking by reference the seven types of *uma lulik* that the team considered as emblematic of seven different districts of Timor-Leste (*i.e.*, Bobonaro, Baukau, Lautem, Maubisse, Oecussi, Suai, Vikeke), the exhibition presents a selection of objects from several collections of the museum, among which the set of architectural elements collected by Ruy Cinatti, as well as miniatures of *uma lulik*.[32]

The primitivistic gaze characterising the Portuguese colonisation, aimed to preserve and save what was supposedly destined to be destroyed – *i.e* the local material culture (Silva and Sousa 2015, 11-12), was then followed by the Indonesian policies related to local crafts, objects and sites – of which, unfortunately, we do not have as much data as for the previous period. During the Indonesian military occupation, *uma lulik*'s architectures were included as part of the multiform national heritage-making process. The Indonesian Suharto's "New Order" (1967-1998) was based on a national ideal encompassing and embracing the diversity of the Indonesian archipelago, including the territory of East Timor that, by that time, was the 29th Province of the Republic of Indonesia (known as Timor Timur). A symbol of the Indonesian motto 'unity in diversity' is the *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah* (B.I, Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park), Jakarta's recreational open-air area that reproduces in miniature the Indonesian archipelago. The park constitutes a synthesis of the Indonesian material culture, reproducing the *rumah adat* (B.I, potent house, a synonym of the Tetun *uma lulik*) of all the different provinces constituting the Republic of Indonesia. Each reproduction of the *uma adat* is in fact a pavilion, storing clothing, dances and other objects of the province represented. The park, inaugurated in 1975 by the will of Siti Hartinah, Suharto's wife, can be considered a historical trace of the Suharto's New Order government (1968-1998) way of conceptualising and displaying heritage, as recently pointed out by Alberto Fidalgo Castro (2015). Despite the Indonesian attempts of creating an imagined community encompassing all the internal ethnic and religious differences, many were and still are the divisions within Indonesia: the Timor-Leste's case was probably the most paradigmatic among the different fights and conflicts within the Indonesian nation (Stodulka and Röttger-Rössler 2014; Varshney 2008).

In his analysis concerning the role of *uma lulik* in contemporary Timor-Leste, Alberto Fidalgo Castro argues that the creation of SEAC started a process of aestheticization of the material elements of the traditional culture, leaving aside other important local cultural meanings. This aestheticization

[31] Source https://mnetnologia.wordpress.com/2016/09/02/inauguracao-da-exposicao-arquitetura-timorense/, last accessed on 20.12.2020.
[32] *Cf.* https://www.e-cultura.pt/evento/4415, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

process has its origin or, at least, precedent in the former colonial Indonesian asset (Fidalgo Castro 2015). The Portuguese research developed during the Portuguese colonisation, however, suggest that an aestheticization of material elements as well as the objectification of cultural elements has to be traced back to the Portuguese colonisation. The Portuguese policies were focused on reconverting *uma lulik* for tourist and commodification purposes, listing them as *arte colonial*,[33] along with other craft expressions (Paulino 2015; Sousa 2011, 94), thus leaving completely aside their ritual and practical significance. Interestingly, also during the rules of the *Pancasila* (*B.I.*) ideology[34], a very similar process occurred (Acciaioli 1985; Traube 1995).

The Western perspective towards heritage is so pervasive that some East Timorese ICH experts have argued that *uma lulik* can be considered as pre-colonial forms of museums. Eugenio Sarmento, for example, *lia nain* who collaborates with SEAC and KNTLU argues that in both the *uma lulik* and Western museums objects and heirlooms with important historical and artistic values are stored. In his perspective, the aim of *uma lulik* is to preserve these objects, removing them from the everyday-life and dignifying them within dedicated spaces: the *uma lulik* (Sarmento 2011).[35] Janet Hoskins (1994; 1998) and Webb Keane (1997) propose quite interesting arguments related to the status and meaning of both ritual as well as everyday objects and goods in different parts of Eastern Indonesia. Keane argues that the goods exchanged as gifts during the public transactions represent their trans-actors as well (Keane 1997, 78-81). Hoskins explores the ways in which the historical past as well as the biographical past is represented by ritual as well as everyday objects (1998). "The ancestral cult is centred on the house and its valuables, which must be named in genealogies along with the names of each of the ancestral founders" (Hoskins 1998, 9). The anthropologist argues that heirlooms are material and tangible evidence of the past, similarly to what James Fox had suggested in relation to *uma lulik* in Timor-Leste (1980, 12; 2006, or. 1993, 2). Exploring Houses, both in their tangible dimension (*uma lulik*) and in their social configuration, the anthropologist James Fox suggests that the House is a "mnemonic cultural design for the remembrance of the past" (2006, or. 1993, 4) and a "theatre of memories" (23).

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Besides being the head of the Portuguese *missão científica* in Timor-Leste (1953-1955), Cinatti acted as a gatekeeper to a number of cultural and social anthropologists who conducted research in

[33] Namely ceramics, woven baskets, jewelry and sculpture. *Cf*. Paulino 2015, 85-93; Cinatti 1987.

[34] *Panca* (Five) *Sila* (Principles) are the fundamental precepts of the Indonesian nation (belief in Supreme Being; humanitarism; nationalism; representative government; social justice). Originally articulated by Sukarno in 1945, the five principles define the Indonesian nation and, hence, its citizens. *Cf*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pancasila; http://www.indonesianembassy.org.uk/human_right- 2.htm, last accessed on 20.12.2020.

[35] I take this opportunity to thank Lúcio Sousa for sharing a previous version of Sarmento's paper with me.

the territory between the 1960s and 1970s (Nygaard-Christensen and Bexley 2017, 6), since "foreign researchers who wished to do fieldwork in the Portuguese colonies had to ask for official authorization and their practices in the field were monitored by the Overseas Ministry" (Castelo 2017, 632). The first ethnographic mission organised and supervised by Cinatti was composed by the French anthropologists Louis Berthe, Henri Campagnolo, Brigitte Clamagirand, Maria Olimpia Lameiras-Campagnolo and Claudine Friedberg. As Cláudia Castelo highlights, Cinatti assigned to each of them a field-site and an ethnic group to investigate (2017, 640). Louis Berthe conducted his research among the Bunak ethno-linguistic group, between West and East Timor, together with Claudine Friedberg, who focused on ethno-botanical and ritual aspects among the same group (Friedberg 1982). Henri Campagnolo and Maria Olimpia Lameiras-Campagnolo which initial field-site was the area between Laclubar (Manatuto) and Baukau, among the Kairui community, later moved to Loré, in the eastern part of the island, among the Fataluku (*see* Campagnolo 1979; Castelo 2017, 634-635). Finally, Brigitte Clamagirand's research (1980; 1982) setting were the seven villages comprising the Marobo community of the Kemak-Ema. In her historical analysis of the first anthropologists doing fieldwork in Timor-Leste, Cláudia Castelo stresses that Cinatti and the first anthropologists conducting fieldwork in Timor-Leste that were just mentioned, were interested in the structuralist "Leiden School" approach, namely with the focus on the study of 'Indonesian social structures', such as the study of descent, alliances and cosmological classifications based on 'oppositions' (Castelo 2017, 638). The "Leiden School" theoretical approach would in fact inform many different researches conducted throughout the Indonesian archipelago from the 1930s until recent years (Allerton 2013, 6-8).

Along with the French équipe of anthropologists, Cinatti managed to convince the colonial administration to give the permission of conducting research also to other foreign anthropologists interested in cultural and social dynamics (Nygaard-Christensen and Bexley 2017, 6). Namely, Elizabeth Traube, who conducted research among the Mambae ethnolinguistic group (Traube 1986); David Hicks, among the Tetun Terik (1976) and finally Shepard Forman, among the Makasae in Baukau (1980). These are the first historical anthropological references regarding the study of social, linguistic and cultural issues within the East Timorese society. Their research was all conducted in rural areas with the aim of understanding the social organization of the societies observed. These anthropologists focused on material features of *uma lulik*'s buildings as well as on the social features of Houses, among specific East-Timorese communities (Castelo 2017; Nygaard-Christensen and Bexley 2017). David Hicks, among the Caraubalo Tetun Terik community in the district of Vikeke, stressed the importance of the structure of *uma lulik* as a metaphor of the body (both of a human being and of a buffalo), a living entity connecting the human and the ancestral realms through its internal womb, where ritual objects are stored (Hicks 1976, 56-66). Brigitte Clamagirand (1980; 1982) was mainly concerned with the social organization of the Ema (or Kemak), structured around the *umar no apir* (house and hearth),

"the minimal social unit of Ema society" (1980, 141) and extended kin group, through which a series of relationships among the members are provided (solidarity between elder/younger brothers; alliances between wife-givers and wife-takers). Among the Makasae described by Shepard Forman, the *oma bese*, or sacred houses, represent the descendant group, characterised by exchanges between the members, described as a fundamental value for the continuity of the social groups, through descendant and alliances (1980, 152-177). Through the mobilisation of kinship alliances, the economic resources are re-distributed with the aim of building new *uma lulik*. In this case, the preservation of relationships among the Houses is vital for their perpetration and, hence, for the existence of the community (Traube 1986, 204-205).

As Angie Bexley and Maj Nygaard-Christensen observe, these earlier studies described these societies as supposedly "untouched" and "isolated" from historical and political events, with the exception of Elizabeth Traube's ethnography, which included observations concerning the Portuguese presence on the territory (Bexley and Nygaard-Christensen 2013, 6-7). All these studies were lately reconfigured within another important research tradition: the 'Comparative Austronesian Project', which aim was to compare anthropological, linguistic and archaeological information concerning the vast Austronesian world (Bellwood, Fox and Tryon 2006, or. 1995). One of the main topics analysed was the ritual house (in Timor-Leste *uma lulik*), as both a buildings and a social organization's category, central for the understanding of social relations and exchanges among the different communities, not just in Timor-Leste but also in other part of the Austronesian world (Fox, 1980; and Fox 2006, or. 1993). More recently, Catherine Allerton, by highlighting the continuities between the "Leiden School" approach and the "Comparative Austronesian Project", based at the Australian National University, questions the social, cosmological and social coherence emerging from these studies, that "ignore or trivialize the messy and contradictory aspects of what eastern Indonesian people say and do in everyday life" (Allerton 2013, 7).

Many of the ethnographic studies conducted in post-independent Timor-Leste are influenced or inspired by the two research traditions mentioned, in which the House is the core element for the understanding of the social organisation of the different communities throughout Timor-Leste. In addition, the comparative perspective of the theoretical approach, made possible the exchange between scholars doing research within the vast Austronesian world (Adelaar and Himmelmann 2005; Fox and Sather 2006) and, in particular, in Eastern Indonesia (Chambert-Loir and Reid 2002; Fox 1980; Reuter 2006; Schefold, Domenig and Nas 2003; Vischer 2009). According to these anthropological interpretations, the term House, for many groups in Timor-Leste as well as in Eastern Indonesia, has to be understood as a social entity, more than just a physical structure. A House thus refers to a social group, comprising several generations, from the ancestors to the future generations (Bovensiepen

2015; Friedberg 1980; 1982; McWilliam and Traube 2011, 17; Molnar, 2011; Sousa 2008, 198-204; 2010a, 151-153; Traube 1995, 45-46).

Origin groups are connected by relations of precedence among them, which can be usually expressed by the botanical metaphor branch/tip-trunk (Fox 2006, or. 1993, 17). The constitution of new Houses is usually conducted by the younger sibling, considered branches of the former and more ancient Houses, which represent the trunk (McWilliam and Traube 2011, 11; Fox 2006, or. 1993, 9-13; Waterson 2006, 234-236). 'House' constitutes a metaphorical and a double term defining not only a physical building, but also, and most importantly, the social, symbolical and ritual relations of the community related with it, as several anthropological studies have observed (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Fox 1980; 2006, or. 1993; Waterson 1990; McWilliam 2005). The House designates particular groups of people belonging to a community which also includes the ancestors as well as the sacred territory from which the community originated in mythical times (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995, 21-22; Fox 1980, 12). Thus, Houses are genealogically linked to ancestors, as well as to the physical places connected with the House's founders and the social relations created throughout time by alliances. The physical structures representing Houses, which my interlocutors referred to *uma lulik*, *uma adat* and *uma lisan* interchangeably, represent territorial markers of the expansions and migrations of the former and past founders of the House, indicating temporal as well as spatial continuities between the ancestors and the contemporary social groups (McWilliam 2005, 31-34; McWilliam and Traube 2011, 9-15; Sousa 2008, 198).

The historical as well as spatial paths of the Houses are linked with their origins, which is another paramount topic of the anthropological literature concerning the Austronesian world (Jolly and Mosko 1994; Fox and Sather 2006). Origins are defined not only through the criteria of ancestry, but also by means of the notions of place and alliance (Fox 2006, or. 1993, 4-5). The journeys of the ancestors and their social interactions with other groups are ritually displayed in oral narratives, relating the genealogies of the Houses. Given the importance of the spatial expansion of the Houses throughout time, the anthropologist James Fox defined these genealogies as *topogenies*: "a topogeny represents a projected externalization of memories" (1997a, 8), a ritual recitation of the migration of the ancient groups, as well as the transmission of supernatural and ancestral objects throughout the generations (Fox 1997b, 93-99; McWilliam 1997). Origin narratives constitute the social knowledge of the House group and legitimise its existence through time and space, by claiming the possession of the land (Siikala 2006, 47-53; Fox 2006, or. 1996, 10). For these reasons, the connections between the Houses and the spatial landscape where they originated are important for the local East Timorese communities, forming a real cultural landscape, embedded of socio-cultural practices and memories.

Uma lulik's buildings are tangible representations of the relatedness existing among the members of the group and between the living community and the dead (Fox 2006, or. 1993). Generally,

uma lulik can be repositories of ancestral objects, providing "physical evidence of a specific continuity with the past" (Fox 2006, or. 1993, 1). These objects are cultural collective memories as well as evidence of the supernatural, ritual and political power of the ancestors over the land (Fox 1997b, 90). The House is then conceived as a "kinship group, a ritual entity and political unity" (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995, 21), which provides cultural identity and social continuity throughout history. Houses represent local cosmologies through which it is possible to understand the world (McWilliam 2005, 30) and their physical and symbolic power is paramount.

Recently, some scholars conducting research in Timor-Leste, as well as in other parts of Eastern Indonesia, have highlighted dimensions related to the House's perspective that have not received much attention. Namely, Catherine Allerton focuses on the permeability between ordinary houses and the landscape in Flores, focusing mainly on the latter, which is described as a "potent landscape" by the anthropologist (Allerton 2013). Allerton argues that in Flores marriages and the process of kinship are inseparable from the landscape where they take place, and that agencies inform everyday houses' buildings (2013). She defines the landscape of Flores as imbued with a specific form of 'agricultural animism', informed by ritual practices actively rejecting Catholicism (Allerton 2009). Judith Bovensiepen in Funar (Manatuto, Timor-Leste) pointed out the connection between Houses, ancestral knowledge and their relation to the land and the potent (*lulik*) elements inhabiting the land (Bovensiepen 2015). According to Bovensiepen, origin houses can be part of the landscape and a crucial site of relationships of reciprocity between the living members of the House, the founding mythical ancestors of the group and the physical territory connected to the ancestors (Bovensiepen 2009, 325-328; 2015, 30-48). She argues that the Catholic sacred, instead of being opposed to the spiritual agencies of the landscape, is considered as an evidence of the *lulik* potency (2009). In addition, an important aspect of Bovensiepen's research for this thesis is her focus on the political authority embedded within ancestral knowledge that *lia nain* guard (Bovensiepen 2014c). Place and communal prosperity and wellbeing are crucial topics in the work of Bovensiepen (2015), Pyone Myat Thu (2020) and Susana Barnes (2011), who have discussed the restoration of the relation between the spiritual custodians of potent lands that were abandoned during the Indonesian military occupation (due to forced relocations). Lisa Palmer (2015), who has conducted her research in Baukau (the same region where I conducted my fieldwork) focuses on another paramount element of the landscape: water. Palmer argues that water has agency and informs what she defines "inclusive sociality" (56). Springs of water represent the source of communication between the material and immaterial world, while also informing ritual, customary as well as social practices in the territory (2015). The relation between humans and their landscape in Timor-Leste has been intensively studied in the last years by a quite vast number of scholars. Finally, Bronwyn Winch argues that the 'spiritual landscape' in Timor-Leste

informs many different socio-cultural aspects, among which the ways people envision social and personal security (Winch 2017).

Allerton's (2013) and Bovensiepen's (2015) perspectives challenge the historical anthropological analysis of Houses in Eastern Indonesian, not just because they point out the connections between people and the land they inhabit. The anthropological literature concerning Houses in the areas of Eastern Indonesia, has historically recognised ritual representatives (in Timor-Leste, *lia nain*) as the best and most important interlocutors when discussing customary and traditional issues in social and cultural anthropology (Allerton 2013, 7-8). Catherine Allerton, during her fieldwork in Flores, explicitly avoided considering only the words of those who are considered the 'ritual experts' (Allerton 2013, 7-8). Bovensiepen explores the hierarchy existent between different *lia nain* in the Laclubar area (2014c; 2015, 51-72). All the *lia nain* met by the anthropologist claim to possess truthful ancestral words, despite the inconsistencies present in the potent words they claim to know. *Lia nain* avoid public competitions among them and Bovensiepen argues that is precisely the secrecy related to the 'truthful' words that turn ritual speakers and their concealed words so powerful (2014c). Lúcio Sousa, discussing the role of *lia nain* in post-independent Timor-Leste, points out that the customary ritual authorities are not only crucial actors in rural and small-scale contexts, but also at a more national and state level. He argues that their involvement in the *suku* administrations, as well as their participation in state-sponsored ceremonies turned them into actors that give legitimacy to the national authorities (Sousa 2019). The ambiguities between the state level and the traditional and customary authorities are analysed also by Kelly Silva. She argues that customary power dynamics have been deployed by the state in order to impose its governmentalities, hence changing the traditional structure of the rural power dynamics (2014). Silva's research takes into account also the redefinition and negotiation of 'tradition' and exchange practices between the urban context of Dili and the *foho* (T., rural and mountainous areas). She argues that the *foho* has been historically opposed to Dili and urban areas, being urbanity ideally connected to modernity as well as statal and national power, while the rural areas have been connected to the customary traditions and laws (*lisan*, T.), as well as to potent objects and places, *uma lulik*, the worship of the ancestors and traditional rituals and ceremonies (Silva 2011; see also Grenfell 2015 on the same topic). Silva (2011) observes that in post-colonial Timor-Leste the authority of the *lia nain* who is traditionally connected to rural areas is often juxtaposed to different kind of authorities linked to Dili (such as jobs, money, schools and knowledge). In addition, Silva's research explores the relation between modernity and tradition, focusing on the role of marriage ritual exchanges (*barlake*, T.) in Dili (2013; 2019a; 2019b).

Recently, Renata Nogueira da Silva (2019) has discussed the ways in which the cultural policies deployed by the State have been produced and transformed cultural practices among Houses and *uma lulik*. She argues the centrality of *uma lulik*, of both rural and urban communities, as a ritual pole but

also a paramount element within the national heritage-making process. The literature regarding heritage in Timor-Leste has mostly focused on *uma lulik*. On the one hand, on the objectification and commodification that the government imposes over the cultural practices (Fidalgo Castro 2015), giving prominence to the tangible aspects of the buildings (Sousa 2008). On the other hand, on the frictions between the national governance and the customary local logics of precedence and origin (Fidalgo Castro 2015, 73; Hicks 2013). The contemporary national heritage-making process carried out by the Timor-Leste government can be analysed as a form of Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD, Smith 2006). This discourse emerged, becoming a *dispositif* itself (Harrison 2016, 195-196), that "constructs not only a particular definition of heritage, but also an authorized mentality, which is deployed to understand and deal with certain social problems centred on claims to identity" (Smith 2006, 52). The current programs developed by the governmental apparatuses, aimed to encourage the production of local handcraft, denounce the endangerment of the local traditions and material culture (*cf.* Gárate Castro, 2010; SEAC and KNTLU, 2017; UNESCO Jakarta et alii 2015). They suggest the use of 'proper' materials in the construction of *uma lulik* (SEAC and KNTLU, 2017; Gárate Castro, 2010), or in the making of traditional handicrafts (UNESCO Jakarta et alii 2015). Moreover, the national AHD clearly establishes a distinction between natural and cultural heritage. Sue O'Connor, Sandra Pannell and Sally Brockwell (2013) discussing the government decision of preserving the Konis Santana National Park as national natural heritage argue that the governmental perspective considers only the preservation of the natural diversity of the site, dismissing the cultural and ritual activities developed and performed by the local population.

Denis Byrne, who has conducted his research among aboriginal groups in Australia as well as in many different countries throughout South East Asia, in analysing the heritage-making processes in these areas observe that the social dimension and the social practices are often considered as "equivalent of heritage objects, places of natural landscapes" (Byrne 2009, 229). Similarly, Laurajane Smith observes that the only identity recognised by the AHD is the national one and the values related to heritage are considered as innate and self-evident in the practical manifestations of the nation (Smith 2006, 29-34). The Critical Heritage Studies' critical wave paved the ways for the reconfiguration of heritage as a set of active practices and discursive processes "engaged with the construction and negotiation of meaning through remembering" (Smith 2006, 66). These processes focus on remembering and commemoration as continually reworked and negotiated forms of heritage (2006). In this perspective, the Critical Heritage Studies consider dissonance (Meskell 2002) as an inherent part of heritage, especially in post-colonial and post-conflict contexts, where multiculturalism and different cosmologies and worldviews raise into question and/or reject the official national uses of history and memory (Harrison 2013, 140-165; Meskell 2002). As Byrne suggests (2014), these memories can be

interpreted as forms of *counter-heritage*: subversive oppositions against the nationalistic "ultra-visible truth claims" (236) in which the local minorities do not recognise themselves.

Several scholars working in Timor-Leste observe that frictions exist between the national and the 'local' or 'civilian' ways of remembering the past (Arthur 2019; Feijó and Viegas 2016; Grenfell 2015; Kent 2015; Kent and Feijó 2020; Kent and Kinsella 2014; Leach 2003; 2008; Sousa 2009). Michael Leach (2003; 2008) and Lia Kent (2015) point out that state discourse tends to misrecognise the contribution of the young people to the independence struggle within the "cultural heritage landscape" (Leach 2008, 154). The national political scene in Timor-Leste is still dominated by the old generation, and the hand-over to younger representatives seem to be quite arduous (Feijó 2015, 61-63). Unofficial or counter memories tend to question the legitimacy of the official national narrative, which is often selective and not inclusive. Some scholars discuss the marginalisation of young people (*gerasaun foun*) from the official national narrative deployed by the State (Bexley and Tchailoro 2013). Lia Kent and Naomi Kinsella (2014) denounce the exclusion of women from the national narrative of the heroes. Women are in fact often excluded from the material compensations that the State give to the former combatant and veterans. The official and national narratives prioritise the commemoration of the Resistance, that Kent defines as a selective memorialisation (Kent 2012). The celebration of the army, and the subsequent conception of citizenship based on a hyper-masculine, violent and armed identity is the topic analysed by Henri Myrttinen (2005). Catherine Arthur, in her analysis of the East Timorese national symbols points out the importance of the warrior (*aswain*, T.) "as a key military symbol of identity" (Arthur 2019, 74). In addition, Arthur defines *funu* (*struggle*, t.) and *terus* (suffering, T.) as the two core elements within the official representation of the nation (Arthur 2019, 30-35). The most extensive and well-documented research published in the immediate aftermaths of the Indonesian occupation is the *Chega!* Report (2006), result of the *Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor-Leste*. This report denounced the human rights violations against the civilian population occurred during the Indonesian occupation. Cemeteries and commemorative places have been built since 2002 by the State, in order to commemorate the many deaths occurred during the Indonesia military occupation (Feijó and Viegas 2017). Both statal-driven and more informal and private commemorations take place in contemporary Timor-Leste. As Damian Grenfell points out (2012), it is important to take into account that the private tributes do not necessarily contrast the national frame of memorialisation, but they could be interpreted as processes through which the communities try to restore their stability (Bovensiepen 2015; Grenfell 2012; Feijó and Viegas 2017; Palmer and McWilliam 2019). "Territorialities of the fallen heroes" (Feijó and Viegas 2017) characterise post-independent Timor-Leste, showing a plurality of configurations within the commemorative processes in Timor-Leste, both state-driven and community-based. Lia Kent (2015) points out also the silent dissent inherent to the commemorative unofficial practices. The recent violent past endured by

East Timorese people has led to frictions between the official commemorative discourse made by the State and other portions of the population. The national narrative deploys national symbols, monuments and statues as paramount elements fostering national unity (Arthur 2019, 71-104), recalling the Catholic values and the suffering endured by Jesus Christ (Barnes 2011). However, as Rui Feijó and Susana Viegas pointed out, the statal commemorative ceremonies and sites often do not include more "family-based and decentralised commemorations to their martyrs" (Feijó and Viegas 2017, 106-107). Death rituals are currently a contested site of struggle, where different actors contest the past (Traube 2020, 12). The East Timorese commemorative practices and death rituals remind the Vietnamese context analysed by Hoenik Kwon (2006), who points out that the Vietnamese state subordinate and often denigrates the customary religious practices connected to death. According to Kwon, the State aspires to remove the dead from the lineages and communities' landscapes, in order to place them within the national framework. However, these efforts are counterbalanced by traditional beliefs and practices of conceiving death, in which national heroes and ancestors collapse within kin relationships.

The post-independence East Timorese landscape is characterised by potent houses (*uma lulik*), heroes and ancestors, heritage politics and policies. In describing the post-conflict process in Vietnam, Byrne (2009) problematises the articulation of the local heritage discourse through the local perspective, which is engaged with the supernatural powers of the land and the ancestors, in a very similar way to the East-Timorese *lulik*. This interpretative cosmological framework challenges the Western Cartesian dualism (nature/culture; real/supernatural; tangible/intangible; human/non-human), questioning also the AHD categorisations and its practices (Smith 2006, 283-299). The violent past endured by the East Timorese population has produced local landscapes populated by restless spirits and ghosts, where most of the time the land has to be pacified in order to restore the stability between people and the environment they inhabit (Bovensiepen 2015; McWilliam and Traube 2011, 11; Palmer and McWilliam 2019). The ritual practices associated to *uma lulik* continue to be part of elaborated worldview intrinsically associated to the landscape (Sousa 2008; Bovensiepen 2009), which aim is to ensure the well-being of living communities.

CHAPTER I – TRANSLATING CONCEPTS

A translator is a traitor.
Latin proverb

Introduction

Translation is a word derived from the Latin *trans ferre*, meaning transfer, carry from one side to the other. It is the etymological origin of many other words existing in English nowadays, such as transmission, tradition, traitor, betrayal (in English, as well as in other European languages). Implicitly, then, the word translation is both a transmission, but also a betrayal. Translators are not neutral subjects: they are embedded in historical, social and cultural settings and these mediate their comprehension of the world. My fieldwork has been a constant attempt at translating local words and concepts and wondering whether they would fit into the English and Western definition of heritage. On the one hand, this chapter deals with the issue of the importance that people ascribe to transmission over generations and on the other hand how the East Timorese case study can contribute to questioning the UNESCO and 'Western' definitions of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

During my fieldwork, my local supervisor Vicente Paulino often invited me to present my research to his students and in conferences at the National East Timorese University (UNTL). In February 2018 he asked me to give an introductory lecture on the cultural and social meanings of the concept of heritage (*patrimóniu*, *T.*). *Patrimóniu* in Tetun has a Portuguese origin, and I was not sure that all the students knew its meaning. So, I began the lesson by presenting the etymology of the term *património* (Pt.). *Património* derives from the Latin *pater* (father) and *monus* (duty, obligation), so literally it represents the belongings that a father is supposed to leave and hand down to his offspring – namely, in terms of goods and material possessions. Nowadays, the word in Portuguese, as well as in other Romance languages (such as Italian and French, for example) has two main meanings: the belongings of a person and, figuratively, the set of cultural, artistic as well as natural assets and resources of a community or of a nation. As John Turnbridge and Gregory Ashworth point out in their definition of heritage, "the present selects an inheritance from an imagined past for current use and decides what should be passed on to an imagined future" (1996, 6). We pass on an ideal past that suits contemporary values and mindsets; for this reason, I suggest that – in a way – transmitting the past and heritage implies at the same time both a translation and a betrayal of the past into the present.

Many other scholars conceive heritage as a cultural process performed in the present and engaging with the past (Harrison 2013, 4; Harvey 2001; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006, 269; Smith 2006, 44-45; Turnbridge and Ashworth 1996). Within such a perspective, heritage has more to do with the present than with the past. Configuring it as an action, then, the word *heritage* becomes a verb or a

process rather than a noun, as argued by David Harvey (2001, 327) and heritage can be conceived primarily as intangible (Smith 2006), due to its discursive nature. As counter-argued by Rodney Harrison, though, heritage is always embedded within tangible elements (Harrison 2013, 14). Nonetheless, as Smith and Denis Byrne point out, heritage is always intangible, being a set of practices and discourses made upon a site, an object or a practice (Byrne, 2009; Smith 2006). Most importantly, *heritagisation* – the process of turning into heritage – "is an instrument of cultural power" (Harvey 2001, 327), which Smith defines as authorised heritage discourse (AHD), in a Foucauldian perspective (2006, 29-34) and Rodney Harrison defines as official heritage (2013, 14-20). Heritage is claimed by national governments as part of their national identities and this can be problematic in relation to intellectual property, namely with regard to indigenous peoples or minority groups within a nation state (Byrne, 2009; Hafstein 2018).

During the lecture I gave at UNTL, I explained that in Tetun the word *patrimóniu* can be considered a neologism, that is mostly used by the government actors and institutions involved in the politics and management of heritage. The students at UNTL told me that they never use this word in their everyday life. This did not strike me as odd at all: during my fieldwork, the word *patrimóniu* (T.) was used only in specific circumstances. In Timor-Leste, this term is largely used by the Secretary of Arts and Culture staff (SEAC) and the UNESCO Commission in Dili (KNTLU)[36] – so, by those directly involved in state heritage-making. It is hence not just a neologism, but also a technical word used by specialists, thus as part of a technical and administrative language. As soon as I arrived in Daralata (February 2017) and then also in Waikulale (September 2017), I realised that the meaning of *patrimóniu* (T.) was unclear to the majority of my interlocutors. They did not use the word at all, with the exception of the mayor (*Xefe de Postu Administrativu Venilale*, T.) and of the representative of the Secretary of Arts and Culture in Baukau (*see* Ch. III). The fact that people in Timor-Leste and in their everyday life do not use the word heritage (*patrimóniu*, T.) was a hint for me. On the one hand, heritage is not a universal concept, but it is embedded within a Euro-American legacy (see Smith, 2006); on the other hand, nowadays the term is used internationally, but in the East Timorese case, it is associated with administrative and legislative vocabularies. Patrick Daly and Tim Winter, discussing the contemporary meanings of heritage throughout Asia, write that "semantic ambiguity and confusion not only arise from the different ways the term has been linguistically loaded, but can also stem from its actual absence from a language" (Daly and Winter 2012, 8). However, this does not mean that in Timor-Leste people do not transmit practices, goods and possessions among generations; but this transmission has to be understood within the local socio-cultural context.

[36] *Sekretaria Estadu Arte no Kultura and Komisaun Nasionál UNESCO Timor-Leste* (T.).

How, then, can we translate the word heritage into Tetun? What are the implications of translating this term into another language? Which East Timorese cultural practices can be conceived as cultural heritage? To what extent can we conceive East Timorese social practices as intangible cultural heritage (ICH), as defined by UNESCO? What are the implications of turning a cultural element, both tangible (such as a building, for example) or intangible (such as a ritual) into ICH? Based on my fieldwork conducted in Venilale, I aim to ascertain to what extent words and concepts related to specific social and ritual practices can be considered as ICH in Timor-Leste. The fieldwork that I have conducted, focused on everyday practices and life, helped me understand some of these social and cultural features as heritage.

Another important aspect to be taken into consideration when discussing the heritage discourse is the role of experts within the heritage-making processes. Experts and professionals are in fact crucial actors in the legitimization and recognition of heritage and, hence, in the conservation ethos (Byrne 1991; Harrison 2013, 114-118; Smith 2006, 29-34). Monuments and museums have become physical manifestations representing the affirmation of the national identity (Graham, Ashworth and Turnbridge 2000; Smith 2006, 16-28), not just in Western scenarios but also in post-colonial ones (Anderson 1991, 82-89; Daly and Winter 2012). "Heritagisation itself has tradition" (Bendix 2009, 254) and has thus become a cultural practice itself throughout history. If on the one hand knowing the cultural context is fundamental in order to understand what could and should be selected and to be turned into heritage within a specific socio-cultural *milieu*, on the other hand, another important issue to be taken into consideration is the fact that nowadays international institutions (such as UNESCO, international NGOs and governmental institutes) demand anthropological expertise, making ethnographic knowledge a political as well as an economic instrument within heritage-making processes.

The conservation 'canon', in fact, validated by intellectual elites of experts and professionals (including anthropologists) throughout history, has been used in the service of political nationalisms and ideologies both in Western, colonial and post-colonial areas during the last three centuries (Byrne 1991, 229; Daly and Winter 2012; Geismar 2015, 74-75). As Rodney Harrison proposes, heritage can be thought as "a strategic socio-technical and/or bio-political assemblage composed of various people, institutions, apparatuses (*dispositifs*) and the relations between them" (2013, 35). The Foucauldian interpretation that Harrison (2013) gives of heritage can certainly facilitate the understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge embedded within heritage-making processes around the world, both in the past and nowadays and can thus illuminate the potential role that specialists (anthropologists, archaeologists, historians etc.) represent within the creation of heritage. Moreover, Harrison's perspective can also shed light on the local actors directly and indirectly involved in the legitimisation of heritage (topic that will be discussed in Chapters II and III). The UNESCO definition

suggests that ICH potentially empowers local communities. However, as heritage is a potential economic resource, it can become a tool of governance of one group over another (Bendix 2009, 263) – namely, of the national governmental apparatus over ethnic minority groups. Turning an object or a practice of everyday life into heritage concerns not just cultural, but also political and economic issues, which in anthropology are considered as components of culture at large (Bendix 2009). Through *heritagisation*, culture becomes an economic good (263), mainly for external subjects and actors. The ethnographic gaze, hence, can illuminate heritage-making processes, both because analysing them it can highlight the structures of power implied, and also because it can propose alternatives ways of conceiving heritage and promoting it.

Anthropologists constantly attempt to translate and build bridges between the realities they study and their own. However, it is paramount to acknowledge the power relations embedded in the act of translation too (Asad 1979) and, consequently, the fact that a cultural translation is never a neutral act (Sousa 2010b, 39). Cultural translation has to be understood as a "process of provisional sense making" (Jordan 2002, 101). In this first chapter, I aim to define elements of what I consider intangible cultural heritage in Timor-Leste, by recalling some aspects that were central during my fieldwork research in the area of Venilale, in an attempt to give a bottom-up perspective on what could be considered cultural heritage. The ethnographic lens, the long fieldwork experience and my attention to local and *emic* meanings and values can illuminate the understanding of what locally is valued and transmitted to the future generations. Moreover, the Venilale local ways of conceiving heritage may contribute to questioning the conservation ethos, based on tangible and monumental elements (Smith 2006).

The chapter is divided into four main sections and in each of them I present cultural elements that I consider paramount in East Timorese society and traditions, and I problematise their recognition as part of the tangible and/or intangible cultural heritage, namely *rikusoin* (T., resources, I.1); *bua malus* (T., chewing areca and betel, I.2); *fetosan umane* (T., exchanges between wife-givers and wife-takers, I.3) and the agency of the landscape (I.4). Starting from the answers that some of the students gave me during the lecture I mentioned earlier, in the first section (I.1) I delineate the importance of the concept of *rikusoin*, which can be literally translated as resources. However, the literal translation is not enough to understand the cultural and intangible values embedded in this concept. The subsequent sections of the chapter are attempts at culturally translating what *rikusoin* are, why they are so important within Timor-Leste and whether or not they can be understood as bottom-up attempts of producing heritage. *Rikusoin* can be goods and objects (sometimes considered potent, *lulik*, T.), but also natural resources, such as trees, springs of water and fields, hence blurring the Western dichotomy of nature/culture. In the second section of the chapter, then, I present what is defined as ICH, according to UNESCO (I.2), by illustrating a quite common and paramount social

practice in Timor-Leste, called *bua malus* (I.2.1). What I consider peculiar in this practice is that it is embedded in discourses of national pride, being considered a symbol of pre-colonial indigenousness; at the same time, shame and backwardness are also associated to it (I.2.2). The third section of the chapter explores the importance of *fetosan umane* (wife-givers and wife-takers) as the core social practice shaping relations within any origin group in Timor-Leste. I then problematize the recognition of the gifts (*rikusoin*, T.) exchanged between *fetosan umane* as ICH (I.3.1). These exchanges, in fact, are considered a threat to gender equality, implying in fact marriage exchanges in which not just goods and objects but also people are included – namely, women. Finally, the fourth and last section of the chapter focuses on the relations between social groups and environment, linking specific kin groups to specific pieces of lands (I.4). Some of the *rikusoin* (T., resources) I refer to in I.1 constitute a bridge between the natural environment and the cultural domesticated landscape. I finally propose that specific places in Timor-Leste could be recognised neither as national parks nor ICH, but as cultural landscape – as defined by UNESCO (I.4).

I.1 Resources and Houses: a first attempt to define heritage in Timor-Leste

As I mentioned in the introduction, my local supervisor asked me to give a lecture on the meanings of the word and concept of *patrimóniu* (T., the lecture was in Tetun), a linguistic calque[37] from the Portuguese word *património*. During the lecture I gave at UNTL, the few students who were more familiar with the Portuguese language suggested *rikusoin* as a way of translating *património* (Pt., *patrimóniu* in Tetun). This word is particularly appropriate, because it means possession, both private and collective, and the collective resources that are often associated with inheritance and to transmission and can therefore have affinities with both the concepts of *património* (Pt.) and heritage. *Rikusoin* is used in different contexts. Its first meaning is related to reaches or wealth (Williams-van Klinken 2008, 130). It is often used to refer to natural resources (*rikusoin natural*, T.), such as the natural gas and oil resources of the Timor Gap.[38] However, *rikusoin natural* is a neologism, a linguistic calque from the Portuguese '*recursos naturais'* and the English natural resources. But *rikusoin* in a more common and everyday use refers to resources and reaches belonging to a House. *Rikusoin* can

[37] In linguistics, a calque, or loan translation is a word or phrase taken from one language and translated literally into another language. In Tetun, especially in the high register language many are the loan words borrowed from Portuguese.

[38] The Timor Gap is a maritime area between the south coast of the island of Timor and Australia, whose boundaries have been disputed since the 1970s. Finally, in 2018 a treaty was signed by the two countries in order to settle the dispute about the exploitation of the natural resources. This specific use of the term *rikusoin* represents a Tetun loan translation both from Portuguese and English (*recursos naturais*, Pt) and it is commonly used by the medias or by governmental apparatuses.

refer to material goods and objects that have a special value and status within a certain community and are transmitted from generation to generation. More commonly, in fact, the term is used to refer to collective material belongings and goods, transmitted from the older to the younger generations within a descendant group. So, *rikusoin* includes natural elements, such as fields and rice-fields and specific kinds of trees that have economic, ritual and social importance, such as candlenut trees (*ai-kamii*, *T.*) or coffee trees. The term also includes forests or streams of water that often belong to a social group (House), or to a community living in an enclosed common area. Other examples given by the students in this sense were money (*osan*, T.), traditional hand-woven cloths (*tais*, T.), traditional swords (*surik*, T.) and gold and golden objects (*osan mean*, T.), traditional necklaces (*belak*, T.), as well as animals (buffaloes, cows, goats and pigs). At this point, it would be easy to translate *rikusoin* as in English (and in other European languages): natural and cultural resources. However, this would be an incomplete translation, because it does not take into consideration a very paramount cultural concept of the East Timorese reality, the House, to which all the objects I have just mentioned are related. Houses in Timor-Leste are social entities, as discussed by the anthropological literature (Bovensiepen 2015; Friedberg 1982; McWilliam, Traube 2011, 17; Molnar, 2011; Sousa 2008, 198-204; 2010a, 151-153; Traube 1995, 45-46). Therefore, House has to be understood in a metaphorical way, defining the group of people composing and belonging to it.

The so-called 'house-based societies' have been a classic topic in the anthropological literature. The first author to use this expression was Claude Lévi-Strauss in 1975, arguing that '*sociétes à maison'* constitute a hybrid form between kin-based and class-based social orders (1988, or. 1975), and in this respect the author uses the concept of *sociétes à maison* (often translated as 'house-based societies'), in an attempt to resolve the problems of both descent-group and alliance models used by the kinship theory until that moment. For Lévi-Strauss a house society is a "corporate body (or., *personne morale*) holding an estate made up of both material and immaterial wealth, which perpetuates itself through the transmission of its name, its goods, and its titles down a real or imaginary line, considered legitimate as long as this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or of affinity and, most often, of both" (1988, or. 1975, 174). Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones, influenced by Lévi-Strauss' argument, but also critical to his conceptual framework, reformulated it in a volume comparing different house societies of South East Asia and South America (Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 1995). Houses do not just represent only a way to categorise kinship, but the buildings are also conceptualised as social groups' physical and architectural representations.

> Rather than seeing in the house the birth of a new anthropological child of alliance and descent, it is this holistic potential of viewing houses 'in the round' which we would emphasize. The relation between building and group is multifaceted and contextually determined, the houses' role as a complex idiom for social groupings, as a vehicle to naturalize rank, and as a source of symbolic power being inseparable from the building itself (Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 1995, 20-21).

The anthropologist James Fox, in exploring the Eastern Indonesian context, focused on the importance of the social continuity that Houses can provide, stressing the centrality of the social and historical memory connected to Houses, often represented by ancestral objects stored in buildings, tangible evidence of the Houses' past (1980, 12; 2006, or. 1993, 2), hence connecting the building to the social entity. In her comparative work on Southeast Asian architectures, Roxana Waterson described houses as 'living' entities: animated, inhabited, potent and vital (1990, 115-138), as well as symbols of kinship (138-168). More recently, Catherine Allerton has pointed out in her analysis of ordinary houses in Flores that "the problem with the literature on 'house-based societies' is that it has led to analysis that (...) fail to connect houses with their wider landscape and pathways and fields" (Allerton 2013, 72). Allerton's analysis focuses on the agency of everyday homes and rooms, and the permeability and mobility of the building to the landscape, instead of focusing on the house as a fixed and built environment (44-72).[39]

In Venilale, *uma lulik* are physical representations of the House, meant as a social entity, including the living community, the ancestors and the future generations to come (McWilliam and Traube 2011, 11-17). In Venilale, the descendant is patrilinear and hence Houses are conceived as patrilineal too. In addition, a House also includes the marriages with other groups and Houses that have made possible the creation of the descendant.[40] In Venilale, *uma lulik* store potent objects (*sasaan lulik*, T.), believed to have belonged to the ancestors, as well as evidence of the alliances between groups. These objects represent the power of a House, and the bonds between different Houses and/or between the ancestors and natural elements (more on these topics later in I.3 and I.4). In Venilale, the goods (*rikusoin*, T.) that represent the belongings of a House could be many and diverse – like the ones mentioned earlier: fields and rice-fields, streams of water, stones, special types of trees used for ritual circumstances, buffaloes (*karau*, T.), horses (*kuda*, T.), pigs (*fahi*, T), and goats (*bibi*, T.). And also, traditional hand-woven cloths (*tais*, T.), traditional swords (*surik*, T.), gold and golden objects (*osan mean*, T.), traditional necklaces (*belak*, T.), money (*osan*, T.), statues, flags and drums. It is easy to conceive of a tree, a big animal such as a buffalo or a stream of water as a communal resource, to be split and used between different members of the same family or House. But what about a *tais*? Or a necklace? Why are these objects conceived as communal *rikusoin*?

[39] Allerton's argument is going to be central for the last paragraph of this chapter, where I discuss the relations between *uma lulik* and places in the landscape (see I.4). In Chapter III, where I focus on the national heritagisation process in Timor-Leste, that recognises as national heritage only the *uma lulik* buildings, I will take into account Allerton's invitation to go 'beyond the house' as an object (Allerton 2013, 72). However, it has to be taken into consideration the fact that Allerton focuses on every ay and ordinary houses, while my analysis mainly focuses on *uma lulik*, both in their architectural and social configuration.

[40] I further discuss the importance of alliances among Houses, *barlake* and *fetosan umane* in I.2.

A House is constituted by people linked by consanguineal and exogamic bonds. When two people want to get married, goods are usually exchanged between the extended families of the bride and the groom. These sets of exchanges are generally referred to as *barlake* (I.3, I.3.1). During my fieldwork in Venilale, *barlake* was always used by my interlocutors as an umbrella term covering all the different rites and meetings shaping the long process of the marriage exchanges between two families. However, the meaning of the word *barlake*, as well as its contents are often contested and interpreted in different ways (I.3.1) (Silva 2019a). The different steps shaping marriage exchanges, in fact, differ depending on the linguistic group and place of origin of the families involved. For a matter of practical convenience, my hosts as well as other people I have spoken to during my fieldwork, always referred to marriage exchanges as *barlake* and therefore I will do the same throughout the thesis. The goods that are usually exchanged as gifts and goods can be diverse, depending on the respective agreements and following the respective *lisan* of the families and Houses between the actors involved. The goods exchanged during the marriage agreements not only have a tangible value, but they also hold a symbolic intangible shared meaning, which is the creation of a bond between two families. It is important to consider the respective *lisan*, not to offend the counterparts.

Originally, *lisan* is an Arabic word, which literally means language or oral. Nowadays this word exists in a range of languages (Turkish, Arabic, Hindi, Bahasa Indonesia, Tetun),[41] and in Tetun it refers to the customary sets of prescriptions that are traditionally handed down orally and they are supposed to be followed (*tuir*, T.) the way they were handed down by the ancestors. *Lisan* are not the same everywhere in Timor-Leste but vary depending on the territory. In the case of the *barlake*, *lisan* prescribes which goods or animals can be exchanged or not during the marriage negotiations. In the Venilale area, for example, *lisan* does not allow any pig to be given or received before the *barlake* is concluded, no matter the ethnolinguistic group. In fact in Venilale, Waima'a, Kairui-Midiki and Makasae cohabit and, despite the linguistic diversity, many *lisan* prescriptions are still very similar, distinguishing the Makasae or the Waima'a living in other areas of the country.[42] Both the families I lived with as well as other traditional leaders in Venilale told me that *lisan* is not ethnically based, but it is based on territoriality. My interlocutors told me that in Venilale, *lisan* denies the exchanges of pigs and pork before the end of the *barlake* and breaking the *lisan* is believed to bring misfortunes to the family, especially to the new couple. When I was living in Daralata, my hosts told me that even being offered pigs or pork during the *barlake* exchanges could mean having disabled babies or bring infertility to the couple – which is considered one of the worst possible misfortunes ever. Ethnicity does not

[41] Islam, together with the Quran and the Arabic language entered into Indonesia through Gujarat merchants from the 14th century. It is fundamental to take into consideration this element, given the spread of Islam within Indonesia, that today is the most populous Muslim country in the world.
[42] See the preliminary linguistic note for more information about the ethnolinguistic diversity in Timor-Leste.

define *lisan* in Venilale; instead, sharing the same oral traditions is believed to have originated in that specific territory, from the alliances created on a specific piece of land. *Lisan* was handed down by the ancestors and it is based on the bonds existing between the Houses and groups inhabiting that land. Villages and hamlets are connected by these historical alliances that have emerged in ancient times, through bonds created by marriages or conflicts.

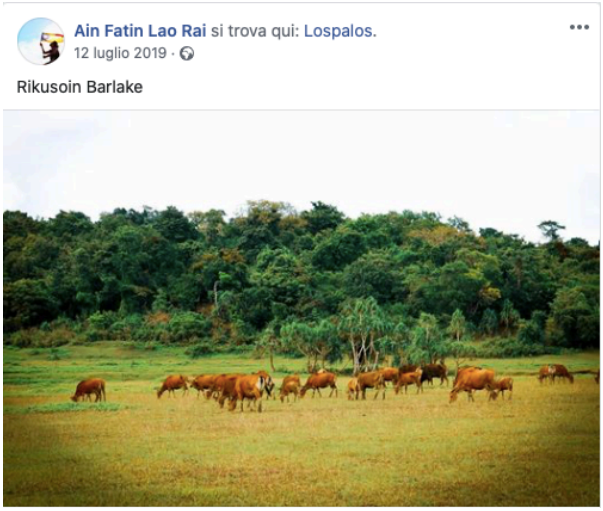

Figure 4 A picture entitled 'barlake's riches' from the Facebook page "Ain fatin lao rai"[43]

To sum up this first section of the chapter, the term *rikusoin* can be paramount in helping us understand what is conceived as heritage in Timor-Leste. *Rikusoin*, though, have to be understood within the socio-cultural framework of the East Timorese context, not just with the 'Western' meaning we gave to this term (resources). *Rikusoin* have to be conceived as communal resources belonging to a House, an origin group, and related to the *lisan* of a specific House or territory. Some of these *rikusoin* are used in the exchanges of marriages and funeral rituals (*fetosan-umane*, see I.3); others are stored in the *uma lulik* buildings, being considered historical evidence of the existence of the ancestors, of their potency and of the House itself. Some others are used to build the potent Houses (such as some kind of trees, for example); and, finally, some *rikusoin* are believed to have special powers and meanings, being connected to ancestral knowledge and origins: streams of water, stones and fields or places in the land. *Rikusoin* are hence embedded in both tangible and intangible values, which will be discussed in I.2.

[43] *Cf.* https://www.facebook.com/ainfatinlaorai/photos/a.221115345285296/431832657546896/?type=1&theater, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

I.2 Tangible and intangible heritage

During the lecture I gave at UNTL, at some point I realised that the students were overlapping the meaning of heritage (*patrimóniu*, T.) with riches (*rikusoin*, T.). As I mentioned in the introduction, the first meaning of heritage is an inherited possession, hence with an intrinsic intangible value attached to a tangible element, that can be economic, cultural, social, emotional, personal etc. I wanted the students to think about cultural elements whose economic value was not preeminent, but which still hold important social and cultural meanings. I wanted the students to explore the intangible dimension of *rikusoin*, the socio-cultural value beyond the material dimension. After a prolonged silence, a shy voice suggested *bua malus* (*lit.* areca nut and betel leave, T.) and the class burst into a loud laugh. What is *bua malus*? And why did the student at UNTL suggested *bua malus* as an example of the East Timorese intangible heritage? To what extent can this cultural and social practice be considered as heritage (see I.2.1 and I.2.2)? Are there other similar cultural and social practices that can be understood as intangible heritage? Who is entitled to define what heritage and intangible cultural heritage are?

Before discussing what *bua malus* represents in Timor-Leste and why the class laughed, which is going to be analysed later in sections I.2.1 and I.2.2, I want to discuss the UNESCO definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and what the Ratification of the UNESCO *Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* of 2003 meant internationally.

> Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts. While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization [...]. The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State and is as important for developing States as for developed ones (*Cf*. https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003, last accessed on 03.04.2020).[44]

The UNESCO Proclamation of ICH broadened the perspective on cultural heritage. Heritage was not just conceived as monuments, ancient buildings and objects anymore, but other elements also started to be appreciated and recognized as such. Namely, 'customs' and 'traditions' started to be understood as part of heritage. However, "while ICH has the potential to bring more focus to the social dimension of heritage, it seems also to want to regard social practices, skills and traditions as the equivalent of

[44] *Cf*. also UNESCO 2003 and UNESCO 2006.

heritage objects, places or landscapes", as Denis Byrne points out (2009, 229). Traditions and social practices are part of the everyday life of a community. The opposition between modernity, economic development and more 'traditional' and customary practices implicitly divides the world into different communities: 'modern' and 'traditional' ones. The director of the UNESCO ICH unit, Noriko Aikawa-Faure, points out that the main consequence of the attempted epistemological assimilation of the ICH to the Eurocentric notion of cultural heritage has been allowing the participation of non-Western countries in the Convention (2009). If on the one hand the ICH Convention attempts the inclusion of historically marginalised and non-Western cultural expressions, on the other hand "Europe has recognized the cultural achievements of the rest of the world and anointed them as 'legitimate'" (Smith 2006, 111). It seems as if UNESCO accorded its patronizing benevolence to non-Western countries belonging to the so-called Global South. As Smith points out, the UNESCO conceptualisation of ICH has certainly expanded the definition of heritage, yet it did not question its ontology, based on tangibility, monumentality and authenticity (Smith 2006, 111). In addition, the creation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity[45] (UNESCO 2006) reaffirmed the monumentality of Heritage through the recognition of human "masterpieces".

Moreover, as observed by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the World Heritage List aimed to countermeasure the homogenisation of culture that globalisation was and is accused of producing, but it failed to see that it was itself a product of that same process that is intended to oppose (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). If on the one hand, the ICH aims to celebrate the fluidity of cultural practice and to empower and develop local communities around the world, on the other the creation of the lists and the 'rescuing' mission for the safeguarding of ICH "echoes the sentiments behind 19th century 'salvage ethnography'" (Kreps 2009). At the same time, the tools associated with the practice of defining an entity as endangered (*i.e.* lists, repertoires, catalogues) do not represent neutral instruments, but result from processes of selection and interpretation and they are projections on calls for actions on the 'endangered' entities and objects (Hafstein 2009). Both ICH as well as the conservation ethos imply what Fernando Vidal and Nélia Dias define as 'endangerment sensibility':

> a complex of knowledge, values, affects and interests characterised by a particularly acute perception that some organisms and things are 'under threat,' and by a purposeful responsiveness to such a predicament (Vidal and Dias 2016, 2).

The discourse of endangerment fails to acknowledge the history of the concept itself, rooted within the Western scientific tradition, as well as in socio-cultural values and in legislative means (Vidal and

[45] *Cf*. UNESCO 2003 and UNESCO 2006.

Dias 2016, 5-6). Heritage needs to be preserved, with the aim of being transmitted from one generation to the other and hence conservation is paramount.

I.2.1 Bua malus: a baptism

On 5th April 2017 I helped a group of women storing an endless supply of corn in the barn belonging to the Technical School and Seminar of Fatumaka, in Baukau. I was there as a guest because the following day I would go back to Dili with an Italian priest who would give me a lift to the capital city. To repay their kindness in hosting me, I thought it would be nice to help store the huge supply of corn that had just arrived from the nearby fields and that would constitute the food for the students' canteen for the following months. The huge golden mountain of cobs was more or less as tall as me and a bunch of women were sitting on the top of it, peeling the cobs. They were looking at me, whispering and giggling between them. I greeted them, clumsily reached the top of the pile of corn and I started to peel the ears of the cobs like they were doing. They were surprised that a white young girl was doing what they considered a menial job. I broke the silence with platitudes in Tetun and they burst out laughing, covering their red and black teeth, surprised that I could master the language. They were farmers and housewives coming from the neighbouring areas: they had to store the corn, supply for the canteen of the school, and the priests would pay them later on. After a short first moment of reciprocal awkwardness, we started to chat together: some preferred to speak in their native language, Kairui-Midiki, too embarrassed to talk directly with me in Tetun. So, other women and girls translated what they were saying for me, and they would tease the others for their shyness. At some point, after a few hours peeling the cobs, one of the oldest ladies took the *bua malus* from a small plastic bag and started to distribute it to some of her colleagues; others had the small nuts with them too, and in a few minutes I was the only one still peeling the cobs, while the centre of the attention was now picking the best nuts to chew. I was looking at them, intrigued. I wanted to try it, but I did not want to sound rude by asking. In a quite bold attitude, one of them looked into my eyes and asked, "Do you chew (*mama*, T.)?". They all burst in a thunderous laugh: they knew chewing is something that foreigners (*malae*, T.) people usually do not do.

I timidly smiled and nodded. A girl grabbed the nuts and showed them to me in the palm of her hand. I picked one and she invited me to take a bigger one. I picked it, the girl put some white powder (*ahu*, T.) on the palm of my hand and showed me with gestures to swipe it on my teeth and then bite the nut. I was chewing it and the first grassy bitter flavour quickly changed into a strong hot sensation into my mouth. The women were all looking at me, waiting for a reaction. My mouth felt anesthetised; the flavour was intense similarly to the horseradish, although less pungent and balsamic. I was hyper-salivating, and I felt the need to spit. My spit and my lips were red, like theirs. The ladies

were laughing and cheering the *malae* who had just been introduced to the most elementary practice in Timor-Leste: *bua malus*. One of the ladies told me that chewing *bua malus* was a good solution for hunger: chewing relieves the sensation of hunger.[46]

Figure 5 The corn in the barn (author's picture)

Figure 6 Women and girls storing the corn in the Fatumaka Salesian School and religious community's barn

Bua malus is a very common everyday as well as ritual practice in Timor-Leste, and it consists of chewing areca nuts and betel leaves. It is common to add also slaked lime, a white chalky powder (*ahu*, T.), to betel and areca. Botanically, *bua* is a berry, despite its association with nuts: it grows on palms botanically classified as *Areca catechu* (*bua*, T., describing both the 'nut' and the plant). *Malus*, scientifically classified as *Piper betle*, is another common plant growing in Timor-Leste. *Bua malus*,

[46] This is a common belief, also supported by scientific evidence (Strickland et alii 2003).

though, does not describe only the two plants, but most importantly, a very common social habit in Timor-Leste, which is chewing *bua malus* (*mama*, T.). It is an everyday habit very common throughout the country. Chewing areca and betel symbolises the sealing of a relationship but also greeting someone new. Being offered *bua malus* represents introduction into a group or reaffirming friendship, kinship or alliance. As Lúcio Sousa (2010b) points out, chewing betel and areca is like sharing a common gesture, and this commonality is the first step to creating communication among the actors involved: "becoming-while-sharing" (2010b, 38).

In April 2017, my host Santana was asked by his older brother Gil to represent him in the first meeting for the negotiation of a *barlake* for the wedding between Gil's fourth son and his wife-to-be Alita, from Lospalos. Santana, then, together with other members of the origin group of the groom (all of them were men), went to Lospalos for the preliminary and formal *barlake* meeting with the bride's family. Once we arrived at the bride's family house, we were invited to have a seat in the porch, in front of the main entrance of the house, on plastic chairs placed around a low table decorated with an embroidered white tablecloth, on the top of which a *bua malus* basket of woven palm leaves (*kohe*, T.) was standing. The *kohe* contained a couple of areca nuts and 4 *kretek* (B.I.) cigarettes boxes.[47] We were sitting all around the table, and there was a palpable embarrassment, because nobody was talking. Then the landlord (the bride's father), took with his hands the basket in the middle of the table and passed it on. He was symbolically welcoming us into his house. As soon as the *kohe* was passed on, the conversation started to flow too.

In Venilale I was constantly reminded that *bua malus* is an archaic practice, passed on by the ancestors. Unlike *lisan*, though – which changes depend on the region and on the House – *bua malus* is common to every East Timorese person, everywhere. "At a mythological perspective, the betel and areca precedes the House (or, at least, are concomitant with it), [...] but betel and areca chewing is of substantive relevance if we want to pass its threshold" (Sousa 2010b, 56). Given the social meaning embedded in this practice, chewing areca and betel is a ritual practice too. It is not just performed in everyday circumstances, but also in more ritual and formal occasions, such as that related to agriculture activities and *uma lulik* rituals (Forman 1980; Friedberg 1980; Sousa 2010b). Betel and areca are trivial and cheap goods that one can find in any market, but the ritual and cultural value attached to the habit and practice of chewing is fundamental within the East Timorese reality, and this is the main reason why I found the suggestion of the student at UNTL of *bua malus* as an example of intangible cultural heritage in Timor-Leste incredibly appropriate. Chewing betel and areca was very common in Venilale, but it did not happen arbitrarily. Its consumption might help relieve the feeling of

[47] *Kretek* cigarettes are typical aromatic cigarettes very common in Indonesia and Timor-Leste; they contain a clove scent, that leaves a sweet flavour on the lips and in the mouth; the smell is very peculiar too.

hunger, but this is not the main reason why people chew *bua malus*. It is a social practice and being invited to chew *bua malus* is an invitation to get to know each other. It shows openness towards the interlocutor and willing to spend some time together. It can be performed in more or less formal and ritual ways. On the occasion I described, the women were busy working; we had been peeling cobs since 7 a.m., and when the sun started to burn (around 10 a.m.), they had a break by chewing *bua malus*. They knew each other: some of them were neighbours and, in some cases, cognate but they were there as co-workers, and some of us were meeting for the first time. *Bua malus* was performed to create a connection among us, to make us feel equal. In the words of Lúcio Sousa, who conducted research in the area of Bobonaro in Timor-Leste, *bua malus* also represents "the beginning of a relationship, of a bond" (2010b, 38), "entailing and mediating a formal acceptance of a stranger into the event" (37).

Once I got back to the school for the lunch break, some of the students of the technical high school, surprised and amused, exclaimed that my lips were red "like the ones of an old Timorese lady". Also, a couple of priests, taken by surprise by my red mouth, congratulated me with a quite unconvincing "like a real Timorese!". As suggested by Sousa, *bua malus* in Timor-Leste is performed publicly, not just because you chew in company, but also because the act of chewing is displayed, turning the lips, teeth and tongue with a vivid and bright red (2010b, 38). It does not just leave a red shade on lips and teeth; but, in the long run, chewing betel nuts turns the teeth black. In fact, it is quite common to see elders with black teeth, especially in the rural areas in Timor-Leste. Precisely the blackness left by the prolonged consumption of betel nuts has helped the archaeologists analyse the black spots found in the dentition of human remains both in the Mariana Islands (Hocart and Frankhauser 1996) and in Vietnam, dating back to the Bronze Age (Oxenham et alii 2002). Archaeological data confirms the existence of this practice throughout the geographical milieu that linguists and anthropologists name Austronesian world (Spriggs 2011).[48] Nowadays, this practice is a habit throughout South (Ahuja and Ahuja 2011) and Southeast Asia (Rooney 1993), Papua New Guinea (Foster 2002) and the Pacific too, despite the many side-effects that the practice seems to cause (World Health Organization 2012, 21-40).

[48] *Cf*. Adelaar and Himmelmann 2004 and Bellwood, Fox and Tryon 2006.

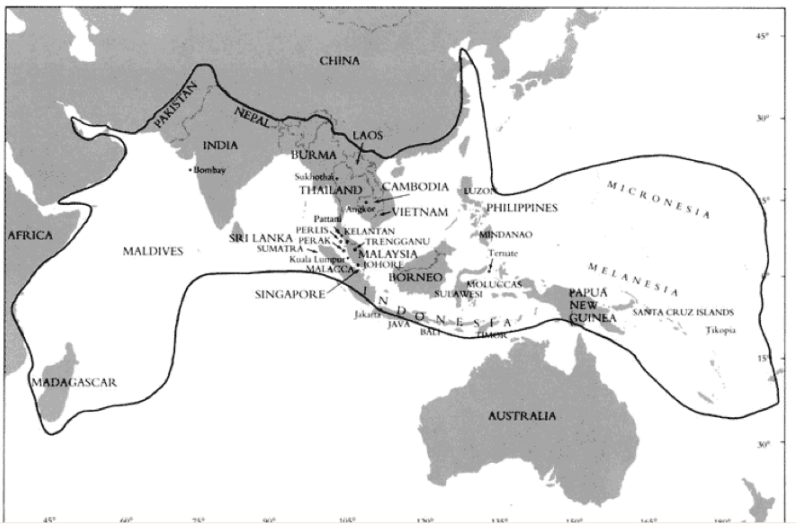

Figure 7 Geographical distribution of current areca chewing (Rooney 1993, 11)

Figure 8 Geographical distribution of Austronesian languages (source: Encyclopædia Britannica)[49]

During my fieldwork research, both in Daralata and Waikulale, my hosts and many other people constantly reminded me that *bua malus* is an ancient practice, common to East Timorese as well as other neighbouring populations, stressing both the ancient origins of the practice, as well as its autochthonous roots. Among the Bunak people, areca and betel are believed to be the first two plants from which both humanity and nature have originated (Friedberg 1980, 174; 2011, 52; Sousa 2010b, 44). *Bua malus* is also believed to connect human beings with ancestors' spirits (Hicks 2004, or. 1976, 39-44; Hicks 2007) and spirits of nature (Friedberg 1980, 274). In the resolution of social conflicts, *bua malus* is believed to connect the *lia nain* with the ancestors' spirits, who guide the leaders in the appeasement process (Simião 2014, 39). Birgit Bräuchler has raised the possibility of recognizing the traditional justice mechanisms as intangible cultural heritage, namely the East Timorese *nahe biti*.

[49] https://www.britannica.com/topic/Austronesian-languages, last accessed on 30.12.2020.

Bräuchler's argument moves from considering these traditional processes not just as peace tools, but as social *dispositifs*, grounded on local traditions and values and with a strong focus on ritual performance (Bräuchler 2012). Chewing *bua malus* is part of the ritual performance highlighted by Bräuchler, as one of the last moments of the reconciliation and peace process, when all the people involved chew together *bua malus*, picking the nuts and leaves from the same basket, the *kohe*. *Bua malus* is present in the *nahe biti* reconciliation processes, analysed by Dionísio Babo Soares as grassroots alternatives to the formal and institutional processes of reconciliation conducted by UNTATET,[50] immediately after the end of the Indonesian military occupation (2004, 20). After the national independence of 2002, the performance of *bua malus* was sometimes deployed in formal and institutional settings, too, such as national ceremonies, the aim of which is precisely to create a sense of national belonging, shaped by the different regional identities and encompassing them at the same time (Sousa 2010b, 56-58).

Among the Meto in West Timor, marriages are expressed "as the union of betel nut ingredients in which the conceptually 'female' areca nut is combined with the 'male' fruit of the betel vine" (McWilliam 2009, 111). The practice, hence, can transcend the boundaries separating the material from the immaterial world, as well as the historical boundary between present and past generations. These boundaries, though, are not so neat as they are usually in a European context. Spirits and living human beings live together and interact with each other, as I explore in detail in the last section of this chapter. Shepard Forman, who focused his research on the Makasae in Baukau, stresses the importance of social interactions embedded in this practice (Forman 1980). The author describes the welcoming of the new bride in the House, who is accompanied by her mother-in-law (162).[51] They cross the threshold of the bride's new house by silently chewing *bua malus*, spitting the red quid that is believed to remove the 'sick blood' from the spouse, symbolising potential infertility.

Precisely because *bua malus* is a practice largely shared in Timor-Leste, new settings were included to this ancient practice in more recent times. Maria Madeira, an East Timorese contemporary visual artist, made paintings by spitting the red quid on canvases. She teaches in the first Arts School of Timor-Leste, Arte Moris (*T.*, art-life; art alive) within the so-called *Movimentu Kultura* (Veiga 2015, 99). The main goal of the artists was to question "what it means to be East Timorese". In this quest for identity, the artists focused on objects and symbols belonging to the ritual East Timorese reality, such as traditional necklaces (*belak*, T.), hand-waving cloths (*tais*, T.) "because in them lies the true Timorese identity, which is prior to Portuguese times" (Gil, artist interviewed in Veiga 2015, 89).

[50] United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (peace-keeping measures).
Cf. https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/past/etimor/etimor.htm, last accessed 15.12.2020.
[51] The Makasae's society in the area of Venilale is patrilinear and generally patrilocal. Forman describes the Makasae he worked with as patrilinear and patrilocal as well.

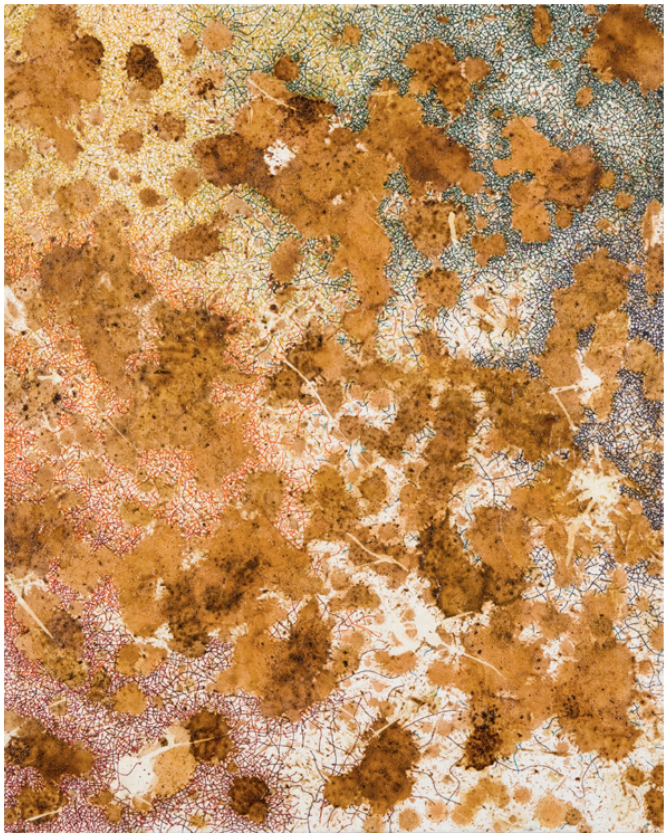

Figure 9 Maria Madeira, "Renascence", 2007. Mixed media on canvas with betel nut, 61 x 76 cm (Veiga 2015, 87)

Similarly to what my hosts used to tell me in Venilale, hence, *bua malus* is an element of the East Timorese identity, belonging to a pre-colonial past and therefore perceived as 'truly' Timorese. As Sousa points out, despite the relevance that *bua malus* has in Timor-Leste, areca and betel do not have the same "iconic display" that other elements of the East Timorese culture which are perceived as 'traditional' have, such as *uma lulik* (Sousa 2010b, 56). *Uma lulik* and *tais* are cultural tangible and intangible elements that the government, through SEAC and KNTLU, have been turning into symbols of national heritage. They have also been chosen to officially represent the national identity, and they have undergone processes of heritagization, as well as commodification and touristification. Miniatures of the *uma lulik* as well as *tais* and objects made of *tais* are sold in local markets and souvenirs shops mainly to tourists. Areca and betel are an obviously less marketable object than *tais*. *Bua malus* is for sure a less monumental symbol than the *uma lulik* architectures. However, I suggest that the reason why *bua malus* is not considered as a potential element of the national cultural heritage has not to do only with its saleability. *Bua malus* is often considered as something "backwards" and "shameful". After showing the importance that *bua malus* has as a cultural practice, both in Venilale as well as elsewhere in the country, in the next paragraph I shall discuss the other side of the coin, which is the shame embedded in this practice.

1.2.2 *Bua malus* between pride and shame

Mau Bere, my brother, GET UP!
Mau Bere, my brother,
Today, on this day, I decided to write to you.
Today is Sunday. Everyone is at home or in church, making the sign of the cross, while confessing their sins, profusely.
Everyone is in the countryside or by the sea.
I am here.
I am thinking of you, Mau Bere, my brother.
At dinner, I felt hungry. But I didn't go out to eat. I stayed here thinking about you.
Imagining what you are going through every day, every hour and every minute. HUNGER.
I'm lucky, because I managed to knock my stomach out with manioc and corn. Not rice, because there is no rice.
And you, you have never eaten any rice. The rice you made with your own sweat is for others. You sell it to the Chinese who trick you with the scales, who trick you with tobacco, wine and other small items.
Mau Bere, my brother, I feel sorry for you. Because you were deceived, and nobody defended you.
Mau Bere, you chew betel leaves, you wear rags, rags inherited by your parents who have died already, who used to smoke corn leaves, smiling with a red smile, because of betel – blood and rebellion.
Mau Bere, get up, walk with me.
Come, Mau Bere.
Don't sleep anymore. Now this is the time to wake up. The sun has already risen. The sunlight also shines for you. But nothing has changed. Today, just like yesterday. Tomorrow will be the same. Your rags. Your betel. Your red smile.
Mau bere, my brother, what can I do for you? I'm with you. In the struggle to keep alive I will be by your side. I'm sick. Sick of everything and everyone. I will drink. To ease my disgust.
Mau Bere, my brother, GET UP!
Your brother.

José Ramos-Horta 1973. Mau Bere, meu irmão, levanta-te![52]

When one of the students suggested *bua malus* as an example of ICH in Timor-Leste during the lecture I gave at UNTL, the class burst into a loud laugh that I managed to silence only after a few minutes. I wanted to know who suggested that answer, because I considered it brilliant, but the student was so ashamed that he would not raise his hand. In Fatumaka, I could feel that the East Timorese priests

[52] Original version of the poem: Mau Bere, meu irmão, LEVANTA-TE!/Mau Bere, meu irmão/Hoje, neste dia, decidi escrever para ti./Hoje é domingo. Todas as pessoas estão em casa ou na igreja, a fazer o sinal de cruz enquanto confessam os seus pecados, profusamente./Todos estão no campo ou a beira mar./Eu estou aqui./Estou a pensar em ti, Mau Bere, meu irmão./Na hora do jantar, senti fome. Mas não saí para comer. Fiquei aqui a pensar em ti. Imaginando pelo que passas a cada dia, cada hora e cada minuto. FOME./Tenho sorte, porque consegui aldrabar o meu estômago com mandioca e milho. Não arroz, porque não há nenhum arroz. E tu que nunca comeste mesmo arroz. O arroz que fizeste com o teu próprio suor é para os outros. Tu vendes aos chineses que te enganam com as balanças, que te enganam com o tabaco, vinho e outros pequenos itens.
Mau Bere, meu irmão, eu tenho pena de ti. Porque foste enganado e ninguém te defendeu.
Mau Bere, tu que mastigas folhas de bétel, que vestes trapos, trapos herdados pelos teus pais que já morreram, que fumavam folhas de milho sorridentes com um sorriso vermelho, por causa do betel, sangue e rebelião./Mau Bere, levanta-te, caminha comigo./Vem, Mau Bere./Não durmas mais. Agora é a hora de acordares. O sol já nasceu. A luz do sol também brilha para ti. Mas nada mudou. Hoje, assim como ontem. Amanhã será o mesmo. Os teus trapos. Os teus betéls. O teu sorriso vermelho./Maubere, meu irmão, o que posso fazer por ti? Eu estou contigo. Na luta para manter vivo eu estarei ao teu lado. Estou enjoado. Enjoado de tudo e de todos. Vou beber./Para aliviar a minha repugnância./Mau Bere, meu irmão, LEVANTA-TE!/O Teu irmão.

were not very keen on me chewing betel and areca with the workers in the barn. Along with the cheerful praise, there were also some gentle warnings that my teeth would be ruined forever. A Lúcio Sousa's observed, some priests did not even allow people to receive Communion if their teeth were too red (2010b, 44). During my first stay in Timor-Leste in 2013, when I was hosted by the nuns, *bua malus* was not allowed within the community as a "matter of decency", both in the Dili and the Venilale community. The girls hosted and the East Timorese nuns themselves did not consume areca and betel. Generally speaking, the Church position aside, I would say that it is rarer to see people chewing in Dili than in rural areas of the county. Even my counterparts in Dili, highly educated East Timorese young people who studied abroad and who had desk jobs in Dili, never chewed *bua malus* in town. However, when they visited their own families back to the rural areas (*foho*, T.), chewing areca and betel was a warm welcome back home for them. Once I was in the market in Venilale and there was a couple of elders who seemed intrigued by my presence in the market. They were chewing and chatting. I passed by and I waved, smiling. They waved back, so I stopped by for some platitudes. They apologised because they were chewing, covering their mouth.

As mentioned earlier (I.2.1), in April 2017, I went with my host Santana and some other relatives to a preliminary discussion of a *barlake* of the wedding of one of Santana's nephews. We were offered *bua malus* and *kretek* cigarettes by the bride's family, as a welcoming gesture. Nobody picked the *bua malus*; instead, both the members of the groom's and bride's family started to smoke cigarettes. Unlike smoking, *bua malus* has no gender-based rules for consumption. During my fieldwork I saw old women rolling tobacco while they were working in the rice-fields, for example, but smoking for young women is generally considered and perceived as a bad practice and behaviour, especially the 'industrial' cigarettes. I would say that smoking is forbidden to a woman during an institutional, official ceremony or ritual, especially if young and in the presence of other men. It is also worth mentioning that during the meeting we had in Lospalos, women were not directly involved in the discussion. In the specific event that I am referring to, I was the only woman at the table, together with Maya, Aurelio's first granddaughter (12 years old). The bride's female relatives (her mother, sisters and her father's sisters) were all in the house, cooking and listening to what the men were deciding during the meeting, but they did not participate in the discussion. Most importantly, not all the men present were supposed to talk; in fact, neither the groom nor his brothers spoke during the 'negotiation'; the only men allowed to talk were Santana, the great uncle from Liabala and the bride's father, as well as his older brothers. Therefore, I suggest that the decision to offer us cigarettes and not just *bua malus* has to be explained considering that the participants in the event were all men, with the exception of Maya and me, the young girl. When the talk ended, the women appeared to invite us to have lunch in the living room; they were all smiling and it was obvious that they had been

chewing *bua malus* in the kitchen, while chatting and cooking.[53] Once we went back to Fatumaka, at Aurelio's house, my host father stated that the presence of cigarettes was a clear sign of the 'modern' mindset of the bride's family and all the other men welcomed Santana's observation positively.[54]

The poem mentioned earlier in this section was written by José Ramos-Horta at the beginning of the 1970s. Ramos-Horta has been one of the most preeminent political leaders of Timor-Leste since the 1960s to the present day, when the first local political East Timorese parties started to rise. Ramos-Horta himself was among the founders of ASDT (*Associação Social Democrata Timorense*, Pt.) that would then become FRETILIN, the party that self-proclaimed the unilateral Independence of Timor-Leste on the 28th of November 1975.[55] The Indonesian government accused ASDT and then FRETILIN of being communist and used this as an excuse for the illegal military annexation of Timor-Leste, with the complicity of the USA. In an interview,[56] the Nobel Peace Laureate recalled the poem mentioned, by saying that it was published in *Seara*, a bi-weekly magazine published by the Catholic Church until 1973 in Timor-Leste[57] and that the PIDE, the Portuguese police, arrested him because of its contents. I find it mentioning José Ramos-Horta's poem particularly relevant in the discussion of *bua malus* as a practice in which pride and shame co-exist at the same time, because Ramos-Horta, as a young and well-educated East Timorese *mestiço*, describes the poorest people of his country as miserable and dressed in rags. Besides the supposedly revolutionary intent that provoked the author's arrest, I would rather stress the implicit internal colonialism of the verses. The author turns poverty into misery, privation into pity. His statements are written from a privileged social and cultural position and also linked to the Marxist (and patronizing) assumption that people need help and indications from intellectuals in order to find their own liberation. The word 'Mau Bere', central in the poem, is originally a Mambae name for men (Mambae is one of the many languages spoken in Timor-Leste).

> During the Portuguese colonial period, maubere was generally used to distinguish the native East Timorese from the upper class, educated Portuguese and to [...] the mestiços, the half caste group. Maubere was often employed as a synonym for the illiterate, uneducated and [...] uncivilized (Babo Soares 2003, 56-57).

[53] All the houses I visited in Timor-Leste, in Dili, in Venilale but also in other areas, had a porch outside, a living room immediately after the entrance and the kitchen was always in the back of the house, often outside the main structure of the house itself. This spatial organization produces a division between the men's and women's space in the house (more on this topic in the next chapter). Men in fact are most likely to stay at the entrance of the house, sitting in the porch, welcoming guests and chatting with neighbours, while women usually stay at the back of the house, in the kitchen.

[54] *Cf*. Reid 1985 for a comparison of the practices of smoking cigarettes and chewing *bua malus* in the Indonesian context.

[55] More on these historical facts in Chapter 4 and in the Chronology.

[56] *Cf*. https://expresso.pt/internacional/2015-11-28-Ramos-Horta-Fui-contra-a-declaracao-unilateral-da-independencia, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

[57] *Cf*. Paulino 2011.

During the Indonesian military occupation, *maubere* changed to indicate the guerrilla fighters, both men and women (*buibere*), who fought against the Indonesian army. In 1987, Xanana Gusmão, then leader of the fight for independence, created the National Council of the Maubere Resistance (Conselho Nacional da Resistência Maubere – CNRM), hence using the term to refer to any East Timorese involved in the cause for independence. Nowadays, the term is included in the East Timorese national Constitution, where in the Preamble, one can read the expression "Maubere Motherland", to indicate the Republic of Timor-Leste. Nowadays, therefore, the Constitution itself defines Maubere as a synonym for citizen of the Republic of Timor-Leste. In Ramos Horta's poem, the term is used to metonymically indicate East Timorese peasants: he pities them for their poverty. However, he hopes for their redemption, guided by the brother whose duty is to show them their path. *Bua malus* also appears in the poem, as it was a distinctive symbol of the poor: it indicates misery but, at the same time, the author describes *bua malus* as a metaphor for blood and revolution – red being both the colour of the spit produced by chewing *bua malus*; the symbolic colour of revolution and the blood of those who fought against colonialism.

In his analysis of Papua New Guinea's (PNG) nation-building process, Robert Foster presents the chewing of areca and betel as an ambivalent national symbol. On the one hand it is a "virtually universal practice" throughout PNG (2002, 32), an "anti-Western and pro-Melanesian" anti-colonial act of resistance (2002, 103); on the other hand, areca and betel chewing is condemned by the Health Department for hygienic as well as health issues. In addition, the practice is forbidden in public circumstances, especially in urban settings, for decorum (103). Chewing areca and betel does represent a customary and traditional habit in a quite vast area of the world, but it is often deployed as a brake on national and modern development (33). Clearly, there are differences between the East Timorese and the PNG situation: as I mentioned, *bua malus* is used in institutional settings by government actors and in those specific circumstances the government apparatus deploys it as a symbol of national identity and cohesion, as also amply shown by Sousa (2010b, 55-59).

However, there is also a strong stigma associated with the practice of chewing and spitting areca and betel, and its association with 'backwardness' and rural and mountainous areas (*foho*, T.). Backwardness is believed to characterise *foho* areas, and these are often associated with 'paganism' – in opposition to Catholicism, a synonym for civilization (see Silva 2011; 2015). It is in fact associated with *gentiu* (T.), a term defining non-Catholic and non-converted people, commonly used during the Portuguese colonial history of the country (Sousa 2010b, 38). In the volume entitled *No Touching, no spitting, no praying: the museum in South Asia*, Saloni Mathur and Kavita Singh explore the historical transformation of museums in India from the colonial to the post-colonial era. During the colonial period, "the museum in India was marked as a tool of colonial control" (2015, 6). The title of the book is in fact a quotation of "an actual sign at the entrance of an Indian museum announcing the rules of

behaviour to his visitors" in the 1930s (5). The 'spitting' part refers precisely to betel chewing, also a common practice in India, as I mentioned before.

To sum up, in Timor-Leste, offering and chewing *bua malus* is a welcoming gesture, shared among the different ethnic groups present in the territory but, due to historical reasons such as the inference of the Catholic Church and (internal) colonialism, it carries a shadow of shame nowadays, caused by an internalisation of external negative stereotypes. Ambivalence characterises this practice. If on the one hand it displays a sense of local pride, both on more domestic and House stages and at more national, artistic and political ones, on the other hand, it remains associated with a certain sense of 'backwardness' that has its roots in Portuguese colonialism, but that is still present nowadays, as a form of internal colonialism. The fact that in the event mentioned before, the guests picked cigarettes instead of *bua malus* reveals that cigarettes have a different status and are considered more 'modern'. Can shame be the reason why *bua malus* is not granted the 'iconic display' (Sousa 2010b, 56) that *uma lulik* have? *Bua malus* displays tensions: between the official discourse of the state and other less official contexts, but also the ways in which more domestic and House practices are considered by the state itself. *Bua malus* is not openly prohibited by the government, but health and sanitary reasons as well as moral arguments (both religious and secular) are implicitly deployed, so its consumption is limited to certain contexts and events only.

I.3 *Fetosan umane*

One of the first days in Daralata, I was sitting with my hosts in the porch, chatting. I had been in Daralata for less than a week and my hosts were curious to know more about the purpose of my research, so I told Santana, my host-father, that my research was about *patrimóniu* (T.). From the doubtful expression on his face, I guessed he did not know the meaning of that word. I then added that I wanted to explore traditions and customs of his House, *kultura* (T.), *lisan*, *uma lulik* (T.). He remained silent for a few seconds and then he said, "If you want to understand *uma lulik*, first you have to understand *fetosan umane*". *Fetosan umane* (T.) can be translated into the anthropological category of wife-takers (*fetosan*) and wife-givers (*umane*) and, from Santana's perspective, the relations between these groups are the core of *uma lulik*. Throughout Venilale, *uma lulik*'s buildings are in fact the symbolic representations of Houses. And marriages connect Houses one another. The marital bonds create obligation of reciprocation among the members of a House, not just on the occasion of marriages, but during a lifetime, until after death. *Fetosan-umane* relationships are diverse throughout the country: they can depend on the linguistic group, on the territory, on the Houses involved. Especially in the case of weddings, the goods exchanged might depend on the personal decisions made by the actors involved in the exchange (see I.3.2 on this topic).

This section aims to debate the importance of the exchanges between *fetosan* and *umane* as a core element of *uma lulik*, understood not just as tangible buildings but as the history of a House, a descendant group and its bonds, that perpetuate life. The expression *fetosan umane* refers to the extended families of a groom and a bride, the in-laws, so to speak. In Timor-Leste, among patrilineal ethno-linguistic groups,[58] marriages imply gift exchanges (Silva 2019a) among wife-givers and wife-takers, not just for weddings (*barlake*, T.), but also for any funerary rituals as well as for any ritual circumstance regarding the *uma lulik*. The diverse rites composing *fetosan umane* are often divided between funerary ceremonies (*lia mate*, T.) and rites connected to life (*lia moris*, T.). My hosts in Daralata explained that the basic goods exchanged between *fetosan* and *umane*, both for the *lia moris* and *lia mate* rites are buffaloes (and cows) and pigs. The wife-givers give pigs (and pork) to the wife-takers and in exchange they receive buffaloes (and beef). The opposite is forbidden (*lulik*, T.). However, as I mentioned in section I.1, in Venilale pigs and/or pork can be exchanged only after the conclusion of a *barlake* (T., wedding exchanges), and not before. Many other can be the goods exchanged, but buffaloes and pigs are considered the fundamental ones. During the funerary receptions I attended (at which there can be several hundred people),[59] *fetosan* had to eat buffalo meat, while *umane* pork. Eating the wrong meal is believed to cause misfortunes to the House, even deaths.[60]

Marriage exchanges are central to the creation and reproduction of relations and connections between wife-givers and wife-takers (Silva 2019a) and marriages have to be understood not just as the romantic union between two people, but as "an alliance in political-economic terms" (Forman 1980, 159) between two extended families. These bonds are established through the *fetosan umane* gift exchanges, as well as through the birth of new babies, outcomes of those relations. The exchanges produced and reproduced during a person's life and death are symbolic as well as practical gestures reinforcing the connections between the members of a House, as well as emphasising the history and legacy of their kinship. Silva describes marriage exchanges in Dili as symbolic gifts, ascribing them to the regime of gift exchange (Silva 2019a). She also stresses that these exchanges symbolise the respect and recognition between *fetosan* and *umane* (219). Connecting *uma lulik* and *fetosan umane* allowed me to focus on the relations existing between the people belonging to the House, beyond the physical dimension of the *uma lulik*. Santana's observation about the connection between *uma lulik* and *fetosan umane* was fundamental also because it allowed me to understand the importance of

[58] Matrilineal descent is found amongst three ethnolinguistic groups: Bunak, Galolen and Tetun Terik.
[59] I never participated in any wedding, but I took part in many different funerary ceremonies. In Venilale, and also in other regions of the country, when a person dies, there are several ceremonies in which relatives, friends and neighbours take part. For my experience, the rituals that see an important attendance of people are the end of mourning (*kore metan*, T.), which is the final commemoration after the death of a person, and it is usually held one year after the death. Between 300 and 500 hundred people are present at the reception, which usually lasts an entire night, until the morning after.
[60] See also Forman 1980, 165 on this topic.

marriages as symbolic as well as practical unions producing and reproducing life and relations, giving continuity to a descent. Most importantly, it showed me another dimension of what could be considered as intangible cultural heritage in Timor-Leste.

In Timor-Leste everyone belongs to a *uma fukun*, an origin group and to at least one *uma lulik*, a potent house. Even if a House has not built their *uma lulik* yet, as in the case of my host-family in Daralata, every member of that House knows their place in their groups. As many young East Timorese I met during my research told me, one of the most meaningful aspect of a *uma lulik* inauguration (when the building of a potent house is opened for the first time) is that they realise the magnitude of their kinship: how many people belong to that House and the history of the descendants of the House. Some of the *lia nain* I had the opportunity to talk to, stressed the importance of knowing the members of their own group, fundamental to get to know both the history of the House and the breadth of their relatives. Building and inaugurating a *uma lulik*, hence, can be considered as a symbolic intergenerational transmission of who they are and where they come from. Being such a central issue, are there other ways in which the history of the House is handed down from a generation to another? I suggest that this happens when marriage exchanges (*barlake*) have to be discussed. Since *fetosan umane* is the core of the House, as Santana suggested, the exchanges between the groups are constantly produced and reproduced, even in more every day and less ritual circumstances than the inauguration of the potent buildings.

As mentioned in section I.2.1, my Daralata host Santana was asked by his older brother Cornélio (the groom's father) to be the spokesperson for the *barlake* meeting in Lospalos. The *lisan* and customs between Cornelio's and his co-parents-in-law were different, since Cornelio's family belongs to the Makasae ethnolinguistic group, while the bride-to-be's family belonged to the Fataluku's ethnolinguistic community. I thought the meeting between the two families would have been the core of the whole process, but what was actually remarkable for me were the never-ending debates and consultations between the uncles and great uncles of the groom before and especially after the meeting with the bride's family. During these meetings, in fact, the elders of the family debated about calls in debt of past *barlake* within the House. Once we got back from the bride's family house in Lospalos to Cornélio's house in Fatumaka that night, we had a quick supper together and then the elders (Santana, Cornélio, and another great uncle) started to talk. The atmosphere reminded me of a lecture: while the elders/teachers were talking, the groom and his siblings listened very carefully, asking questions from time to time, like pupils during a lesson. A lecture that only men attended, beside me. Being the Makasae society patrilinear, exogamous and virilocal (Guterres 2001, 176-177), men are supposed to transmit knowledge related to the House,[61] namely, the *fetosan-umane* relations

[61] *Uma lulik* in Makasae is *omafalu*; *fetosaun-umane* is *omarae-tufumata*.

to the younger generations. Instead, being women who are supposed to get married, they will consequently enter their husbands' Houses. Men stay in the line of succession, while women do not.

> When a baby boy is born, his relatives address him as 'oma gau há' (landlord), because the baby boy has to stay in his birth house and lineage, while (the family) would address to a baby girl as um'a la'a (traveller) or bainaka (guest), because she will eventually leave her birthplace and join her husband's when she gets married (Guterres 2001, 180).

What was so interesting and important to learn? The topic discussed was the past *barlake* that wife takers still needed to pay to their origin group, as wife-givers. Although the *barlake* are discussed in concomitance with weddings, they can be exchanged over a very long period of time, since they can be very expensive – as was for the case of Cornelio's son. Therefore, it is fundamental that the origin group's elders keep in mind all the *barlake* that still need to be given; both the ones that the origin group needs to give to their *fetosan* and *umane* and vice versa. The elders at Cornelio's house were discussing the *barlake* that still needed to be 'paid' to them, as well as the ones that they needed to give for some past weddings of the members of their extended family. However, it was not only that: the attention and the interest that the youngest showed during the recounting of the elders, let me understand that what was being actually transmitted was the history of the *fetosan umane* of the House, the core of *uma lulik* – in Santana's term.

Catherine Allerton, discussing the Manggarai weddings in Flores suggests that

> the action of travel creates both a physical trail and an alliance relationship: the two are fundamentally intertwined. Moreover, just as a forgotten forest trail becomes overgrown and impassable, so too can alliance paths become neglected when people no longer travel them to renew the connections between families (2013, 83).

During the meeting I attended in Fatumaka, the new generation was learning the history of the lineage, through the elicitation of the weddings of the past generations throughout time and space. The elders mentioned the weddings of the past generations as well as their connections with geographical routes – similarly to what Allerton suggests for the Manggarai's weddings. Some of the members of the House moved to other regions and gave life to other branches from the origin group; some others married with women/men coming from other areas of the country, with different *lisan* and customs. Many were the relatives, distant both geographically and agnatically, that the groom and his siblings were hearing about for the first time in their life. It was the oral recollection of the genealogical tree of the origin group; the "historical sequence of movements along a marriage path" (Allerton 2013, 96). All those weddings were mentioned for a practical reason, to recall the past *barlake* that wife-takers still needed to give. However, I suggest this has not to be considered only from a monetary perspective: the elders in fact were handing down the legacy and the history of the origin group, through the recollection of tangible objects and goods (*barlake*) exchanged between wife givers and wife takers.

That episode made me realise the breadth of kinship in Timor-Leste, as well as the importance of history of the Houses. Domestic moments in which the elders of the family recollect the past *barlake*'s goods are fundamental for the younger generations. This was confirmed to me by many people: my hosts both in Daralata and later on in Waikulale, my friends and acquaintances in Dili and some of the students at UNTL. Both young and old people participate in these private chats, so the history of the family can be handed down without making mistakes, since the elders rectify one another with the correct information.

The historical as well as geographical paths that were recounted walk hand in hand with the goods exchanged that then become *rikusoin* (T., wealth, resources) for the origin groups, as if they were testimonies of the alliances. These routes recall the *topogenies* described by Fox (2006, or. 1993), complex and ritual narratives, telling the ancestral origins of an origin group.[62] They recount the geographical path of a given House, focusing on the territorial trajectories and belongings, more than the historical and temporal occurrences (8-11), which indicates the importance of the places and territories comprised within the Houses. Throughout South East Asia, and especially in the south-eastern area of the Indonesian archipelago, the importance of the social and historical memory connected to the Houses is often represented by ancestral objects stored in the buildings, tangible evidence of the Houses' past (2). In Venilale, potent objects belonged to the ancestors are stored in *uma lulik*. These objects are representations of the status of the House, and of the bonds between *fetosan* and *umane*. They also represent the relations between the ancestors and the *lulik* potency. *Fetosan umane*'s relations are fundamental in order to understand *uma lulik*, because they represent the history of the House itself. This history is recounted through origin narratives, in both formal and informal ways – like the one I just mentioned. In addition, the history of a House is also displayed by the objects stored in the potent buildings (*uma lulik*), both historical evidence of the existence of a House and also tangible elements of the bonds, and kinship of the members of the House (I will further explore the topic of the *lulik* objects in Chapters 2 and 3). The transgenerational transmission of goods belonging to each House could be indeed considered as heritage – both in its tangible and intangible dimension.

However, the elephant in the room has to be taken into consideration. These objects and, more generally, the *rikusoin* belonging to a House, mostly derive from exchanges between groups, involving women in the exchanges too (*barlake*). This strongly clashes with the Western perspective on sexual equality, but also with the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Are women valued as commodities? And to what extent can resources exchanged through *barlake* be considered as ICH? Besides the creation and reproduction of kinship and the paramount role of transmission, in fact, the

[62] The importance of the landscape and the environment associated with *uma lulik* is going to be central in I.4.

socio-cultural practice of *barlake* might collide with the UNESCO gender equality norms, based on the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).[63] In the next section (I.3.2) I will discuss these issues. On the one hand, *barlake* is a paramount element of East Timorese culture, on the other hand, this practice has been critically scrutinised since the Portuguese colonial period by different actors. Nowadays, the critiques related to it connected to gender equality and violence against women are many. Precisely the controversies surrounding the practice are the reasons why this practice will not be considered as heritage – at least from the national and international official heritage discourse perspective.

I.3.2 *Barlake*, the elephant in the room

> Gender tends to be overlooked in discussions of 'heritage'.
> When it is addressed, it is often related to women's issues.
> Just as many people tend to believe that ideology is what other people believe,
> and ethnicity is what people unlike ourselves possess,
> 'gender' all too often gets treated as what women have
> – a women's problem – as if men have no gender.
> Laurajane Smith, 2008

> Violence against women shall be understood to encompass,
> but not be limited to, the following:
> Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering,
> sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape,
> female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women,
> non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.
> Article 2, UN Declaration on the elimination of violence against women, 1993[64]

In Timor-Leste, *barlake* are the occasions during which exchanges between two families and groups are discussed,[65] and these exchanges are reproduced even after death. Connections between groups do not fade away with death; on the contrary, death provides an occasion to reaffirm the bonds between wife-givers and wife-takers (Guterres 2001, 174). According to Forman, in the 1970s among the Makasae peoples in Baukau, mutual exchanges were a way to exorcise death, by constantly perpetuating marital bonds, that symbolically represented the beginning and the flow of life or the origin group (Forman 1980, 164). The Makasae people's beliefs interpret the creation of life – both human and agricultural – as embedded within the unions of the descent group (Guterres 2001). These

[63] *Cf*. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/, last accessed on 30.12.2020.
[64] *Cf*. https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/violenceagainstwomen.aspx, last accessed on 20.12.2020.
[65] Kelly Silva (2012) mentions that in Dili barlake are usually discussed after a couple settle down and have a child (153); Forman (1980) writes that the couple that is supposed to get married sleep together first and the day after the negotiations can start. The information collected during my fieldwork suggests that the virginity of the bride is fundamental in order to begin the negotiations. I guess the inference of both Catholicism and the Indonesian military occupation are the main factors of this mindset. In Indonesia, in fact, sex before marriage is strongly disapproved of and, in many cases, socially sanctioned.

bonds are not only relevant for the social production and reproduction of kinship, but also for the production and reproduction of the food produced and consumed by the members of the House (see II.4 on these aspects). "For the Makasae, continuity in life depends on the exchange of food and its means of production between wife-giving and wife-taking groups" (Forman 1980, 152-153). The group of origin, in fact, descending from a common ancestor, propagates itself through bonds and alliances with other groups (marriages), hence perpetuating life and giving birth to new generations. Nowadays in Venilale, the negotiations to decide the goods to be exchanged are generally referred to as *barlake* and these can last a long time before the wedding itself. There are many rituals shaping the long process of the marriage exchanges between two families and its meaning as well as its contents are often contested and interpreted in different ways (Hicks 2012; Silva 2012). Many goods can be exchanged between families, as I indicated throughout the chapter. *Barlake*'s goods represent collective capital that are used only for *fetosan umane* purposes. During the first preliminary gathering between Cornelio's siblings and cousins in Fatumaka presented earlier, all the relatives gave money for the *barlake*, including the groom's siblings. The money was kept separately, just for the *barlake*. During my stay in Waikulale (September 2017-March 2018) a house in a nearby village burst into flames during the night, also burning the barn of the house. Everybody was talking about this terrible accident, stressing the fact that the family affected by the misfortune used to keep the *fetosaun umane* money in the barn, that unfortunately was destroyed in the fire too. The fact that the entire extended families are involved in the *barlake* let us understand that in Venilale and, more generally, in Timor-Leste, a wedding cannot be considered as a private issue between a man and a woman or even between a couple and their parents and close relatives, but it involves the entire origin groups (*uma fukun*, T.).

Nowadays, *barlake* is a disputed and controversial practice. The anthropological literature on *barlake* agrees on the fact that is essential within the East Timorese culture, representing a cornerstone of social production and reproduction in Timor-Leste (Hicks 2012; Niner 2012; Silva 2019a). It has to be mentioned, though, that a certain part of the classic anthropological approach defends *barlake*, despite being possibly linked to gender inequalities (Niner 2012, 138). For instance, David Hicks argues that the practice cannot be understood as a purchase, but – conversely – as a way to protect women (Niner 2012, 138). However, nowadays, a certain part of the feminist critique, sustaining gender equality (the ideals of which are guided by the UN Human Rights Declaration) condemns East Timorese marriage exchanges as means of subjugations of women. Just to give an example, Lynsze Woon describes *barlake* as

> the custom (...) involving women moving from the control of their fathers to their husbands through a system of exchange. Barlake restricts women's access to economic and social rights. The continuing practice of barlake is indicative of the significant tensions between institutionalisation of

> modern international norms of gender best practice and deep-rooted cultural norms (Woon 2012, 49).

For other commentators, as well as NGOs workers, *barlake* itself may cause the impoverishment of the less privileged citizens and communities – because of the many and expensive exchanges between wife-givers and wife-takers – and this cultural practice may be the main cause of domestic violence in the country. Heather Wallace has registered that in Timor-Leste the number of a couple's children is often supposed to compensate for the value of the *barlake*: on the one hand, continuing to have children grants the continuation of the family line; on the other, having daughters generates *barlake* income for the future (2014, 40-42). For these reasons, Wallace suggests that *barlake* is among the reasons why many women and couples choose not to use contraceptives (2014, 38).

The criticisms towards *barlake* are not new at all. The main debate has not changed much since Portuguese colonization, the main issue being over the nature of the exchange itself. Some Portuguese civil servants as well as some Catholic priests interpreted *barlake* as a transaction between goods and brides, hence implying a commodification of women (Niner 2019; Silva 2019b, 314). The East Timorese intellectuals involved in this debate, which was named the "*barlake* war", counterargued that *barlake* is part of a complex social process and practice (*i.e fetosan umane*) that could not be reduced to a transaction (Silva 2019b, 314) – similarly to what a certain part of foreigners as well as indigenous social scientists argue nowadays. Silva points out that the so-called "*barlake* war" was carried on by East Timorese intellectuals, educated within the colonial and Catholic school structures. I would like to add that all of them were men, both foreigners and East Timorese. With the FRETILIN Unilateral Declaration of Independence (28th November 1975), there were many customs and traditional aspects that this revolutionary front wanted to eliminate. Namely, the Popular Organization of the East Timorese Women (*Organização Popular da Mulher Timorense*, OPMT, Pt.) was well aware of the oppression suffered by East Timorese women. The leaders of OPMT fought against what Hannah Loney has called the "double exploitation", subjugating women in Timor-Leste (2015): both the 'traditional' conceptions and the colonial ones, among which the sexual exploitation of local women conducted by Portuguese colonialists, 'traditional' polygyny and *barlake* (2015). *Barlake* was even outlawed in the FRETILIN Manifesto in the mid-1970s, even if later on the political party had to negotiate this decision with the customary leaders in the rural areas (Niner 2012, 144-145).

Many young people with whom I had the chance to talk to in Venilale as well as in Dili (both men and women) told me that in their opinions, their families should pay less costly *barlake*, so the money should be used to build a decent house for the young couple or to give a good education to the children, hence excluding other relatives from the exchange of the *rikusoin*. In Venilale, *barlake* and marriage exchanges are still largely performed, and they were one of the most recurring topics when I was living there. On the one hand, the exchanges of goods were never interpreted as economic

transactions by my interlocutors – but rather as social obligations between wife-givers and wife-takers – implying trades of material resources between the two groups. On the other hand, though, when quarrels and fights arose within households, especially among young married couples, *barlake* was often deployed as a tool to silence the fight itself – as the exchange and its implications were something to respect and obey without discussion. Part of the anthropological literature has discussed the meanings given to exchanges and gifts, as part of the marriage processes. In particular, Webb Keane, exploring the transactions of objects and goods within the public sphere in the island of Sumba, stresses the transformative action wherein the objects are embedded: "the (...) agency that exchange possesses is not found in the objects alone, but in the repeated events wherein they are transacted, in the links forged among sequences of events, and in the words spoken as the objects move" (1997, 92). Therefore, the goods exchanged as gifts during the public transactions, cannot be understood as merely material, but they represent their trans-actors as well (78-81). Objects, goods, riches, *rikusoin* swapped during the *barlake* and the *fetosan umane* exchanges are embedded in personal as well as social histories that are acknowledged in the exchange itself. *Barlake* is a way of creating a bond, throughout tangible elements (goods, riches, *rikusoin*), implying moral and social obligations between two groups.

Both my male hosts, in Daralata as well as in Waikulale, were respected by the villages where they used to live. Mr. Santana was a *lisan* expert of the Makasae community, while Mr. Alex used to be the Mayor of the Venilale subregion for 15 years (1988-2003). Due to their prestige and status within the community, neighbours and fellow citizens very often used to pay visits and ask for their help and opinions in the resolution of quarrels within their households. These fights often had to do with unwanted babies, unhappy marriages, violent discussions between parents-in-law and their respective daughters-in-law. *Barlake* was often brought up in these discussions. I report one particular case that I hope can shed light on the scale of the matter, involving both personal, social and moral ties between people. On a rainy Saturday afternoon, the house in Waikulale was particularly quiet and everyone was resting. I was reading a book, when suddenly I heard women entering from the back of the house, from the kitchen, into the living room. Some sounded angry, others were weeping. Alex, my Waikulale's host, suddenly left his room, where he was resting, and asked what was going on. A long discussion in Kairui-Midiki started, in which I decided not to take part. It sounded quite serious and I did not want to intrude. Once the tones seemed more relaxed, I made my way to the living room. Mr. Alex was sitting at the head of the table, his usual seat. Other women I had never seen before, one of whom was still in tears, were sitting on the sofa instead. Mr. Alex's wife was not there. I greeted everyone and mentioned that I was going to prepare some tea for everyone. I then slipped into the kitchen, looking for Mr. Alex's youngest daughter Sol, hoping to get some clue about what was going on. In the kitchen, Sol and her mother were eating unripe mangoes with salt. I sat with them and tried

to understand what had happened. Meanwhile, glancing out of the kitchen, beyond the garden, I saw that in Claudino's porch (Mr. Alex's older brother) there was a small group of old men talking, among whom was Constancio, an old cousin of both Claudino and Alex. Sol and her mother explained to me that Sónia, Constancio's daughter-in-law, was expected to prepare the lunch (*etu*, T.) for Constancio the day before, but she did not, citing as a motivation the fact that she had to go to work. Constancio was resentful. A discussion broke out between Constancio's son and his father, during which Constancio had pointed out that he had paid the *barlake* for his marriage and, therefore, he expected the agreement to be respected. His son, instead of obeying his father, had kept on defending his wife. Therefore, the discussion had taken on really violent tones. That is the reason why they decided to come and settle the fight with Alex and Claudino, the day after the quarrel. The women in the living room were Sónia, her mother-in-law and another relative; while at Claudino's there were the men: Constancio, his son and another young man.

I then asked Sol and her mother what they thought of the matter. They replied that Sónia should have cooked the rice, not to cause the quarrel. They also added that her husband should have obeyed to his father, Constancio. Later on, after dinner, once everyone left, I asked Alex what he thought of all that discussion. I liked to confront Alex on hot topics, because I found his attitude very progressive and wise. He did not disappoint my expectations in that case too. He replied "Acáro,[66] the problem arose because nowadays women work as well as men. And this in Timor is new... it takes time for things to change. If a woman brings money at home, this should be acknowledged by the whole family". Some weeks later I would have had a conversation with uncle Claudino (see II.2.2), who explained me how the East Timorese society has changed in the last decades, in his perspective. "Nowadays democracy and human rights impose you not to oblige your sons and their respective wives to do whatever you want to (*manda sira*, T.). In the past it was different. The eldest decided, and the youngest had to oblige. I am alone in this house with my wife, my sons working in Dili, gaining $150 per month.[67] They prefer to live like that, instead of living here and being farmers, like us".

I suggest that the conversations mentioned, as well as the quarrel that happened between Constancio, his son and his daughter-in-law, reveal open conflicts between different ideals over social orders. They reveal deep undergoing social changes that eventually lead to frictions. On the one hand, Constancio could not accept the fact that his son was disobeying his authority. His son's attitude brings patrilineality itself into question – and not just patriarchy, as feminists would probably suggest. Questioning the authority of the elders is not just considered disrespectful, but it calls into question the familiar and social order itself, based on the authority of the elders over the youngers (the next

[66] Acáro was the nickname Alex gave me. In Indonesia, as well as in Timor-Leste, some nicknames are formed by taking the first part of the given name of a person, adding an "a" as a first letter. Amara, Alina, Aulou are examples.
[67] 150 American dollars is the minimum wage for any employee in Timor-Leste.

chapter will focus on this topic). On the other, Constancio's son felt entitled to disobey, not just to take the side of his wife, but because his wife contributes in practical terms to the nourishment of the household. Sonia's role, hence, was ambivalent: she was expected to take care of the house, as any wife would do following the East Timorese stereotypical ideal (not only East Timorese, in any case),[68] but at the same time she worked, receiving a salary – activity usually conducted by men.[69] In the small and spontaneous domestic tribunal, Sonia was accused of being the cause of the fuss, and Constancio, the elder, felt ousted both by his daughter-in-law and, most importantly, by his son who, instead of defending him, defended his wife. *Barlake* was deployed as a tool by Constancio in an attempt to reconstitute the social order of domestic unity. The only person who did not blame Sonia for her attitude was Alex, my host.

I suggest that proposing the elimination of *barlake* as a way of preventing these frictions to happen would be limitative, as well as accusing *barlake* of being the reason why gender inequality and domestic violence exist in Timor-Leste. During my stay in Waikulale, the 15-year-old daughter of Alex's younger brother was obliged to leave the school she was attending in Lospalos and had to come back home and live with her widowed father, so she could cook and take care of the house chores, that her father was apparently not able to carry out by himself. The regret her father and Alex felt because of this decision was tangible. Blaming the father or the elders for the decision taken would be limiting. I suggest taking into account stereotypical gender norms and roles that both men and women are supposed to perform in order to be accepted within their families, as well as within society at large. However, pretending that marriage exchanges do not imply personal and social commitments between people and groups, often reinforcing gender stereotypes and norms would be equally limiting.

In a conversation I had with Santana (as well as during the interview I had with Claudino, see Ch. II) they both told me that before the Indonesian military occupation FRETILIN[70] wanted to change *barlake*, imposing a new perspective on marriages, but FRETILIN never wanted to touch *lisan*. In its brief yet bold political activity,[71] FRETILIN tried to question the role of *barlake* (as I mentioned above);

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[68] *Cf*.https://timoroaniasusesu.wordpress.com/2017/09/17/se-mak-dehan-mane-labele-tein-cesar-gaio-nain-ba-dilicious-resturante-ai-han-lokal/?fbclid=IwAR1HLMJVoomAmADxPPzOTuz4-LB4FZH9RZ5fuquZyn_BU8cYRWTbHWpYiuA, article entitled "Who said men can't cook? Cesar Gaio, owner of Dilicious Timor, restaurant with local food", on some of the gender stereotypes linked to cooking. Last accessed on 30.12.2020.

[69] I recall the episode I mentioned, with the women peeling the cobs for the Fatumaka's Salesian School and community. While we were peeling the cobs, some of them told me that they felt happy to be in the barn working, so they could take a break from the chores in their house. However, they were still expected to cook for their families, once they had gone back to their houses.

[70] The Indonesian military forces invaded Timor-Leste on 8th December of 1975. FRETILIN had had control of the territory since August of the same year.

[71] Some of the sections in Chapter 4 will be dedicated to a more in-depth analysis of FRETILIN and the role of the Resistance in Timor-Leste.

however, it had to come to terms with the rural communities without which FRETILIN would not have survived (Niner 2012, 145). According to both Claudino and Santana, a man and a woman should choose each other, and the parents should not have imposed any decision on marriages and unions, as it used to be in the past. However, the reciprocation of gifts between wife-givers and wife-takers was not under discussion. Santana added also that during the Portuguese colonisation, the groom's parents were the ones going and ask for the hand of the bride to the girl's family, and not the groom himself.[72]

Mr. Alex, my host in Waikulale, refused to ask for *barlake* for his daughter (and first-born). Together with his wife, they asked only a small and symbolic contribution to the groom's parents, which he used to call *aitukan-bee manas* (T., firewoods and hot water) or *musan* (T., seeds). These linguistic expressions are metaphors that symbolize the parents' efforts in raising their daughter: the hot water that is used to bathe the babies and the new mother with, and the seeds for food (*musan*, T.).[73] Mr. Alex stressed many times that the important thing for him was the love between his daughter and her husband-to-be, who had been together for almost 10 years by 2018. Mr. Alex's older brother, though, Claudino (a *lia nain*), insisted on having a *barlake* discussion. Mr. Alex did not take part in the meeting, which involved only Claudino, his eldest brother and Constancio. There were no members of the groom's family, not even the groom himself who was watching the TV in the living room with Mr. Alex, while the elders were having the meeting in a small room next to the entrance that lasted less than 30 minutes. When they finally deliberated the results of their debate, asking for money and a few buffaloes for the groom's family, Mr. Alex burst into laughter, failing to hide his disappointment, while Lisa, the bride-to-be and Mr. Alex's daughter, started to yell about that "silly tradition that was stealing money from their future as a family". I was shocked and amused at the same time by Lisa's reaction, as well as by Mr. Alex's attitude towards his elder brothers and cousins. It was the first time that I saw an open divergence in the house, displayed with such a loud and transparent stance. Most importantly, a young unmarried woman (Lisa) and her father Alex, Claudino's younger brother, were bold enough to confront the older generation, represented by Claudino (a *lia nain*) and Constancio. Also in Lospalos, with my Daralata host Santana and his relatives, during the preliminary discussion for the *barlake* mentioned above, the only people who were allowed to talk during the meeting were the elders: the bride's father and his brothers; Santana and his peers. The groom was present, but he never talked. As mentioned, the bride and her mother were inside the house, cooking.

[72] Justino Guterres confirms that in the past, the Makasae marriages were arranged by the family, "so that the families could ensure their future political and economic influence within the community and beyond" (2001, 174).
[73] See Silva 2019b on the use of *aitukan-bee manas* during marriage exchanges in Dili.

Some scholars have stressed the lack of discussion of gender issues within the heritage field, within UNESCO and, most importantly, within the Intangible Cultural Heritage frame (Moghadam and Bagheritari 2007; Smith 2008). Despite UN recognition that cultural norms and values sometimes clash with women's rights (see United Nations 1995; UNESCO 2004) and the fact that cultural and artistic values are believed to promote gender equality (UNESCO 2007, 4-8), however gender issues "still lack visibility and understanding among new heritage policy-makers" (UNESCO 2007, 5). I suggest that it is important to take these issues into consideration within the heritage-making processes in Timor-Leste. Cultural change should and could be promoted through heritage. After centuries of foreign as well as East Timorese men (intellectuals, priests, politicians) discussing whether *barlake* dehumanize or not women; after centuries of foreigners (scholars, missionaries, NGO workers) analysing this practice, perhaps East Timorese women's arguments about the topic should be taken into account – in order to question and discuss how and if *barlake* could promote gender equality. Inclusion of women within the heritage discourse and practices should be a priority. However, in Venilale women were often excluded or not considered as preeminent interlocutors in public debates related to *lisan* and traditional issues. As I mentioned, during the preliminary *barlake* meetings, both in Lospalos and Waikulale, women were not included in the discussion. And when Lisa boldly stated her opinion, nobody seemed to listen. Old men, namely *lia nain* (like Santana and Claudino) are often considered as the only spokesmen concerning cultural issues. And traditionally, the anthropological literature concerning Eastern Indonesia has often taken into consideration only the people who are believed to have 'ritual expertise' and 'cultural knowledge' as the only official voices (see Keane 2004, 148). This often leads to an unquestioning attitude to the socio-political implications of our actions as anthropologists. Conscious of these issues, Catherine Allerton, during her fieldwork in Flores, explicitly avoided considering only the words of those who are considered the 'ritual experts' (2013, 7-8); similarly, I suggest that *lia nain* cannot be the only interlocutors taken into account when dealing with traditional knowledge.[74] Besides promoting a partial perspective on the local society, I suggest this attitude promotes stereotyped gender roles too. Listening to women is not important just because a matter of impartiality; but, assuming the position of *lia nain* within a community can help us question and discuss the (toxic) masculinity implied in this socio-cultural role and not just the absence of women' interventions within public gatherings and debates.

Fetosan umane and *barlake* are paramount socio-cultural practices within Timor-Leste which, despite being criticized since the Portuguese colonisation by many different actors, still persist nowadays. They imply the circulation of goods and women, often causing debates on whether they imply the commodification of women or not. More precisely, these controversies are the reasons why

[74] In Chapter II I explore further the issue related to gender norms and also the gender identity of the researchers.

barlake is incompatible with the gender equality rights of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Nevertheless, *fetosan umane*, implying the transmission of material goods from one generation to the other and during marriages and funerals, and the display of potent objects (*sasaan lulik*) in the *uma lulik*, could be understood as local ways of understanding heritage. *Fetosan umane* connects kinship, alliances among Houses and social groups; these social relations are embedded in goods and objects considered paramount within a House or descent group, as part of their history, legacy and heritage.

To sum up, the anthropological literature rightly points out that *barlake* is not just a trade or a transaction between goods and people, but it is characterised by broader and deeper social, cultural and moral implications. And precisely because of its socio-cultural implications, one cannot pretend not to see that within these obligations there are also the implied social hierarchies and gender norms that are intended to be respected. And since these norms exist, *barlake* can potentially contribute to gender inequality. Far from being the cause of domestic violence, rather than a cause of it in itself, *barlake* constitutes a potential tool used to perpetrate social and gender injustice.

I.4 Domesticated and wild Nature: Cultural landscape in Timor-Leste

> Power is that intangible, mysterious,
> and divine energy which animates
> the universe.
> It is manifested in every aspect
> of the natural worlds,
> in stones, trees, clouds and fire,
> but is expressed quintessentially
> in the central mystery of life,
> the process of generation and regeneration.
> Benedict Anderson 2006. Language and power, 22

In this last section I want to discuss the importance of the dynamics between Houses and the environment in which they belong and build a bridge between Venilale's local beliefs connected to the landscape and the UNESCO's concept of cultural landscape.[75] In I.4 I will discuss the potency of the landscape in Timor-Leste. Seizing Allerton's argument (2013, 97-126) and influenced by Tim Ingold's "lived-in environment" concept (Ingold 2000), my aim is to show the reciprocity connecting Venilale's human beings and their activities to the landscape and the spirits and agents inhabiting it. Finally, in the next and last subsection (I.4.2), I will discuss the possibility of recognizing the East Timorese beliefs surrounding the landscape as cultural landscape, as defined by UNESCO.

As already mentioned in I.3, the geographical routes of a House are fundamental, and the temporal and historical history of a particular House is described through a spatial path as well as

[75] *Cf*. https://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

through marriages (*cf*. Allerton 2013, 94-96; Fox 2006, or. 1993, 8-11). The routes also indicate some of the places and territories belonging to Houses and scattered throughout the landscape. Actually, Houses belong to places, since in Venilale as well as elsewhere in Timor-Leste (*cf*. Bovensiepen 2015, 9), people belong to the land and not the opposite. As mentioned, origins are usually expressed through botanical metaphorical expressions: ancestors' origins are considered as the trunk (of a tree), while the current groupings and social alliances are considered the tips (Fox, 2006, or. 1993, 17). This linguistic aspect is not of secondary importance, given the fact that in the rural areas of Timor-Leste as well as in other parts of Eastern Indonesia, people often live off subsistence agriculture: this activity moulds social, economic and ritual interactions, including linguistic expressions. The land is the main resource for the groups living in a territory: agriculture is central to Venilale's communities, as well for their ritual and spiritual activities, connected to *uma lulik* and to the landscape.

The two families I lived with used to plant corn and rice (staple East Timorese food), as well as sweet potatoes, pumpkins, cassava, yams, ginger, turmeric, peanuts, green leafy vegetables (such as water spinach, *kankung*, B.I and T.). They may also grow bananas, papayas, mangoes, coconuts, sugar palms, limes, pomelos and other fruit trees, too. This huge variety of crops was maintained in different locations, often quite far from the household. Corn and rice especially were grown in huge fields located in large, wide terraced hills, distant from the house, and the fields bordered with other people's fields, with no fence dividing them. Crops and vegetables were grown in small gardens close to the house, and the fruit trees were scattered across a large territory surrounding the house. None of the crops were fenced and this often puzzled me, especially at the beginning of my fieldwork, because I could not recognize which plants were my hosts', and which were not. The fruit trees particularly were scattered in areas that I considered wild and overgrown, so I thought they were communal areas where anyone could pick any fruit.

My hosts always warned me not to pick fruit from the wrong trees: it could be dangerous. On the one hand, picking the wrong crop and using someone else's fields cause huge fights between neighbours; but it can be dangerous also because of the spirits inhabiting the land, plants and trees. For instance, rice and corn fields sometimes were named by my hosts, especially the ones directly connected to the *uma lulik*, which my hosts believed to be the most ancient ones where the ancestors used to plant crops. The same happened with the springs of water: some of them were considered potent (*lulik*) and for this reasons rituals and ceremonies were performed throughout the year, offering food to the spirits inhabiting them. The rituals to the potent springs were not performed only by my hosts but, as the springs of water were a source of livelihood for a huge number of people, the rituals were performed by the groups of households who used the water coming from that specific spring. The human rituals ensure that the springs will not run dry. These ceremonies express the gratitude of the living community towards the agents inhabiting them (Palmer 2015). Spirits do not inhabit only

lulik fields and springs, but also other places scattered throughout the landscape to which access is often forbidden because they are potentially dangerous (*lulik*). Specific stones and trees can be *lulik* too, as well as the objects stored in the *uma lulik* (*sasaan lulik*, T.), as I mentioned in the past paragraphs. The spirits inhabiting the landscape have a variety of specific names, but they are often referred to as *rai nain*. Literally, *rai nain* in Tetun means owner/lord (*nain*) of the land (*rai*), a linguistic aspect that stresses once more the fact that the ultimate owners of a place are not humans, but other entities scattered throughout the landscape. In the Baukau region these spirits are often referred to as *dai* (both in Makassae, Waim'a and Kairui-Midiki); often connected to wildness, they reveal what Lisa Palmer defines 'inclusive sociality', since they represent animal ancestors to which the living House members are connected (2015, 42-45). Despite the existence of spirits inhabiting and, to a certain extent, owning the land (Allerton 2013, 120-122), fields and gardens are handed down from one generation to the other, following a patrilineal inheritance system that must be respected so as to avoid unpleasant disputes among relatives.

As rice and corn are the two main cereals and the staple food in Timor-Leste, the agriculture cycle of these two cereals influences the division of time in Venilale – as well as elsewhere in the rural areas of the country. The year is roughly divided between *bai loron* (dry season: May-October) and *tempu udan* (rain season: November-May). At the beginning of the first rains (November), corn and rice are planted. With the beginning of the intense storms (January-February), corn is harvested, and the rice buds transplanted. The rice needs to be transplanted so the grains of rice will be softer and tastier – as my informants used to repeat to me, over and over. Finally, celebrating the rice harvest occurs between May and June. To celebrate the corn harvest (*sau batar*) and the rice harvest (*hare foun*), the potent objects stored in the *uma lulik* (*sasaan lulik*) are generally taken out from the potent buildings through a ritual celebration in which the members of the House participate. Traditionally, in fact, the agriculture activities are connected to the House: to the ancestors and to the spirits inhabiting the places belonging to the *uma lulik*. During the year, there are many rituals performed in the ancestral fields as well as in other potent places, where food is offered to the *rai nain*, the spirits who guard the land. Specific fields, trees, stones, springs and streams of water belong to the Houses, and hence are part of the *rikusoin* of the *uma lulik*. In the cases in which the *uma lulik*'s building has not been built yet, the household celebrates the harvest in the origin place of the House group. As Allerton points out, the "fields gain value (...) from numerous ritual procedures that are considered essential to the production of a successful crop" (Allerton 2013, 103). In Timor-Leste, the agriculture cycle and calendar overlap with the Catholic/Western one. In fact, the most important ceremonies take place between the 1st and 2nd of November: the ancestors' day, overlapping with the Catholic All Saints and

All Souls' Day, showing the syncretic articulation of these celebrations (*cf*. Barnes 2011 and Bovensiepen 2009 on syncretism in Manatuto).[76]

During the Finadu (1st and 2nd of November), I visited my hosts' original hamlet (*Deroho*, *K-m*, meaning 'lemon tree'), to celebrate the ancestors on the same days of the Catholic celebrations for saints and dead souls. Every East Timorese commemorate the ancestors and deaths souls with their family, representing a cultural paramount element.[77] The dates of the celebration coincide with the Catholic calendar, corresponding to the festivity of saints and dead souls. Despite the importance that all these dates and events have for the rural communities in Venilale (and throughout Timor-Leste), and despite the fact that these rituals connect people to their *uma lulik*, to their ancestors and to the territory they inhabit (or the territory the ancestors used to inhabit), the current East Timorese Authorised Heritage Discourse seems focused on other aspects of the *uma lulik*, namely their tangible architectures (see Chapter III). My host, Mr. Alex, told me that the celebration corresponded to the rice sowing, so to the first rains, even before the arrival of Catholicism in Timor-Leste.[78] Early in the morning of the 1st of November, the women were busy in the kitchen preparing food that we would have carried from Waikulale to Deroho to share it with the relatives and with the ancestors. All Alex's and uncle Claudino's children were back home for this celebration. The night of the 30th of October to the 1st of November, my host mother kept the main door of the house open, 'so the spirits know they can come in', she said.

[76] I could observe the syncretic articulation of the East-Timorese beliefs also during the Easter holidays. If for the official Catholic tradition, the most important celebration of the liturgic year is the Resurrection of Christ, in Timor-Leste Good Friday seems to be more important than Easter itself. On Good Friday of 2017 I was in Dili and I was surprised to notice that all the commercial activities were shut down, the streets were empty, and it was incredibly difficult even to find a taxi. I suggest that this happened, because 'traditionally' in Timor-Leste death has a paramount importance and it is strongly felt and celebrated. Therefore, the anniversary commemorating the death of Jesus Christ has a central importance throughout the country. My hosts in Daralata once asked me why the death of Jesus was not celebrated on the same day every year, but its date changes every year.

[77] The majority of the young people live in Dili, or they study in other regions. For All Souls' and All Saints' days, though, all of them were back again, to enjoy their time with the family.

[78] The first missionaries arrived on the island of Timor in 1515, but the Catholic presence started to have a real capillary presence only during the military Indonesian occupation (1975-1999), when the administration demanded that the local population convert to one of the 5 Indonesian official religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism or Confucianism.

Figure 10 Praying on the ancestors' graves in Deroho, the original hamlet of my host family, 1.11.2017 (author's picture)

Figure 11 Sharing food and drinks between living and ancestors, close to the potent stone (*fatuk lulik*), 1.11.2017 (author's picture)

Once in Deroho, Claudino opened the door of the *uma lulik*. Then we walked to the place where the ancestors were buried, and the women passed on the candles and dispersed the flower petals on the ground. Then, men lighted *kretek* cigarettes and let them burn on the ground, "so the ancestors can smoke too". There were no prayers, but we were silent for a while. After a short while, women brought the baskets with the food and drinks to a nearby area and they distributed the food on banana leaves on the ground. I noticed that people were sitting in circle, avoiding touching a white

stone that was located in the middle of our circle. Alex told me that his origin group considered that stone as potent (*fatuk lulik*, *T.*) and explained to me that in the past, during 'ancestral time' (*beiala sira nia tempu*, *T.*), the ancestors found *lulik* objects on the ground, because nature (*natureza*, T.) and the ancestral places used to 'produce' them. These ancestral objects are golden disks (*belak*) and swords (*surik*), central goods within the *fetosan umane* exchanges – as discussed earlier. Drums could be found on the ground too: the land (*rai*), would give these gifts to humans. Both in Daralata and in Waikulale, from time to time my hosts mentioned the 'ancestral times', mythical times when the ancestors were alive. My host mother in Daralata told me that in the past people did not need to plant and sow, in fact, "the land would give fruits and products naturally". The association of potent stones with ancestral times is a common element throughout the Austronesian world (cf. Allerton 2013, 113-115). Allerton defines the potent stones as monuments and signs of history, connecting the present generations to the dead, to ancestors and to the ancestral times (113). In Venilale, stones are believed to protect human beings and bring them luck and prosperity. My hosts in Waikulale told me that there are special stones in the *lulik* fields, ensuring the good health of the buffaloes that plough the muddy ground of the rice-fields.

Moreover, the Tetun expression *fatuk no ai* (stones and trees) describes the animistic beliefs that ancestors of East Timorese people used to believe. I heard the expression *fatuk no ai* in many different situations, both in Dili and in Venilale and by using these words my interlocutors wanted to remark on the coherence between animism and Catholicism. In the past the ancestors used to believe in stones and trees, like the Old Testament suggests, before the gospel was revealed. Therefore, for East Timorese people the arrival of the missionaries represented the discovery of Christ and the Gospel but not the imposition of a new religion, totally different from the local and native beliefs. Trees, stones and nature (*natureza*, *T.*) are considered an 'old' and sometimes 'backward' way of believing in God, because the ancestors used to see God in the landscape: the sun, the moon, mountains, streams and springs, trees, stones and unusual atmospheric phenomena.

I found a similar explanation also in a report about the Baukau region, published by Timor Aid, an NGO developing programmes about the cultural heritage in Timor-Leste (Da Silva 2008). In the introduction, one can read that in the past the ancestors used to believe in God (of the Catholic tradition), but not knowing the Gospel, they prayed Him through trees (*ai hun*), stones (*fatuk lulik*), mountains (*foho*) and springs (*bee matan*). Non-human, supernatural and invisible agents interact with human beings and inhabit the environment, in Venilale. The land is believed to have a "potency in and of itself – a potency that can be both beneficial and harmful" (Allerton 2013, 108). Human beings are supposed to interact appropriately with the land otherwise these intangible agents can punish them (Bovensiepen 2009; 2014b; O'Connor, Pannell, Brockwell 2013, 211). Even eating fruits from the wrong

tree or wandering around alone can be dangerous: malevolent ghosts and spirits can attack you and make you sick, or even kill you (see Ch. II on this specific topic).

Armindo Da Silva, author of the Baukau Report, articulates some of these beliefs with the tale of Noah, presenting the *rikusoin* I have discussed throughout the chapter (including *bua malus*), and the connection existing between the environment, the ancestors, *uma lulik* and God.

> Once the Great Flood was over and he touched the ground with his feet, he kissed a stone (re'in fatuk). Being part of the Austronesian world, our ancestors used to pray to God through uma lulik. Lulik objects, swords (surik and katana), necklaces (morteen), golden and silver objects (osan mean and osan mutin) that the ancestors left for the future generations and stored in each uma lulik and the potent houses themselves have always been a bridge between humanity and God. Through prayers and by chewing bua malus, lighting candles made out of bees' wax, each year, for the rice and corn harvest (hare no batar foun), they prayed (harohan and hamulak) to thank the rai nain (lords/spirits of the land) in the lulik fields, and the ancestors too, who were already living in Heaven with God (Da Silva 2008, 9-10).

Prayers, chewing *bua malus* and lighting candles are activities that build and restore a connection between the visible and the invisible worlds. Allerton suggests that there is a close connection between the offerings to the ancestors and spirits, the places where they are made (like the stone-monument mentioned earlier) and the ritual speeches performed during these rituals. Allerton argues that offerings and ritual words are mixed together, hence "offerings emplace speech", combining material and immaterial elements together, that "materially constitute ritual sites in the landscape" (2013, 106).

Figure 12 My hosts decorated the Catholic shrine with flowers and with a candle, lighted from the 30th October until the 2nd of November.

I.4.2 Potent landscapes and cultural landscape

The UNESCO conceptualisation of natural and cultural heritage as two different domains has been brought into question, both by scholars as well as by heritage experts. This division created a dichotomy that has permeated the conservation ethos and UNESCO discourse and practice until 1992, the year in which the "World Heritage Convention became the first international legal instrument to recognize and protect cultural landscapes".[79] UNESCO definition of Natural Heritage states

> Natural heritage refers to natural features, geological and physiographical formations and delineated areas that constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants and natural sites of value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty. It includes private and publically protected natural areas, zoos, aquaria and botanical gardens, natural habitat, marine ecosystems, sanctuaries, reservoirs etc. (Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972).

As Rodney Harrison and Donal O'Donnell point out, already in 1972, when the Convention just quoted was ratified, "indigenous people in Australia and New Zealand (...) were influential in their criticisms of the separation of natural and cultural heritage in the management of heritage at regional, national and global levels" (2010, 90). The division between the 'work of man' and the 'work of nature' is in fact culturally framed (Harrison 2013, 205), and does not correspond to many 'indigenous' cosmologies existent in the world. The dichotomy between natural and cultural heritage was officially challenged for the first time by ICOMOS, with the adoption of the Burra Charter (1979, 1988, 1999, see Harrison 2013, 145). This Charter was adopted (and then readjusted and modified) as an alternative to the Natural Conservation ethos imposed on the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, in Australia. The Anangu indigenous people living in the area where the park is located, believe that Uluru and Kata Tjuta are physical manifestations of the actions of their mythical ancestors (Harrison 2013, 118). Precisely the need to recognize the indigenous values over the park led ICOMOS and other governmental institutions to propose an alternative to the legislation of the time, which recognized the site as a Natural Park. This Charter was the first attempt to include the Indigenous Australian voices within the National Official Discourse (Harrison 2013, 145).

> The Burra Charter suggests that the management of a heritage object, place or landscape should be determined by its significance according to a series of different categories of value—aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and spiritual (note the latter category was added in the 1999 revision), (Harrison 2016, 145).

[79] *Cf*. https://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape, last visited 30.12.2020.

The Anangu cosmology, named Tjukurpa, also indicates the rules dictating the "relationships between humans, animals, plants and the environment, the relationship between past and present, and the methods for the maintenance of these inter-relationships in the future" (Harrison 2013, 118); in fact the Aboriginal cosmology implies the existence of bonds of kinship between people and particular plants, animals or other non-human elements of the surrounding environment. This document was fundamental for two reasons. The first one is that, for the first time Heritage practices started to be conceptualized from a more bottom-up perspective, namely including the Aboriginal communities in the heritage-making process and conservation of the site. The second reason is that the Burra Charter was also subsequently adopted by UNESCO – as one of the key documents for the definition of the concept of cultural landscape, in 1992 (Harrison 2013, 125-126). The most important aspect of this new reshaping was the fact that the term "place" was introduced, considering it more inclusive than other concepts, such as site or monument.

The first place to be nominated as cultural landscape by UNESCO, following the above-mentioned recommendations, was the Tongariro National Park in New Zealand. Initially nominated as natural heritage in the World Heritage List of 1990 (WHL), in 1993 was then renominated under the WHL's cultural criteria as the first cultural landscape (Harrison and O'Donnell 2010, 91). The place in fact is not characterised, not just by natural diversity, but it has a specific cultural relevance for the Maori community. The mountains at the heart of the park, in particular, symbolize the spiritual links between the living community, the ancestors and nature.[80] As can be read on the UNESCO's webpage dedicated to the Tongariro National Park,

> The mountains at the heart of the park have cultural and religious significance for the Maori people and symbolize the spiritual links between this community and its environment. The park has active and extinct volcanoes, a diverse range of ecosystems and some spectacular landscapes (http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/421/, last accessed on 20.12.2020).

UNESCO defines 'cultural landscapes' as "combined works of nature and humankind, (that) express a long and intimate relationship between peoples and their natural environment".[81] With this concept, UNESCO's goal was to overcome the historical division between natural and cultural heritage. This last subcategory, in particular, recognises the spiritual and cultural significance that some places might have for certain populations. In similar ways, UNESCO registered as cultural landscapes the Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park in Australia, as mentioned above[82], as well as the Lushan National Park, Mount Wutai, and the Cultural Landscape of Honghe Hani Rice Terraces in China,[83] the Subak rice terraces

[80] *Cf*. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/421/, last accessed on 30.11.2020.
[81] *Cf*. https://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/, last accessed on 30.11.2020.
[82] *Cf*. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/447, last accessed on 30.11.2020.
[83] *Cf*. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/778, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

system in Bali,[84] and the Royal Hill of Ambohimanga in Madagascar[85]. I mentioned all the Cultural Landscapes recognised by UNESCO within the Austronesian world, because UNESCO stresses their spiritual relevance for the local communities, often linked to native mythologies and traditions. Cultural landscapes, overcoming the traditional Western division between natural and cultural heritage, can develop new strategies to cope with the natural environment in accordance with local conceptions and beliefs surrounding the environment and landscape.

As discussed in I.4.1, within the Austronesian world and namely in Eastern Indonesia, there are many contexts where landscape is believed to have agency, despite the many cultural as well as religious differences within such a huge area (Allerton 2009, 2013; Bovensiepen 2014b; Palmer 2015; Telle 2009). I suggest that the UNESCO concepts of cultural landscape and the cosmologies and beliefs present in Timor-Leste seem to have many elements in common. For instance, in her analysis of Funar village in Timor-Leste, Judith Bovensiepen points out that the local inhabitants, after being displaced for a long time during the military Indonesian occupation, 're-inspirited' the land when they finally went back to their ancestral territory (2009; 2011). As discussed in I.4.1, in Venilale the land is believed to have agency and the spirits inhabiting it often represent ancestral presences. Everyday activities linked to the agriculture cycle connects both practical as well as symbolic and ritual activities. However, despite the strong beliefs connected to the landscape, the East Timorese governmental apparatuses involved in the heritage-making process have not shown interest in the recognition of cultural landscape in the country. For instance, the Konis Santana National Park in Timor-Leste (Lautem region) officially considered as a commemorative symbol with the aim of strengthening the narrative of the nation (McWilliam 2013), was recognised as a natural park by the state, not allowing the local population conducting rituals and other activities within the park area. The Fataluku people are not allowed to live in this territory nor practice traditional activities (such as ritual ceremonies, fishing and hunting etc.) (O'Connor, Pannell, Brockwell 2013 209). The government perspective considers the area as a national park, with the aim of preserving the natural diversity – dismissing the cultural dimension of the place.

Conclusion

In this first chapter I aimed to ascertains to what extent words and concepts related to specific cultural practices can be considered as intangible cultural heritage in Timor-Leste. The concept of cultural transmission is paramount, as well as the one of *rikusoin*. *Rikusoin* represent natural, cultural and kin special goods, objects, places or natural elements, often imbued with ancestral potency, hence

[84] *Cf*. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1194, last accessed on 30.11.2020.
[85] *Cf*. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/950, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

considered important and transmitted from one generation to the other. Due to the central significance that *rikusoin* have in Timor-Leste, I proposed the term as a translation of the word heritage in Timor-Leste, and as an alternative to p*atrimóniu*. *Rikusoin* helped me question the classical division imposed by the AHD between natural and cultural heritage, and the one between tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The current anthropological literature concerning Timor-Leste and Eastern Indonesia has stressed the cosmological and social importance of land and landscape. I hence proposed a comparison between some of the cosmological aspects regarding the landscape and the agencies inhabiting it and the concept of Cultural Landscape proposed by UNESCO.

The chapter is dense of examples of cultural and social practices that my interlocutors often performed during my fieldwork and that for these reasons I consider central aspects of the current East Timorese intangible cultural heritage landscape. *Bua malus* as heritage is proposed due to its social significance. It is considered the most ancient and common symbol of sociability; a practice handed down from the ancestors until today, a shared *habitus* throughout Timor-Leste and within the vast Asia-Pacific region. *Fetosan umane* and *barlake* are central social practices, paramount to the production and reproduction of Houses in Timor-Leste. However, ambiguities characterise both *bua malus*, *fetosan umane* and *barlake*. On the one hand *bua malus* has undergone a process of scrutiny since the colonisation; on the other hand, though, *fetosan umane* and *barlake* are often considered among the reasons for gender inequality in Timor-Leste.

CHAPTER II – LOCAL FRICTIONS, IDENTITIES AND TRADITIONS

"Anthropologists are tattletales".
Aristotle, Nicomachean ethics[86]

Introduction

Frictions and tensions rather than harmony and peace helped me to focus on the relevance of some cultural aspects within the Venilale context. Awkwardness, silences, refusals, open fights and discussions helped me understand the local political configurations and dynamics, both at a household level and at a broader *suku* (village, T.) level. In some circumstances, my own presence and identity in Venilale helped me to understand the boundaries among people and groups, experiencing those boundaries in my own skin. The subtle processes of my inclusion and/or exclusion from the households I lived in (Daralata and Waikulale) made me perceive how identities are negotiated in order to create groups. In Timor-Leste I was an unmarried European girl interested in *uma lulik* and my presence was far from neutral. Dealing with how people perceived and configured my identity helped me to recognise some of the dynamics of incorporation and separation in Timor-Leste. How do exclusion and inclusion work? And why are these aspects relevant when dealing with heritage-making processes? How does the national heritage programme deal with local tensions and frictions?

Internal domestic dynamics shed light on the relations between members of different extended families and groups for me. This is mostly because kinship is a fundamental category that defines human groupings. In Venilale, specifically, different Houses create and define different groups. In order to understand hostilities, it is necessary to observe the boundaries traced by relations between Houses. Judith Bovensiepen traces a connection between the competitions existing between the origin narratives of the Houses in Laclubar (Manatuto, Timor-Leste) and what the author names "material processes" in the present. In Laclubar, "conflicts in the present tend to be framed in relation to origin narratives" (Bovensiepen 2015, 61). I suggest that this lens can be helpful in focusing on some of the social dynamics I observed in Venilale: I realised that the social tensions between groups were often connected to ancestral knowledge, and to Houses' affiliations. Origin, precedence, hierarchy and authority are fundamental concepts that can be helpful in the understanding of the East Timorese social context and that have been explored by many anthropologists not just in Timor-Leste, but also

[86] In Aristotle's Nicomachean ethics it is attested the use of the word 'anthropologos'. However, the Greek philosopher does not intend anthropologos as an expert of humans and their customs, but as a synonym of tattler (Aristotle 1957, 107). This definition is quite pertinent for this chapter, in which I discuss the frictions and fights I observed in Venilale among my interlocutors.

in other Eastern Indonesian societies and groups (McWilliam and Traube 2011, 17). The importance given to social status is in fact conspicuous among many of these societies. James Fox was the first scholar to suggest precedence as a useful analytical category for the analysis of many societies scattered within the Indonesian archipelago. He defines precedence as a "relative relationship" between different groups related to a same social whole (Fox 2009a, 1): precedence implies an interaction of oppositions related to one single origin, and a concatenation of relationships producing an "order of precedence" (Fox 2009b, 106). According to Fox's argument, the term precedence defines the internal social dynamics in that specific area of the world more accurately than the term hierarchy, mainly because within precedence, there is no privileged opposition as in hierarchy, but a complex interaction of oppositions. On the one hand, Greg Acciaioli agrees with Fox on the differences between hierarchy and precedence, but on the other hand, he points out that these terms often collapse into one another in everyday and ritual practices (Acciaioli 2009, 80). As a result, anthropologists should understand how hierarchy and precedence interact within the same social group. As he points out:

> Models of status ranking are analytically distinguishable by hierarchy's emphasis on a single underlying asymmetric opposition operating to construct exclusion and precedence's emphasis upon multiple valent oppositions linked to origin operating to differentiate and incorporate groups (2009, 81).

Andrew McWilliam (2009) notes that in the western part of the Timor Island, botanical idioms are used as metaphors for representing social groups. The opposition trunk/tip is an emic way of expressing social organisation through an agricultural metaphor. The anthropologist suggests that these oral expressions inform and express aspects of temporal as well as spatial precedence (2009). In addition, McWilliam adds that precedence is constantly contested and, hence, is reconfigured and negotiated: "any integrative and ordering authority inherent in the principle of precedence typically rests upon a negotiated and temporary consensus" (127). Due to the fact that fights and coalitions are strongly related to ancestral and traditional knowledge in some areas of Timor-Leste, I suggest that these are crucial aspects to be taken into consideration when dealing with heritage-making processes and, more generally, in the understanding of local perspectives on traditions and heritage.

Furthermore, perceiving tensions and negotiations within groups paves the way for questioning the categories of group and community, which are crucial concepts within the UNESCO definition of intangible cultural heritage.

> States [...] shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and individuals that create, maintain and transmit intangible cultural heritage within the framework of their safeguarding activities and actively involve them in its management. Communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals should have the primary role in safeguarding their own intangible cultural heritage.

1) The right of communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals to continue the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills necessary to ensure the viability of the intangible cultural heritage should be recognized and respected.
2) Mutual respect as well as a respect for and mutual appreciation of intangible cultural heritage, should prevail in interactions between States and between communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals (UNESCO 2015, 1).

According to the UNESCO's definition above, communities and groups are presented as social entities that are guardians of ICH, suggesting that states should help them in their attempts to preserve heritage. The 2015 Convention also appeals for an inclusion of 'communities' and 'groups' within the national framework, as if they were somehow excluded from it. As the sociologist Rogers Brubaker pointed out, in defining ethnicity, social scientists "tend to take for granted not only the concept 'group', but also 'groups'—the putative things-in-the-world to which the concept refers" (2002, 164) and suggests that "by raising questions about the unity of analysis – the *ethnic* group – we may end up questioning the *domain* of analysis: ethnicity itself" (186). I suggest that a similar discussion could be had when analysing not just the UNESCO guidelines, but also the East Timorese national perspective regarding the national tangible and intangible heritage legislation. Fights and tensions, alongside alliances and coalitions, helped me to understand that the 'groups' and 'communities' I had in mind were often wrong assumptions I made about the people I was working with. 'Breaking' groups and communities is paramount to questioning the concept of 'community' itself and to disclosing much more complex perspectives on social reality.

In Resolution 24/2009, representing the first formal and official national document establishing a conceptual political framework regarding the definition and protection of National Culture and Heritage in Timor-Leste (Sousa 2017, 432), the definition of 'community' remains a quite vague matter:

> The majority of East Timorese people belong to a place and to an uma lulik and share a set of beliefs and values common to their community. In Timor-Leste, these values have their own regional dimension, arising from the contact with the Portuguese colonial presence over more than four centuries. In addition, the two and a half decades of national resistance organized against the Indonesian occupation contributed to cementing the feeling of belonging to a reality with physical, linguistic and culturally specific characteristics.[87]

While on the one hand Resolution 24/2009 specifies the complex historical legacy of each 'community', on the other it remains unclear what a community is. The unity within that community seems to be taken for granted.[88] Is this definition problematic when dealing with heritagisation processes? To what extent is the community a House? Is it composed by the members belonging to one single House,

[87] *Cf*. http://www.mj.gov.tl/jornal/?q=node/1816, for the original document. Accessed on 30.11.2019.
[88] Rogers Brubaker defines 'groupism' in these terms: "the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups and basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis" (2002, 164).

despite the fact that they might live in different parts of the country? Or is a community a social unit living on a specific piece of land? Can it be identified with an *aldeia*, a *suku*, an entire region?

This chapter aims to discuss the many ways in which a community can be defined in Venilale, and how the creations of boundaries and their negotiations are fundamental for these definitions. It is important to take tensions into account when dealing with national programmes that assume the existence of something called heritage and that define such a concept by creating laws, implying political as well as economic outcomes. Reading the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH; 2003), 'community' is a central concept, crucial to understanding the actors involved in the safeguarding of ICH. How can this concept be applied to the Venilale context, where heritage and traditions are characterised by a multivocality of definitions, often in contradiction and contested by different groups and actors? My experience in Venilale suggests that local tensions between Houses, between *suku* and *aldeia* have been constantly present. Houses are often conceived as contraposed to one another. However, when tensions emerge and they threaten the stability of sociality, then debates and meetings take place, in order to stress and point out the single origin and the common ancestors of the 'community'. In addition, I had the opportunity to talk about some of these issues with Mr. Abrão Ribeiro, Programme Coordinator for the KNTLU's ICH of *uma lulik*, who confirmed that in the areas where KNTLU experts conducted fieldwork research, they had to deal with the social tensions related to the origin narrative of the Houses, as well as with a strong diffidence of the local population towards them as external actors, not related to the communities involved in the project.

In the first part of this chapter, I will explore the importance that kinship has in Dili and in Venilale, and the different importance given to kinship in the urban and highly populated context of the capital city versus the rural area of Venilale. In the second section I discuss who outsiders are. By defining outsiders, is it easier to understand who is part of the 'community'? In the last section, I explore tensions existing in Venilale, both among Houses, single actors and among members of different *aldeias*. The aim is to show on what these tensions are based upon.

II.1 How to introduce yourself in Dili

Kinship is a fundamental aspect of any society and anthropology has explored this topic since the birth of the discipline. In Timor-Leste and, more specifically in Venilale, kinship is fundamental: kin ties shape households and basic social units and they are also the nucleus of Houses. However, in Venilale, kinship can be very widely extended and broad in time span and include many people, and it is quite usual to see it contested, negotiated and reconfigured. In II.1 and II.1.1, I explore the importance of kinship between Dili and Veniale, by giving some ethnographic examples. The aim is to show how kinship is

deployed as a tool in order to suggest unity and strength. A kin tie would be the most important bond in the definition of a 'real' relation and, hence, in the creation of a group and/or community.

In Daralata, my host-dad had a quite cold and distant relation with his older brother, and a close and intimate relationship with some of his distant cousins (*primu*, T.) who we often visited.[89] Kin were often used to assess a relationship; especially in the case of quite distant family ties, when blood ties become blurred, kinship was elicited to express proximity, commitment and unity. Often in Dili I witnessed quite common and apparently insignificant episodes, but, due to their recurrence, they might be interesting to discuss dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. In Dili, when people meet for the first time and introduce themselves, they often ask each other where they come from – which actually is and used to be a quite common practice in many parts of the world. In Dili, especially men of 40 and over, spent much time telling each other where their families were from. These formalities sounded quite hilarious to me: what was the point of debating such a trivial topic for several minutes? The reason for this was often to 'situate' the other person's identity: not the regional and linguistic one, though. The aim was to seek a common relative or a branch of the extended family in common. And in some cases, people were not actually related to one another, or relatedness was incredibly distant. As Sara Brinke points out, "knowledge of where one stands in the genealogy is important for daily encounters, as it defines how people are to be addressed and what can, or cannot, be expected from them" (2018, 886).

Once I was present at a quite prolonged introduction between two old men in their 70s or 80s. One of them was from Ermera, in the western part of the country, close to Dili, while the other was from Lospalos, in the eastern part of the country. After a quite long conversation about their respective *uma fukun* and *fetosan umane*, during which one of them was insisting that he was related to the other, they managed to find a distant 'uncle' (*tiu*, T.) in common, from Baukau, who had already passed away, and who was married to a distant relative of one of the two men. As I mentioned, these might appear insignificant episodes, but I suggest they reveal a quite important characteristic of the East Timorese culture: kinship is considered the first and most important bond within people. When relatedness is not so neat and clear, then kinship is elicited in order to include the interlocutor in the East Timorese quintessential community: the House. The formal and convoluted exchanges I described are in fact not just ways of introducing oneself, but they represent dynamics of inclusion of strangers and people considered as outsiders.

[89] Santana's distant cousins live in Liabala, the 'origin' village of both Santana's and Susana's. Santana and Susana were in fact cross-cousins, married according to the Makasae's *lisan*, as they used to say. The *lisan* suggests as the best marriage the matrilineal cross-cousin one. Following the 'traditional way' (which was officially forbidden by the Church during the Portuguese colonisation as well as during the Indonesian military occupation, as Santana used to say) a man can only marry from his wife-givers (*fetosan*, T.), while marriages to women of wife-taking groups are forbidden. Therefore, a man can marry a woman who is not already of a wife-taking group.

I noticed that these sorts of exchanges happened much more frequently in Dili, where most people are originally from other districts, and identities and communities are not so neat as in the *foho* areas. In Venilale, a person's House, *uma fukun* and *fetosan umane* are well known to anyone, but in Dili, where the population is much wider, these categorisations and distinctions are blurred and very often people do not know each other (Brinke 2018, 186). Kinshipe, then, is the first element defining a person, including him/her in a wider social whole, and this is the reason why it becomes so important to seek a common relative, even if very distant. In addition, I suggest that there might be a second and more important reason for this: when someone in Timor-Leste states that he/she is a relative of another, it is to establish a good relation between them. This of course does not mean that there are no fights among relatives, but to recognise each other as part of the same kin displays the will to create a peaceful bond with the other person.

II.1.1 In Venilale family means peace

My host's older brother in Waikulale, Claudino, was a *lia nain*, a guardian of traditional knowledge. Many people used to ask his expertise in resolving local conflicts. Similarly, my host in Daralata, Mr. Santana, was often invited to settle fights, because he was considered as a 'keeper' of traditional knowledge. *Lia nain* are recognised in the Law of *suku* (Sousa 2019, 215), as part of the *suku* councils, and they are supposed to ensure and defend the traditional customs of their communities. *Lia nain* represent a fundamental asset to the national governmental structure, as pointed out by Lúcio Sousa (2019). Sousa argues that, given the ritual role of the *lia nain* within the local communities, their incorporation within the national institutions is a way through which the State appropriates their prestige and status for its own advantage (209), as a way of "(re)creating the nation's cultural identity" (210).

In Venilale, *lia nain* had a consultative role, especially in the resolution of local conflicts and disputes. People used to say that the real tribunals are the 'traditional' ones and peace has to be settled there, not in the state courts. I had the chance to participate in two of these meetings: one in Daralata; the other, in Waikulale. In both cases, my respective hosts were part of the *lia nain* traditional "judges". And in both cases, the conflict to be settled was between two men who accused each other of invading their respective private properties. In addition, in both cases, the *lia nain* used similar persuasive terms, so the two parts would reach an agreement. In the Daralata case, a young man was accused of having built part of his house on his neighbour's property; while in the Waikulale's case, a farmer accused another of planting seeds in his own field and asked the other farmer to remove the crops that had grown. In the Waikulale 'process' an agreement was reached; while in the Daralata one, there was no agreement.

Many people from the respective villages participated in both cases; the police and other municipality and local authorities (*Xefe de Suku* and *Xefe de Aldeia*) were also present. Anyone could take the floor at any time during the meeting, but the words that were considered important for the success of the trial were the ones of the *lia nain*. The local authorities introduced the case and the participants: accusation, defence and the customary leaders. There was a clear order not just in the procedure of the trial itself, but also – and most importantly – there was a hierarchy of importance among the words of the people who took the floor. The majority of people present participated as audience and just listened, even though anyone could have broken into the conversation at any time if they wanted to. Prosecution and defence were at the centre of the tribunal court but the *lia nain* were the real protagonists of the event. The proceedings I was present at, lasted between 5 and 6 hours. In both cases, the ritual experts – old men whose words are respected by the community – were there to convince the prosecutor and the defence to reach an agreement. The *lia nain* were not there to defend either party. On the contrary, they act as *super partes* judges, and their aim was to reach an agreement.

The *lia nain* carefully listened to both the version of the accusation and the report of the defence. Then, one by one, as they were judges, they started to recount the origins of the village(s)[90] involved. They carefully explained to both the accusation and the defence that their ancestors were from the same origin, so they were both descendants of the same trunk, and this should be the reason to silence the quarrel. To follow Fox's argument (2009a; 2009b), origin and precedence were used to settle the case. They were also used to point out the boundaries of the community. The aim was to let everyone know (not just the accusation and the defence, but also to the audience) that the parts involved were one 'family' and that they should not fight. Compensations might be paid, because a mistake (*salah*, T. and B.I.) had been committed, but the goal of the 'trial' itself was to ensure harmony and conciliation between the two litigants and, more generally, within the community. And harmony was reached, at last, after 6 hours of discussion, between the two men from Waikulale. The audience clapped their hands and whistle, inviting the two men to hug each other. The people around me greeted the conciliation, by repeating to me "This is our tribunal, *menina*", "In Timor things work like this". The two men hugged and cried together, while everyone else rejoiced the deal.

Unfortunately, for the Daralata case a solution was not reached, despite the long meeting and attempts to convince the two parties. In the days after the trials, many people came to visit my hosts, both from Daralata and Liabala too. They wanted to talk about the trial. Many of them commented that it was a shame that such a quarrel had to be fought for such a long time among relatives of the

[90] In the Daralata case, the quarrel was between a man living in Liabala and the other in Daralata. The seat of the tribunal was set under a huge mango tree, on the border between the two villages. Whereas the Waikulale trial was between two men from the same village.

same family. After the *lia nain* account on the common ancestral origin of the two *aldeias*, the boundaries between families and *aldeias* were blurred. The cultural experts had in fact stressed the common blood tie flowing among the members of the two *aldeias*, so that a fight that was apparently between two people, was in fact a conflict between two relatives and, in the end, a dispute between two villages, that were actually one single thing, because of their common ancestral origins. Frictions and fights cannot be discussed privately: they are a public and communal matter of discourse, and this is the reason why so many people were present at the 'traditional' court and came to visit my host in the days after the 'traditional' trial.

The ideal of peace was fundamental in Venilale and family ties were a strong reason to reach that ideal. Bad relations between relatives were believed to bring misfortunes to the household, and – consequently – to the community itself. Family was a metaphor for peace in Venilale, and when biological kin were elicited, it was to stress the importance of a relation between two or more people. The biological bond was there, as the *lia nain* explained by illustrating the origin of the descendant groups of the two actors involved, and by stressing the single ancient origin uniting them. However, precedence and kinship were deployed to persuade the two parts to reach an agreement. In Timor-Leste, in fact, kinship implies mutual obligations between people, even in the case of death relatives (*beiala, T.*; ancestors) and nature (Bovensiepen 2011). I suggest that the reason why sometimes outsiders are reconfigured as part of the family is precisely to make them feel at ease and included in the group. In the next section of this chapter, I will explore some dynamics of inclusion and exclusion involving outsiders, of whom I am one.

II.2 Guests and foreigners

In this section of the chapter, I draw some considerations on how boundaries are created, shaping distinctions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. The section is divided into three parts: in each of them I discuss specific matters related to the construction of 'otherness', external to kin and household dynamics. In this one (II.2) I discuss the categories of malae (foreigner) and guest. I reflect on these topics primarily by means of self-reflexive accounts on my fieldwork in Venilale and how my position as a foreign (*malae*, T.) and guest helped me to see these boundaries more clearly. In the second one (II.2.1) I discuss the implications of being young and unmarried in Venilale, as well as in Timor-Leste as well. This social position, in fact, exclude from decision-making dynamics within the community – not just the family or House, but also the *suku* (village, T.), the district and the nation. Finally, in II.2.2 I thicken once more the discourse about social boundaries by discussing the categories of 'outsiders' (and insiders).

My host family in Daralata welcomed me on a hot Sunday at the beginning of March 2017,

showing me my private room, with a bed, a desk and a chair "where you can write your book undisturbed". The first days I was not allowed to help them in any way. I was keen to know them better, so I used to chat on the porch with my host-father Santana and his guests every time I could, although they used to speak Makasae and not Tetun and it was quite difficult for me to understand the topics of the conversations. However, it was more difficult to spend time with my host-mother, Susana: she used to clean the house and cook for us as well as for the chickens and the pigs. She was restless, the first to wake up and the last to go to sleep, always busy in some activity. At the beginning it was impossible to keep up with her. She often said she was embarrassed and ashamed to talk to me: she claimed she did not know how to address me, and she thought I would have judged her way of speaking and the house and their poor living conditions. The only helper in the family was Alina, the 8-year-old niece living with them. The other two boys, Marçal and Atinu, were not asked to help their older sister in domestic activities, nor were they interested in doing homework when they came back from school.[91] Marçal used to slip out of the house whenever he could, while Atinu liked to play in the garden or watch cartoons on TV – when his mom and dad (aunt and uncle, actually) were not in the house. I managed to sneak into the kitchen from time to time, but my host-mother did not want me there – "You are going to ruin your eyes with all this smoke", she kept repeating. At the beginning of the fieldwork, Susana, my host-mother, used to say out loud that she was ashamed of having a *malae* (*T.*, foreigner and, in my case, white person)[92] helping her with such humble activities; then she started to pretend not to notice that I was helping and, by May, I finally managed to break some boundaries. She was in fact relying on my help for the washing up and for lunch and sometimes to cook dinner.

I wanted to help in the house because I felt that cleaning and cooking or helping the kids with their homework was the easiest way for the family to understand that I wanted to be a proactive presence in the house, and not just a guest to 'serve'. I felt uncomfortable when Susana and Alina were cooking in the kitchen, while I was chatting with Santana or reading and writing in my room. With the second host family in Waikulale,[93] I was the only woman at the table, together with my host-father, and his sons, while the women (my host-mother and her daughter) were eating in the kitchen. I thought that helping women could be helpful in building a closer relation with them, as well as allowing

[91] Alina, Marçal and Atinu are the nephews of my hosts. Alina and Marçal were siblings, and they live with their aunt and uncle because their mother had passed away a few years before and their dad was struggling with mental illness. Atinu's parents were from Liabala, the nearby native village of my hosts, where many members of their extended family live. Fostering children and teenagers (*hakiak*, T.) in Timor-Leste is very common. In the rural areas, old people foster children (mostly nephews and grandchildren), while in Dili people host teenage relatives coming from the rural areas, who study or work in the capital city.

[92] *Malae* in Tetun means foreigners. However, it is often referred to white people, being foreigners mostly white in Timor-Leste.

[93] I stayed in Waikulale between September 2017 and March 2018.

me to be part of the household.[94] Santana used to wake up early, too, like the rest of us, and feed his horses and buffaloes. Despite my insistence, he never took me to the place where he used to tether the buffaloes. Instead, he always took me with him to the municipality meetings he was invited to, and it was probably a way for him to show his social prestige to the rest of the community. No one was indifferent to the fact that he appeared at the *suku* meetings with a young foreign girl. It was not just social prestige, though. I was not just a *malae* (T.). I was a young unmarried girl too; so, a sexualisation of my body as well as of our relation was present too. The visits to the Venilale city centre on his motorbike ended up being the reason why I left Daralata. Santana preferred to take me on the back of his motorbike instead of walking me to the buffaloes' place, despite the rumours about his attitude. "Ema koalia",[95] Susana often repeated – people were gossiping about us because I used to sit on the back of his motorbike. A man and a woman on the same motorbike in Timor-Leste are usually considered to be married or engaged, if they are not relatives.[96] Susana was in fact resentful and embarrassed by the gossip and I did not want to put her in an uncomfortable position with the rest of the village and community, so I decided to leave their house.

During the first weeks with my hosts in Daralata, I realised that women and men had different spaces in the house as well as in the community. During my fieldwork, I often shared the space with men and not with women. I used to eat at the table with my host-dad, while my host-mom and the children ate separately in the kitchen or in front of the TV, after us. As mentioned, in Waikulale my host-mother and her daughter used to eat separately in the kitchen too. During public ceremonies, such as funerals, for example, women used to stay in the kitchen while men were chatting on the porch, in front of the entrance of the house. It was very difficult for me to access the kitchen, because I was not allowed to do so, especially during public gatherings. It was shameful for my hosts to have a foreigner (*malae*, T.) helping in the kitchen. In Venilale, kitchens are usually located behind the house – often in a separate building, preventing the smoke from entering the house – while the immediate external entrance of the houses is used as a space to entertain and welcome guests. The porch and the entrance were spaces usually assigned to men: it was very rare to see women sitting in the porch, while men were chatting. Women usually stayed in the kitchen preparing coffee and snacks for the

[94] A few months later, in a conversation I had with other anthropologists in Dili, I realised that all these difficulties were common to other women anthropologists, but not men. I know this is not the appropriate space to articulate a wider discourse on the topic, but I am convinced it would be worth analysing the differences between being a woman/man anthropologist in Timor-Leste, the spaces and interlocutors related to genders, and how they affect the outcomes as of the research. Far from suggesting that it is more difficult for women to get into the field (which might be true, but it is not my point), I suggest that the point of view of the analysis of the fieldwork is considerably different for men and women researchers, and hence the outcomes of the research are different too.

[95] Literally "people talk", in Tetun. It was a very common expression meaning that people gossip about something.

[96] Funny jokes about alleged affairs were often present in Dili, when a man and a woman were together on a motorbike.

guests; otherwise, they stayed inside the house.[97] If women paid a visit as guests, usually they were not offered food or drinks, especially for informal and quick visits. Even if women were present in conversations, I rarely saw them taking the floor in the presence of men. Seeing them chatting in the kitchen or behind the house was more likely.

I often felt my position was awkward, because I was always undecided whether I should fulfil the cultural gender local norms and make coffee and snacks or participate in the men's conversations, which was the space my hosts wanted me to enter. The anthropologist Evelyn Blackwood experienced something similar during her fieldwork in a rural area in Sumatra, Indonesia. She observes that women researchers never have a clear and identified gendered space: we shift from one to the other and our behaviour is often disapproved of (Blackwood 1995). If on the one hand my unclear position often made me feel awkward, it was also true that I could decide to shift from one identity to the other quite easily: it was an advantage to have access to both spaces. I used to help in the kitchen and do the chores in the house, and I also participated in the conversations with men.[98] My host-dad in Daralata never complained when I used to serve him coffee, or when I set the table or cooked dinner. And I could read a veiled satisfaction in his face when I turned on my recorder to interview him. Sometimes, I even pretended to switch it on, in order to get out of my guest-daughter role and enter the more suitable guest-researcher one: it was a win-win compromise. However, it was precisely the ambiguous role I had in the house that prevented me from being included as a member of the household with one single clear 'enacted' identity, both in Daralata and, later, in Waikulale.

During public events in the rural areas, or with the people who hosted me, my presence was generally considered highly prestigious. Or at least I was always treated as a prestigious guest or presence, because of the colour of my skin, coming from a far-away place, studying and working at the university, speaking many different languages. With both my host families, I had a special place at the table, a personal and single room for myself, where the children were explicitly asked not to enter and 'disturb' me. Every time I visited a new house, I was insistently invited to have a seat and if the chairs were all busy, somebody would have immediately stood up from their chair and vacate it for me. Even during public celebrations, I was always offered a special seat, sometimes among the authorities. I was often asked to be the first to serve myself during the banquets. My host family in Waikulale felt the obligation to provide me with meat once a week, "because in your place you eat meat every day,

[97] Far from seeing an anti-feminist/patriarchal norm here, I agree with Josh Trindade's argument that public and private spaces are occupied by men and women differently (to be published). A lot of important conversations happen in the kitchen and, actually, when I wanted to have news and the 'unofficial' and dirty details, I always went to the kitchen. Men represent the 'public' sphere, so their discourses are more 'official' and appropriate for the public sphere.

[98] Probably this shift of 'identities' from one realm to another is something that men anthropologists can enact less easily than women. However, their 'enacted' identity as men is less questioned than the female 'enacted' identity.

right?". The usual diet, especially in the rural areas, consists of rice and vegetables; occasionally corn and beans; eggs, meat and fish are food for special occasions only, such as special banquets and celebrations (funerals, weddings, etc.).

It was clear to me that my hosts (and the authorities in Venilale) wanted to make me feel at ease and comfortable, however the result was often the opposite. All those formal mannerisms made me feel constantly like a guest. I do not want my words to be misunderstood. I am not complaining about my host's attitude at all. They made me feel comfortable, the way they thought I would have felt comfortable: with a private bedroom, meat and eggs once a week, outside the kitchen, and so on. Precisely their attitude towards me, made me understood what my role and identity within the house to them were. What I want to stress is that, through my own experience, I understood social boundaries along my fieldwork. I should not expect to be treated like a member of the family: it was precisely my identity, shifting between different categories (foreigner, guest, daughter) that helped me to understand how boundaries were created between people, namely between relatives and non-relatives. In fact, although on the one hand some formalities were observed with me because I am a white person and because of the meanings that whiteness carries in Timor-Leste, on the other, that kind of 'distant formality' was often created also with other external actors too, who did not belong to the household or to the extended family.

In Waikulale, for example, for two nights my hosts[99] extended hospitality to some men who had to plough my hosts' fields and rice-fields with their tractors. Despite the fact that these helpers come every year before the sowing, and despite the fact that they live in the same village as my host-parents, they were treated in a very formal way, as guests. They were not part of the family, and so were treated very respectfully and, at the same time, kept 'distant' from the core of the house. The door to the kitchen was always closed, even when my host-mother and Sol were cooking. My host-mother was almost invisible while the guests stayed there: she did not appear in the living room, and she did not join us, not even for the coffee break in the afternoon. I was kindly asked not to enter the kitchen while the guests were there. However, my host-mother's solicitude was evident in small details: she put new soap in the bathroom; for the breakfasts we had together there was fresh bread; the cups and plates on the table were 'the good ones'. Júlio, my host-dad spent almost 2 hours trying to fix the antenna, at night and in the rain, because the TV was not working properly, and we could not see the RTTL news (*Rádio Televisaun Timor-Leste, T.*). We usually watched Indonesian TV Programmes because we could not reach the signal for the national East Timorese TV. He knew he

[99] Alex (55 years old) was my host in Waikulale; he lived together with his wife, Maria (52 years old), their last son Fábio (22 years old), Sol (16 years old), their youngest child, and their first and second grandchildren, Amara (6 years old) and Ababy (2 years old). Amara and Ababy were the children of Alex and Mária's eldest son, Edilson, who lives in Dili with his wife.

could not fix it, but he 'pretended' to fix it to show to the guests that he was providing them with the best comfort possible.

To sum up, my position within the house, in both the families hosting me in Waikulale, shifted between many different roles and identities along my fieldwork and depending on the situation. The one of *malae* (foreigner) and/or guest, being a white and European unmarried girl; but I could also be a daughter. My hosts felt responsible for me and so – depending on the situation – sometimes I was a special daughter to them too. Guests were treated in a special way, and not as members of the family: formalities had to be shown – as in many other places in the world. However, kindness and subservience did not only show respect, but they implicitly displayed inferiority and superiority between the actors involved. These conducts did not only create a relation, but they also traced boundaries, implying distance between the two parts. In the next two subsections, I focus on the different interpretations my Waikulale's hosts gave me about the fact that Claudino, a *lia nain* of some renown in Venilale, would not talk to me easily. Particularly, in the next section, I discuss what it means to be 'too young' within a House and, in a wider sense, within the nation/state.

II.2.1 He won't talk to me

My hosts in Waikulale were concerned that I was not gathering enough information about the topic of my research and they were all convinced that uncle Claudino could have helped me to acquire more data. However, it was incredibly hard for me to get close to him. To be honest, one of the reasons why I decided to accept Fábio's invitation to host me in their house was because he reassured me that his uncle was a *lia nain* and that he would be willing to talk to me about traditions and *uma lulik*.[100] Claudino was Júlio's older brother and neighbour. From time to time, I used to ask to my hosts their thoughts about Claudino's reluctance to talk to me. The two houses, Claudino's and Alex's, were on the same piece of land, Claudino's property, less than 100 metres apart. Later on, during my fieldwork, I would come to realise that this aspect was a quite relevant hint about Claudino's posture towards me and his younger brother, for reasons related to precedence and hierarchy. In fact, I was being hosted by his younger brother, Alex, but Claudino would not directly receive any material benefit from my presence, while his younger brother's family would.[101] In the meantime, however, I was convinced that Claudino was not willing to talk to me because I was a foreigner and a woman. I discuss here the

[100] I met Fábio for the first time in the Friends of Venilale Association (Fov) in April 2017 (*cf*. https://venilale.com). I was visiting Venilale with Santana, as often happened. I was interested in the association's tourist activities. I kept in contact with him and, when he heard I was leaving Daralata, he invited me to live with him and his family in Waikulale, 2-3 km from the centre of Venilale.

[101] In Daralata and in Waikulale I paid a monthly rent to my hosts, since they were providing me with food and accommodation in a private room in their houses.

different interpretations my hosts gave me and why each interpretation was relevant for me to focus on broader social issues. Claudino's silence was a riddle to me, and it actually helped me understand the wider social dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. I suggest that the social aspects discussed are crucial to take into consideration to better understand heritage-making processes developed by the state and also for the understanding of local perspectives on traditions and heritage.

Once I was talking with Fábio about his uncle Claudino and he told me "He doesn't want to talk to me about *uma lulik* either... it's because we're too young". "Too young" meant unmarried. In Venilale, as elsewhere in Timor-Leste, people's social status changes when they get married and when they have children (*kaben*, T.; a single word meaning both get married and have sex, and hence have children). People start to be considered more accountable and responsible. There are even two different words distinguishing unmarried and married people: *labarik* and *katuas*. These are polysemic words. *Labarik* means child/children and also unmarried/young; while *katuas* means married and elder(s). I think it is relevant to consider the lexical correspondence between young and unmarried and between old and married. The lexical distinction, in fact, corresponds to different social status, connected to an implicit social hierarchical and authoritative order. Taking my own case as an example, I was treated with respect as a *malae*, but my hosts were convinced I was not adult enough. On formal occasions, I was often asked if I had to be addressed as a *senhora* or a *menina* (Pt. and T., madam/miss), which was a way of asking me if I was already married (and had children) or still young and unmarried. I was not an adult woman yet, just as Fábio was not an adult man yet. And, in his opinion, this was the reason why his uncle did not want to share his knowledge regarding *uma lulik* with me. Fábio's explanation helped me to understand that age and generations imply different roles, and, most importantly, they qualify the possibility of accessing certain information and knowledge. As 'young' people, we were not allowed to receive that information yet. Youth is not just an age factor, but it is mostly related to the civil and marital status of a person.

Judith Bovensiepen, in her analysis of the revitalisation of customary practices after the Indonesian occupation within the Laclubar area (Manatuto region), stresses the importance of secrecy as an inherent part of the customary knowledge connected to the ancestors' realm. She explains that during her fieldwork, many local cultural experts claimed to know many secret words, which were described as powerful and potentially dangerous. Their potency and threat were the main reason why these words could not be revealed to her (2014c, 59; 68-69). Furthermore, secrecy was a strategy used by her informants to display their authority, as well as a device 'to define membership and non-membership in a group' (69). For Bovensiepen, there is a connection between ancestral knowledge and authority, as well as between secrecy/disclosure and inclusion/exclusion dynamics. Fábio was not allowed to be introduced to the ancestral knowledge nor to enter the *uma lulik* building. The threshold of the *uma lulik* was a metaphor of his position within the House. Following Bovensiepen's argument,

it was also a display of the authority that his uncle Claudino had over him and his unmarried 'young' male siblings: they must stay out of the *uma lulik*, because the ancestral knowledge said so. And Claudino was the keeper of that knowledge. Claudino's posture paved the way for the discussion about power dynamics and authority related to *lia nain*, a topic I shall discuss later in the chapter. For now, I want to develop a little more the role of youngers not just in Venilale, but also in Timor-Leste.

Sara Brinke defined the young generation of Timor-Leste (people born after 2002), as "citizens *by* waiting" (Brinke 2018). She argues that citizenship in Timor-Leste is not related only to national legal recognition but is intertwined with other different 'systems' – as she names them – which are *uma lulik*, the *fetosan-umane* relations and the customary conflict resolutions' 'system' (882). I do question the use of the word 'systems' made by the author. I would not define *uma lulik*, *fetosan-umane* and the customary 'tribunals' as different "systems": they might be helpful categorisations for a *malae* researcher – who sees a clear-cut difference between the "customary" norms and the state laws. However, one may wonder whether these distinctions exist in the minds of the East Timorese people. Brinke observes that young adults over 17 years old still present themselves (and are presented) within a "discourse of incompleteness" (892). In addition, the author very neatly defines these three 'systems' (in fact four, including the national legal citizenship 'system'), as if they were the same everywhere in Timor-Leste. Besides the interregional differences that do exist, even in Venilale these 'systems' were not so neat for everyone. Sol, Fábio's younger sister, could enter the *uma lulik* building, for example, while his older brother could not. Young adults' representatives were present in every public debate in Venilale, and 'national' and 'customary' boundaries were not so neat as Brinke describes. However, despite the rigid categorisation used by Brinke (2018), her definition of young people as "citizens *by* waiting" is incredibly helpful. Brinke's work is particularly interesting because it points out the relations between the exclusion of young people from the national public political sphere and the marginal position that young people generally have in their households and villages.

> They (young adults) are not allowed to participate in uma lulik activities but they also feel that there is nothing that can be done about it because the rules of participation are sacred and have been established by ancestors who will not shy away from retribution if their rules are disrespected (886).

Brinke is not the first scholar to point out the gap between the "old" and the "young" generation in Timor-Leste. Michael Leach (2003; 2008) as well as Lia Kent (2015) point out that state discourses tend to misrecognise the contribution of the young people to the struggle for independence within the "cultural heritage landscape" (Leach 2008, 154). *Jerasaun foun* (young generation, *T.*) is an expression which I often heard in informal conversations or in public debates, which usually addresses the East Timorese young generation: some people consider the beginning of the young generation in 1975, others 2002. It is a subdivision which is often used in political terms, to indicate the young political

leaders in the Parliament, who are contraposed to the old members – such as Xanana Gusmão,[102] Mari Alkatiri and José Ramos-Horta (Feijó 2015). As Leach suggests, the contraposition between elder and younger reflects a major 'fault line' in the national politics, between the political establishment – mainly constituted by the 'old generation' – and 'younger' ideas contraposed to it (Leach 2008). In addition, Leach highlights the importance of languages in the tensions existing between the young and old generations, as well as of different ideas of the national narrative and identity, linked to the colonial legacy (2003; 2008). Despite the official recognition of Portuguese as one of the two official languages of the Republic of Timor-Leste (along with Tetun), and despite the fact that Timor-Leste is part of the CPLP,[103] Portuguese has always been an elitist language that used to be spoken by a tiny East Timorese minority of so-called *mestiços* (*Pt.*) and *assimilados* (*Pt.*), since colonial times (Costa 2001, 59-60; Donzelli 2012, 138, Leach 2003, 140). Even nowadays, the people who speak it fluently, even if not on a daily basis, are a very small minority of the population,[104] namely old people who could learn it before 1975 (Leach 2003, 140), in the few Portuguese schools available at the time (Jones 2003).[105] Portuguese is in fact rarely used in common and day-to-day conversations: it is mostly used as a formal and prestigious language by government institutions, mostly in Dili. During the Indonesian occupation, the language used by the administration, in the schools and by the media was Bahasa Indonesia,[106] so, currently the *jerasaun foun* (young generation, T.) speak Tetun and Bahasa Indonesia fluently, while the *jerasaun tuan* is (old generation, T.) relatively more fluent in Tetun and Portuguese – in addition to the native languages that have been used for domestic and daily conversations until the present day.

Taur Matan Ruak, current Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, Major General of the National Army (F-FDTL) from 2009 to 2012 and Chief of the Resistance wing during the 1990s, justifies the choice of

[102] During my fieldwork I often heard people addressing to Xanana Gusmão as *Avó*, which means 'grandfather' or ancestor in Portuguese and Tetun, stressing his position as a *katuas* (T.).

[103] *Comunidade do Países de Língua Portuguesa* (Pt., Community of the Portuguese Language Countries). *Cf*. https://www.cplp.org/id-2778.aspx, accessed on 08.12.2019.

[104] Ethnologue counts that the users of Portuguese on a daily basis in Timor-Leste are less than 6000. *Cf*. https://tinyurl.com/ya3h8gbw. Fernando Dias Simões (2015) estimates the number of the East Timorese speakers of Portuguese at 10%.

[105] As Gavin Jones points out, by the 1970s the literacy rate in Timor-Leste was estimated to be around 10%. The school system was coordinated by the Church, not directly by the colonial administration, and the first secondary school of the country was opened in 1952 (the number of students enrolled was between 200 and 800 during the course of the 60s). The number of schools present in the country in the aftermath of the end of the colonial era (1974-75) were 47, while at the beginning of the 80s there were more than 300 and the number grew to 600 in the 90s (2003, 41-43). Clearly, the rapid growth of the schools during the Indonesian occupation (as well as the improvement of the road system) has to be connected with the Indonesian integrationist programme. However, some of my interlocutors, especially in 2013, when I used to conduct my interviews in Portuguese (and not in Tetun) used to stress to me the fact that important services such as electricity, infrastructures, the mail services and schools were developed only during the Indonesian occupation. During colonial times, in fact, these services were present but only in Dili and only for the administrative elite (Boldoni 2014, 72-73).

[106] As Donzelli points out, the Indonesian administration prohibited the use of Portuguese (2012).

Portuguese as the national language because it was the language used by the armed resistance during the independence fight, as well as the language of the lusophone countries who helped Timor-Leste in its self-determination as an independent country.[107] The political leadership which has been in charge since the independence of the nation is the same that used to be in charge of the armed resistance during the Indonesian occupation (Leach 2008; Magalhães 2015, 34-36). This 'old generation' tends to emphasise the *funu* (struggle/fight) narrative as paramount in the construction of the national and nationalistic discourse (Arthur 2019). Aurora Donzelli reconfigures the choice of Portuguese as one of the two national languages as if it was "suspended between an ambiguous display of colonial nostalgia, a pragmatic choice aimed at minimising Australian and Indonesian political-economic influence and the attempt of constructing a new sense of national identity" (Donzelli 2012, 138). The *jerasaun foun* feels misrecognised by the official perspective that interprets Portuguese as part of the national heritage and identity, besides feeling excluded from "symbolic sources of power" (Leach 2003, 141). Brinke explains that East Timorese young people perceive a clear connection between generational differences and the language each generation learnt: the "Portuguese" are people of 50+ years old; the "Indonesian" is the generation educated under the Indonesian occupation (1975-1999) and, finally, the "new generation" is the one educated after 2002, and so after the Restoration of Independence of the country. Brinke sought to score each generation on their participation in customary law, decision making and national politics. "The Portuguese generation scores a 'maximum' in every category and the new generation a 'minimum' in each category, with the Indonesian generation occupying a middle position" (Brinke 2018, 882).

Being "too young", using Fábio's words, has political implications in Timor-Leste that have to be understood on a household and House level, as well as on a *suku* and national level too. The marginality/exclusion of young people in Venilale as well as in other contexts in Timor-Leste is not just related to the *uma lulik*'s knowledge, but it has also other implications, in different contexts of the

[107] I would like to stress here that Taur Matan Ruak does not refer to Portugal only, but to the lusophone world in general, which is composed by ex-colonies, suggesting the idea that there might be a connection between the ex-colonies, especially between Timor-Leste and the African ones, given the anti-colonial common fights. I argued the ideological, political, social and linguistic connection among the ex-Portuguese African colonies and Timor-Leste (rather than with Portugal) in my MA dissertation (Boldoni 2014). The common language is a means through which the lusophone world stays connected, not just a submission/recognition of the metropole. José Ramos-Horta, son of a Portuguese deportado to Timor, "was exiled to Mozambique for his anti-colonial activities" during the 70s (Niner 2007, 114). Alkatiri, an Arab descendant (his ancestors arrived in Timor around 1800 from Yemen), also left the country in the 1970s to study in Angola, where he made contact with the local anti-colonial front (Niner 2007, 114). By the end of 1975, when Indonesia had already occupied the East Timorese territory, Alkatiri, Ramos-Horta, Lobato and Rodrigues all left Dili flying to an external delegation of Fretilin based in Mozambique (117). Not to mention other Timorese political leaders of the 70s, who studied in Lisbon and came back to the country as anti-colonial leaders – because in Lisbon they were in contact with anti-colonial theorists from the other Portuguese African colonies.

public sphere as well, as I discuss in Chapter 4. In the next sub-chapter, I introduce and discuss the 'outsider' category, so to thicken and conclude the discussion on social boundaries began in II.2.

II.2.2 Outsider

It was difficult for me to have access to information related to the *uma lulik*, the origin of the Houses in Venilale, mostly because ancestral knowledge is embedded in secrecy and can be revealed only on certain occasions and to certain people, as observed by Judith Bovensiepen (2014c). As I mentioned earlier, I was convinced that the reason why Claudino did not want to talk to me about *uma lulik*'s knowledge was because I was a foreigner. Many of my interlocutors, especially in the rural areas of Venilale, were surprised and often taken aback by the fact that a white (*malae*, T.) educated woman, as I was in their eyes, wanted to study the local culture and traditions, apparently considered 'backwards' by them. People were surprised about the topic of my research, my willing to better understand local languages and traditions. In Dili, many of my interlocutors often asked "What can you learn over there?", in the *foho*. Sometimes at UNTL, some of the students would suggest I should not pay attention to the people in the mountains because they are '*beik'* (*T.*, backwards; ignorant). I was convinced that Claudino did not want to talk to me because he thought that I thought *uma lulik* knowledge was 'backwards'. I was wrong. A week before All Saints Day, Fábio enthusiastically announced that Uncle Claudino would teach the 'words' (*lian, T.*) to a *subriñu* (nephew, *T.*) during the Day of the Dead.[108] I asked if I could be present at the ceremony and he nodded, excited. Unfortunately, on the 2nd of November no ceremony was held because the uncle said that it was not the right time yet. The anthropologist Judith Bovensiepen relates that during her fieldwork research in Laclubar, many interlocutors told her that the secret words had to be revealed at the right moment, and that she should not have gone home until all the words were revealed to her (2015, 49-50).

I had the chance to talk about the difficulties in talking about *uma lulik* in Venilale during the interview I had with Mr. Abrão Ribeiro, Programme Coordinator for KNTLU (more on this interview in the next chapter). KNTLU and SEAC are working on the heritagisation process of *uma lulik* in Timor-Leste, a topic that is going to be central in the next chapter. These two institutions have recently published a pilot study about the presence of *uma lulik* architecture in Oecusse and in Marobo, Bobonaro (*cf.* SEAC and KNTLU 2017). A fieldwork research was conducted in these areas under the responsibility of Mr. Ribeiro, the project manager. I met Mr. Ribeiro for an interview, we shared our

[108] The 'words' are supposed to be revealed and given directly from the ancestors, so I think it was not by chance that the day chosen for the ceremony was in conjunction with the celebration of the dead. Bovensiepen argues that the ancestral knowledge is 'handed down directly from the ancestors' and not […] 'transmitted through practice' from one generation to the other (2014c, 57).

experiences as fieldworkers and, surprisingly, some aspects of our experiences were similar. I asked Mr. Ribeiro what kind of methodology KNLTU applied for the study they conducted. He explained they first reached out to local institutions and, thanks to them, the project team very patiently managed to involve the customary leaders. He stressed the diffident behaviour that the *lian nain* had at the beginning of the process, which the research team managed to mitigate by explaining that the government was willing to financially and practically subsidise the community *uma lulik*'s reconstructions. He stressed that the economic factor was decisive in order to involve the local *lia nain* in the project. I was surprised to hear that even for an East Timorese person it could be hard to be accepted and trusted by local and ritual leaders. He suggested that people might not be very collaborative, perhaps because researchers are usually not members of the communities they study. In Mr. Ribeiro's opinion, it was not because I was a *malae* that I was not introduced to uncle Claudino's knowledge; it was because I was an outsider, a non-member of the House and, hence, of the community. As Mr. Ribeiro told me, *lia nain* were the gatekeepers of the information about *uma lulik* and they were also considered the representatives of the entire community (*suku* or *aldeia*) by the KNTLU staff. *Lia nain* were the ones who granting the access to the staff or not, based on the knowledge they have. Their cultural expertise granted them a certain power, part of which was being the cultural representatives of the community. As I mentioned before, describing the traditional 'courts' meetings in Venilale, the *lia nain*'s knowledge is also used to resolve local tensions, and the cultural experts mediate as if they were judges. Similarly to what happened during the 'traditional trial', hence, *lia nain* are considered the representatives of the 'community' – *aldeia* or *suku* – as well as the guardians of the traditional knowledge.

Furthermore, Mr. Ribeiro mentioned that after KNTLU and SEAC researchers managed to talk with the *lia nain*, they organised meetings with the cultural experts (which Mr. Ribeiro named "community" meetings) to discuss the project. During the sessions, many debates and tensions started to rise between the cultural experts in Marobo, about issues of precedence and legitimacy among the Houses that were part of the villages involved. He told me that in Marobo *uma lulik* are not equal among them, but there is a relation of precedence. Mr. Ribeiro explained the issue to me by differentiating the Houses between *uma lulik liurai*[109] and 'common' *uma lulik*. The former, supposedly, are more ancient (precedent), so they are to be considered the most important; while the *uma lulik*, which are usually comprised within the *uma lulik liurai*, are subaltern to the first ones. In Venilale this distinction exists too, and it leads to fights among customary leaders about the legitimacy over the Houses. It is a matter of controversy and debate whether a House is actually *liurai* or not (see

[109] *Liurai* were East Timorese rulers during the Portuguese colonisation. These figures were often connected to the Portuguese power, associated with colonial policies.

the next section for more details on the topic). I am not sure that this distinction between *uma liurai* and *uma lulik* exists throughout Timor-Leste, but the disputes between customary leaders over the legitimacy and precedence of the Houses seems to be fairly present throughout Timor-Leste, and is an aspect registered by many scholars (Bovensiepen 2015, 73-96; Fidalgo-Castro 2015, 70-74; Población and Fidalgo-Castro 2014; Sousa 2010a; Traube 1986, 68-69). Most importantly, as McWilliam suggests, precedence is constantly contested and hence is reconfigured and negotiated (2009, 127). Bovensiepen thoroughly outlines that one reason why the origin narratives were rarely deployed in public in Funar was because there were contradictions between them, which lead to bitter tensions among *lia nain* and members of the Houses (2015, 50). The author even refers to an attempt which her host suggested in order to 'find the most truthful account' (59): her host advised the researcher to gather all the *lia nain* of Funar, so she could find out the truth. Despite the invitations, the event was a fiasco, since almost nobody appeared, and the few participants arrived at different moments to avoid each other (59-61). The local disagreements in Funar did not involve only the origin narratives, but they went far beyond and regarded competitions on the status of the Houses, revealing the political and everyday dimension of these disputes (61-62).

Talking with Mr. Ribeiro made me want to know more about how the KNTLU managed to encompass the local tensions among *lia nain* in Marobo, and Mr. Ribeiro openly admitted that neither the KNTLU team nor the local public institutions could intervene in these debates: they had to let the local custom leaders talk and find a mutually acceptable solution (*tur, koalia hamutuk, T.*). Mr. Ribeiro reassured me that when the *lia nain* gather to talk about the ancestral knowledge, mistakes cannot be made and the truth must be told, because the life of the 'community' itself, as he said, is in question. The consequences of wrong decisions based on false arguments could lead to massive deaths or diseases within the members of the *suku*/*aldeia*. Misfortunes are believed to be messages sent by the ancestors, and evidence of the potency and the danger associated with the ancestral words. This is the main reason why it is important to know how to manipulate the knowledge of the ancestors and to "speak the truth", hence the importance of the role of the *lia nain* within the *suku* and or *aldeia*. *Lia nain* are spokespeople of the community because their words are fundamental for the stability and the life of the community itself.

I was very doubtful about Mr. Ribeiro's explanation, because my personal experience of local tensions in Venilale gave me no hope for the possibility of having discussions between the customary leaders nor reaching an agreement about which Houses were actually the 'legitimate' ones. I was impressed, though, by the fact that a team of governmental experts external to the community (outsiders) managed to encompass the local tensions and apparently find a peaceful solution. However, the KNTLU and SEAC Final Report (2017) does not refer to the tensions among *lia nain* about the hierarchy of the Houses, although it does mention that a hierarchy exists, hence acknowledging

the existence of different status among the *uma lulik*. The KNTLU research thus suggests between the lines that the 'communities' they worked with are not social undifferentiated units, but they are also informed and shaped by different voices and structures of power and hierarchies. In addition, as I explore better in the next chapter, the KNTLU report registers the different points of view of each *lia nain* and local representatives about their *uma lulik* and about the government plan too, even if in some cases these voices differ from the SEAC and KNTLU projects. The KNTLU report, as well as Mr. Ribeiro's words, also suggest that no matter how many and how tense the relations among the *lia nain*, the community will always find a way to pacify itself. This was the point that did not fully convince me, in relation to the Venilae context. Venilale recognises itself as divided into different groups. When I met for the first time my hosts and the *Xefe de subdistritu* (Mayor), in their welcoming presentation of Venilale, they all listed the different languages spoken within the territory, as well as the name of the *suku* and *aldeia*. They described the differences between the different places, highlighting the internal divisions and boundaries (both physical and cultural) among them. Differentiation and diversity were foundational aspects of the 'community' itself. Within every *suku* and *aldeia*, other branches exist. They can be Houses or families and they all inform and compose the social life of the territory. Hence, tensions within a village or a subdistrict are a core element of that 'community'. In the next section I discuss precisely some of the tensions and fights existing between Houses and *aldeias* within the Venilale subdistrict, and how these tensions can be difficult to manage when they conflict with tourism activities, associated with heritage-making processes and development plans.

II.3 The false step

The last section in this chapter deals with local Venilale tensions I witnessed during my fieldwork. After showing the importance of family and households in the first section, and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of guests, foreigners and outsiders in the previous part of the chapter, in this last section I discuss some of the internal tensions within the Venilale subdistrict. In this first subsection, I illustrate the 'false step' I unwittingly made towards my hosts in Waikulale. I asked Friends of Venilale (FoV), a local association that organises guided tours in the area, to take me to visit an *uma lulik* in Fatulia (one of the *suku* comprised in the Venilale subdistrict). It was a 'false step' for two different reasons. First of all, the house/House from Fatulia was in competition with my hosts' House (in Dero-ho), so my visit created some tension between me and Claudino. Secondly, through my 'false step' I realised there was an almost unnoticeable conflict between Claudino and his brother Alex, my host. The following subsection deals with the conflicts between FoV and the *Xefe de subdistritu* (Mayor of Venilale). Despite the fact that these disputes seemed to concern contemporary power dynamics between FoV's

managers and the *Xefe de subdistritu*, I slowly realised that they actually involved contrasts between different Houses. Finally, in the last subsection of the chapter I delineate some of the potentially negative outcomes between traditional beliefs and tourism, deriving from a mismanagement of tourist activities in the area, involving local heritage issues.

*

The association Friends of Venilale (FoV) organises tours to visit some of the cultural and natural assets in the Venilale area.[110] Fábio's father, Mr. Alex, is one of the founders of the association. In the entrance of my hosts' house there are two big and framed pictures of Mr. Alex with the Australian representatives of FoV, as well as pictures of his journey to Australia, when he visited the FoV's Australian headquarter. Nowadays FoV provides assistance to the main tourist attractions within Venilale, including guided tours to different places, including an *uma lulik* in Fatulia.[111] These tours are offered to foreign tourists not just to provide educational information, but because foreigners are supposed to "obtain permission to visit local sites", as mentioned on the FoV website.[112] Being close with FoV was a privilege because it helped me understand their activities and goals better. Furthermore, it was an unusual perspective on Venilale: FoV is in fact the only hub for tourists in Venilale which offers information and help, and it is quite rare to see such an enterprise in a rural area of the country, so far from the capital city and from the regional capital (Baukau). Unfortunately, FoV's plans often encountered hostilities from the *subdistritu*'s authorities (sub-regional, *T.*), as I illustrate in the following subsection.

[110] The natural and cultural assets of Venilale are one of the main topics of the next chapter.
[111] I visited this *uma lulik* on 7th December 2017.
[112] *Cf.* https://venilale.com, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

Figure 13 Friends of Venilale's building[113]

Since I encountered many difficulties in reaching out *lia nain* who were willing to talk to me about the ancestors' knowledge related to *uma lulik*, I thought that paying a visit to the *uma lulik* as I was a tourist could be an easier way to access the information I wanted to get. I then asked the association, which was managed by Fábio and a distant cousin of his from Fatulia, Johnny, for help.[114] My decision and the following visit to the *uma lulik liurai* in Fatulia led to subsequent tension between me and my hosts, especially with Claudino, and between Claudino and his brother Alex, my host. As often happened, one day I went to the FoV seat with Fábio and asked him and Johnny if I could visit the *uma lulik* in Fatulia. Their reactions were very different: Fábio lowered his head and did not answer, while Johnny seemed enthusiastic about accompanying me. I thought Fábio was embarrassed because he knew I was asking to visit that *uma lulik* because of Claudino's silence. I reassured him that I was not offended by his uncle's attitude, I just wanted to visit an *uma lulik* that I hadn't visited yet. After all, I had already visited the Dero-ho *uma lulik* during the month of November. I should have interpreted Fábio's silence as a red flag, but I did not. Johnny and I agreed to meet that very afternoon, around 4 p.m. It was a rainy December afternoon. Johnny accompanied me to the place where the keeper of the house (*uma hein*, T.) was waiting for us. While we were walking on the muddy path from the FoV centre to Fatulia, Johnny told me that it would not be possible to see the *lulik* objects store in the *uma lulik* building. I smiled, reassuring him that I did not want to force the *lia nain* to tell me or show me any forbidden thing of word. Johnny nodded and repeated the price of the visit to me. Money was the main reason that made that visit possible: I was not a researcher at that moment; I was a tourist to Johnny and to the *lia nain*.

[113] *Cf*. https://venilale.com/the-venilale-tourist-centre/, last accessed on 30.11.2020.
[114] Fatulia is one of the eight *suku* comprised in the Venilale subregion.

When we met the *lia nain*, who was also the *uma hein*, the guardian of the house, he repeated that unfortunately he could not show me the *lulik* objects stored inside[115] and he explained that that house was an *uma liurai* that had been inaugurated the year before. He explained very carefully that that House had been linked to Luka in the past. Luka nowadays is a small town in the southern part of the Vikeke region, although in the past it used to be a quite important domain in the Eastern part of ancient Timor, attested in both foreign (Portuguese, Dutch and French) historical literature (Barnes, Hägerdal and Palmer 2017, 335-337) as well as in contemporary oral narrative histories and ritual practices performed by a vast number of *lia nain* in the eastern area of Timor-Leste (Barnes, Hägerdal and Palmer 2017; Palmer 2015, 51-59). Particularly the oral literature and recounts/accounts suggest that Luka used to be a very important pole of political as well as ritual power in the Eastern part of the island of Timor. Mr. Castro, the *uma hein* in Fatulia, mentioned that in the past Luka provided a vast supply of horses to the Fatulia's *uma liurai*, to illustrate the political as well as military power of the *uma liurai* in Fatulia. In addition, he mentioned that the brave warriors belonging to the Fatulia *uma liurai* used to kill their enemies and hang their heads on the big trees that are still in front of the *uma lulik*'s building.

As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, in Venilale the term *liurai* is often associated with the Portuguese colonial power: both my hosts as well as other adult men I talked to in Venilale often mentioned that *liurai* used to be East Timorese or *mestiços* rich landowners, who claimed taxes over the local population. The *liurai* granted the usufruct of the land to local peasants so they could cultivate the land they were given, but then the peasants were obliged to give part of their harvest to the *liurai*. These families were literate, they could speak Portuguese fluently, and they were often linked to the Catholic Church – in some cases, in fact, they sold part of their lands to the Portuguese Catholic Church – so they were converted. They no longer believed in the animistic beliefs of *'fatuk no ai'* (stones and trees, T.), but they went to mass and sometimes taught the Gospel to the local *gentiu* (T., infidels, pagans). Both my hosts used to tell me that when the *liurai* or the Portuguese colonial officers needed to give important information to the population, they used to play the drums, whose sounds and vibrations can be heard at a great distance. Among the *lulik* objects stored in the house that we were not allowed to see at that time, there was a Portuguese flag as well as an ancient drum, both attesting to a military pact between the Portuguese colonial power and the House, as Mr. Castro told me. By the recount given by the *uma hein* of the Fatulia's *uma liurai*, the military proximity with the domain of Luka, as well as with the Portuguese colonial officers, gave power and prestige to the House, which used to have control over the villages of the area, as well as over some of the Houses of the territory.

[115] The importance of the *lulik* objects was presented in the first chapter and is one of the topics of the next.

The Portuguese historian Ricardo Roque, analysing a collection of decapitated East Timorese skulls found in the Coimbra museum in Portugal, attempted to trace back the story (and history) of these skulls, eliciting archival sources. He observes that the craniological analysis in vogue among the Portuguese anthropologists of the first half of the 1900s interpreted these skulls as typical of the "Timorese-ness of headhunting violence" (Roque 2017, 69). The author, though, refuses this *orientalist* analysis and, through his exceptional archival *quest*, reconfigures East Timorese headhunting as an originally native practice of which the Portuguese colonial power took advantage in order to impose their power on the territory. In Roque's perspective, the Portuguese colonial enterprise in Timor would not have happened if the small numbers of Portuguese military officials had not authorised the ritual headhunting practice among the native warriors under their command (Roque 2017, 72). Therefore, the author describes the relation between officials and natives, civilised and savages, as a "parasitic symbiosis" (Roque 2017, 37), given the fact that the heads severed by the natives were in fact the scale of measurement of the Portuguese victories. I have not gathered enough historical data to conclude that the Fatulia head-hunting practices that Mr. Castro referred to were surely connected to the Portuguese colonial enterprise. However, the *uma hein* stressed the connections between his House and the Portuguese power, as well as with Luka. These aspects are central to understanding the reasons for the contrasts that arose after the visit to the *uma liurai* with my hosts.

As soon as I got back home, Claudino asked where I had been. It was the first time he had asked me such a question. I answered that I had gone to Fatulia, to visit an *uma lulik*. "The *uma lulik* you visited is not finished yet – I know because I'm helping to build it", he replied. I told him the *uma hein* told me that the house was finished the year before. He scrutinised me, surprised, and then he asked what house I visited, and I answered "The *uma liurai* in Fatulia". He turned around and left. I looked up towards Alex's house and I saw Fábio, his mother and Sol on the porch: they listened to the brief conversation between me and the uncle but as soon as my glance met theirs, Fábio went to his room, and Maria and Sol disappeared too. The following days I tried to figure out what happened. Claudino was clearly offended and disappointed because I went to visit another *uma lulik*, but why, then, did FoV not provide the same visit to the *uma lulik* of Fábio's family in Dero-ho? At first, I thought Claudino was offended with me, because instead of asking him information about the *uma lulik* in the area, I went to talk with another *lia nain*. But then, on questioning Alex, Fábio and Johnny, I began to understand that there was another point.

Both Fábio and Johnny told me that the ancient house of Fatulia was closer to the Venilale city centre, so it was more easily reachable for tourists. Then, they added that the Fatulia potent house was an *uma lulik liurai*, implicitly admitting that the Dero-ho *uma lulik* did not have the same status and importance. Claudino never recounted the origin narrative of his House to me; however, there were surely open rivalries between the two Houses, as well as between the two *lia nain*, accentuated

by the fact that the *uma lulik liurai* was visited by tourists, while the Dero-ho potent house was not. I started to wonder how many *uma lulik* were excluded from touristic dynamics in Venilale, and if this could potentially be dangerous for future heritage-making processes. Tourism and heritage can potentially transform ancient and traditional dynamics between Houses into political matters in the present. As I explore in the last subsection of the chapter, tourism and traditions are already deployed as political tools by the local 'communities' and *lia nain*. What if the KNTLU and SEAC activities made only some of the local Houses national heritage and not all of them? What are these decisions based on? The *uma lulik liurai* in Fatulia seemed to have special power, acquired through the Portuguese colonial enterprise. Hence, the network of powers initiated with the Portuguese colonial enterprise are still alive today and they continue to inform internal conflicts among the 'community'. Is UNESCO willing to explore the historical dimensions of these webs of power embedded within the local 'communities'? Did the conflict between the Dero-ho *uma lulik* and the *uma lulik liurai* in Fatulia already exist before the colonial enterprise? Are there other open historical rivalries among the Houses in Venilale? These are open questions that I leave for further investigation into these topics that will surely need a historical and archival approach.

In addition to the conflict between the two *lia nain* and between Houses, though, I noticed that a more internal conflict between Claudino and Alex had started to become more evident to my eyes after my visit to the *uma lulik* in Fatulia. Maria, Fábio and Sol seemed embarassed after my brief conversation with Claudino. Were they ashamed at my behaviour? Or there was something else going on? I then asked Alex if Claudino was offended because I did not pay him, like I did with the *lia nain* Castro, to take me and visit the *uma lulik* in Dero-ho. Alex tried to reassure me, telling me that Claudino was not upset with me and that I did not need to give him any money other than the monthly amount I was already giving him. As I mentioned, I used to pay a monthly rent to Mr. Alex, but he lives on the property of his older brother Claudino. I started to realise that maybe Claudino was not willing to talk to me because there was a fight between him and his brother. Hence, as a matter of precedence and internal familiar hierarchy, he was also supposed to give part of the rent to his brother. I realised this by observing what was going on in the two kitchens: the one in Mr. Alex's house and the one in Claudino's. The rice barn was secured in Claudino's kitchen, and when Mária needed rice, she used to go to their barn and take it. Another detail I noticed was the 'raids' of Claudino's wife – Alex and Maria's sister-in-law – on Alex's living room, where the food was stored. Sol and I often used to go to the market and buy fresh vegetables, fruit and bread. As soon as we got back home, Claudino's wife appeared and took the vegetables stored in the fridge that we had just bought at the market. Claudino never entered Alex's house, unless there was a special occasion, such as a special dinner. I think I saw him in Alex's house once or twice, during my stay. In the same way, I rarely saw Alex enter his brother's house nor talk with him directly, despite the distance between the two houses being less than 100

metres. I remembered I considered the auntie's 'raids' on the fridge incredibly intrusive, because private spaces were respected and kept separate and distinct, despite the proximity between the two houses. I suggest that the aunt's attitude, was an indirect, yet explicit way to let Alex understand that Claudino expected money from Alex because of my presence in the house.

I often gave Claudino small presents, such as cigarettes and *bua malus* bought at the market and other small gadgets whenever I went to Dili, but he never seemed interested. During the All-Saints celebrations, Claudino's and Alex's siblings were reunited, and I insisted on taking pictures of them all together. I then printed the picture in Dili (there was no printing service in Venilale) and gave the pictures to all the siblings I photographed. When I gave the picture to Claudino, he was smiling and he accepted it, taking it delicately with both hands, gently bowing his head, to thank me. He looked at the picture smiling and nodding his head, he then offered me a seat on the porch, asked me for a cigarette and conceded me the one and only interview with him. It was raining very hard and the interview I saved on my recorder is totally inaudible. That printed picture created a bond between us, an obligation to which Claudino felt obliged to respond and give back something. He offered me his time, a conversation, *bua malus* and cigarettes. I guess Claudino was not expecting that kind of present from me. It created a momentary bond between us, and Claudino felt an obligation towards me and my gesture. He offered me a sit and his time, *bua malus*, cigarettes and chats.

II.3.1 Friends of Venilale vs *Xefe de Subdistritu*

Fábio and Johnny managed FoV in Venilale and were always in contact with the Australian headquarter of the association, which financed the project. Alex was on the FoV's board of directors, together with other elders belonging to Johnny's family. Fábio was really keen to be part of the project in a pro-active way: he organised many workshops for the kids, providing English, music and drawing lessons. He was also very committed and engaged in the fine-tuning of a project for the realisation of a guest house, in Venilale. Fábio, together with the Australian's FoV responsibles, drew up a quite interesting plan to turn the Venilale's FoV seat into a guesthouse. Fábio was in fact a graduate in architecture and he was very interested in the so-called green architecture, having also participated in a few bamboo-construction workshops in Bali. He designed the project for the new FoV seat, green and sustainable, including some rooms and a restaurant for tourists. The current home of FoV, in fact, is a quite old and unsafe building that was a Portuguese police station originally, and then became a pharmacy during the Indonesian occupation. With national independence, the building remained empty so when FoV was funded in 2005, the Venilale city council decided to allocate the building to FoV's activities. Despite FoV working on a project to renovate and expand their premises to turn the place into a guesthouse, the project was on hold, because the *Xefe de subdistritu* did not want to sign for its approval, and he seemed very reluctant to discuss the proposal with the FoV members.

Fábio often expressed his frustration at the Mayor's attitude. FoV is the only facility providing assistance and tours to foreign visitors, with guides who speak both English and Tetun. At the beginning of my stay in Waikulale I could not understand the reasons for the Mayor's objection. Then I slowly started to realise that the reasons were rooted in kinship relations and tensions and that the mayor was using his administrative power to state his social status and position towards Alex's extended family. Fábio and Alex often discussed the issue. The project Fábio had designed had already gained the approval of the members of FoV's board, both in Venilale and in Australia. The project had also already been discussed officially with the *Xefe de subdistritu*; however, despite a first voiced endorsement, the project then remained on the Mayor's desk, waiting for the formal and official approval and signature. There were many quarrels between Fábio and his father Alex over the topic. Fábio in fact demanded his father organise a meeting of the FoV board together with the local administration representatives, while his father was distancing himself from the matter. Alex repeated insistently that his presence in FoV was just formal and that it was his time to step back from all his public and social responsibilities. He claimed he wanted to leave space to the young generations, and that it was their turn to take charge of FoV, as well as of the local administration's apparatus: "old people cannot continue being the only references". Fábio was in a rage every time his father used these words, but Alex was unmovable in his decisions.

After the innumerable discussions between Alex and Fábio, I decided to ask to Johnny his opinion about the mayor's attitude. What was the reason for his denial? The project would have brought many tourists to Venilale, and the project would have been totally financed by FoV's Australian headquarter. Why was the mayor so uncooperative? Johnny's answer was that the two families – Alex's and the mayor's – were apart and divided ("*Sira nia familia keta-ketak*", T.). This was a common expression, meaning both that there were no alliances (or marriages) between the extended families, as well as there some tension between them. However, the fight was not just between 'families', as Johnny mentioned. The conflict in fact took on a generational dimension too. To avoid open conflict between the two families, Alex did not take part in the meetings and left the responsibility of resolving the issue to the 'youngsters'. He knew in fact that his presence could inflame the conflict, as he was the former mayor of the subregion. Fábio and Johhny, though, being 'young' had a minoritarian position within the matter, and hence they were subject to the elders' decisions.

II.3.2 There could be blood

Most of the people I talked to in Venilale referred to tourism as a mirage, an abstract entity they were waiting to come and that would undoubtedly bring wealth to the area. Something very similar to what recently Bovensiepen defined as the "promise of prosperity", referring to the discourses that the governmental apparatuses have created about development and the national growth that oil is supposed to bring to Timor-Leste (*cf*. 2018a). I must admit that tourism in Venilale seemed much more a chimera than a promise, and through a tragi-comic event happened in Venilale during my stay, my aim is to show how a massive or unregulated presence of tourists in the territory could potentially affect the local social dynamics.

As I mentioned earlier, there are no places in Venilale that provide facilities for tourists coming to visit the area. At this moment, the Salesian nuns' community is the only place providing rooms for foreigners, given the fact that the *Xefe de Suku* does not want to approve the FoV's project and build the guest house. Tourists, scholars, teachers: foreigners arriving in Venilale are hosted by the Salesian nuns' community. Emily, an Australian teacher, was invited to teach English to the high-school run by the nuns (July-December 2017). I met Emily for the first time in October and we used to take long walks together in the afternoon, with another PhD student that was also living in the nuns' house at that time and who was conducting research in the area. Emily really enjoyed walking in her free time, and she often used to walk by herself, despite the fact that the nuns warned her many times that walking alone could be dangerous. As mentioned earlier, foreigners were not supposed to wander around Venilale by themselves. Both my host families rarely allowed me to stroll around by myself, warning me that it could be dangerous because wild malevolent spirits could attack me and cause sickness; or thieves or rapists could have assaulted me. Also, when I wanted to visit a place, I always needed to be accompanied by someone, usually a FoV guide. I was happy to contribute to FoV's activities, even if it often felt like an obligation to have to ask their help or presence, and I felt controlled in my activities and movements. I never had the impression that people could have attacked me, but I never felt comfortable walking alone either as I always felt observed and almost stalked by the people I would meet while walking. I never felt in danger, especially in Venilale, even if often I felt sexualised, as a woman, and easily spottable, as a white foreigner. Unfortunately, Emily was attacked a few times: she enjoyed getting off the beaten track and children threw stones at her; a couple of men harassed her too. To my surprise, she did not seem to care much. One weekend, some of her Australian friends living in Dili came to visit her and they headed to *Ponte Natureza*.

Ponte Natureza means nature bridge and is one of the most visited places in Venilale, both by foreigners and by locals.[116] The place is located in a quite secluded and isolated area of the Venilale sub-district, between the villages of Badoho and Wa'i-oli, and it is a naturally bridge-shaped earth formation over a deep transparent creek and waterfall. Due to the road's conditions, Emily and her friends were not able to get to their destination by car, so they proceeded on foot. They were approaching the site when suddenly a group of men approached, yelling at them while waving their *katana*[117] in the air, in the clear attempt to keep them away. None of the tourists could speak Tetun nor any other local language, and they were upset by the situation, so they decided to leave. Emily told me that the men did not want to harm them, but that it was quite unpleasant to be 'welcomed' in such a hostile way.

As soon as Emily got back to the nuns' community, she told them what had happened to her and her friends and the news spread incredibly fast. The "*malae* attacked with the *katanas*" story was in the air for a couple of weeks: some people were scandalised by the behaviour of the men at Ponte Natureza; some other were just entertained by what happened. I was intrigued: I wanted to understand better what happened. I was quite sure that the attack had to do with the fact that the *malae* visitors went to Ponte Natureza without being escorted by anyone from FoV or any other East Timorese person. A few weeks after the accident, the Venilale's *Xefe de Subdistritu* decided to organise a public debate with all the local authorities and especially with the local traditional leaders to discuss what had happened. I really wanted to go, but unfortunately, I was not invited, and I preferred to stay home. Alex, my host, was asked to participate but he kindly refused, as often happened. He was often invited to public gatherings, since he had been the Venilale's *Xefe de Subdistritu*. He rarely participated, especially if the present mayor was among the organisers. His official excuse was that the younger generations had to learn how to deal with the local problems, without relying on their elders all the time. However, I am quite sure that in this specific circumstance, his attitude had to do with the 'fight' between his extended family and the mayor's. He knows his opinion is taken into high consideration everywhere within the sub-district; his voice is considered prestigious, because of his long experience as a local state representative. His authority and status are the reasons why he is often invited to public gatherings, to settle fights and important events. However, he rarely participated and, even if he went, he refused to speak, even when he was asked to. Just to give a brief example, he was invited to the 'traditional tribunal' to settle the dispute between the two farmers I described at the beginning of the chapter. The Venilale mayor was not present: usually for these kinds of disputes only the *Xefe de suku*

[116] I illustrate all the Venilale cultural and natural assets in the next chapter. For a short presentation on Venilale's tourist spots, *see* https://venilale.com/things-to-see-in-venilale/, last accessed on 30.11.2020.
[117] *Katana* are machetes, used mostly by men for many different activities, in the fields, with the herds, in the woods etc. They are often used by women too, especially to cut the wood for the fire in the kitchen.

and *aldeia* and not the *Xefe de subdistritu* are asked to be present. He was asked to sit among the *lia nain* but instead sat among the audience, while his older brother Claudino was among the *lia nain*/judges. At some point, in the middle of the dispute, the discussion was at an impasse and it seemed almost impossible to reach a solution; one of the policemen took the floor and asked Alex to intervene. He refused, saying that he was present as a simple citizen and he added that he trusted the judges' and local authorities' completely.

As concerns the public debate that the *Xefe de subdistritu* organised to discuss the 'katanas' issue, Alex was invited but did not go. I asked him if I could go and he suggested that it would be wiser to stay home, that there was nothing important to hear. I then asked Alex's opinion about the case, and about the reason why a public debate was organised.[118] He explained me that the '*Ponte Natureza* issue' had been a struggle since the Indonesian time. The site has been contended by the two different villages (*suku*) surrounding the place – Badoho and Wa'i-oli – because both of them claimed to 'own' the place. In Tetun terms, the inhabitants of the two villages claimed to belong to the place and, hence, to be the legitimate descendants of *Ponte Natureza*. The dispute began during the Indonesian period, when the government was trying to improve the place for tourist purposes. The Indonesian administration succeeded in the negotiation, and for some years the situation seemed to be pacified, even though the tensions between the two villages were intense. Alex added that after the independence of the country, Xanana Gusmão came to discuss the issue in person with the local *liurai* and *lia na'in*, and it was decided to put a 'tax' for visitors,[119] which has to be divided equally between the two *suku*. Alex knew the issue very well because, due to his activity as local administrator between the end of the Indonesian occupation and the national independence, he had to deal with these tensions and was among the negotiators.

During my stay in Venilale, the local FoV guides used to tell the tourists that the tax was to ask permissions to the ancestors to visit the place. This is not entirely false, because the place is still considered *lulik* (more on this specific issue in the next chapter), so it requires sacrifices and ritual *hamulak* (prayers) from time to time, but after the explanation my host gave me, it was clear to me how in this specific case *kultura* and traditions were deployed as tools in order to keep social stability between the two communities, through an economic compensation. During our conversation, Alex never mentioned ritual activities, but by his words it was instead clear that this 'entrance fee' that visitors had to pay was simply a profit for the two *sukus*. Alex was questioning the legality of this decision, since this issue had not been discussed yet at the *munisipiu* level (Baukau), and – at that time – the tax had been just an informal agreement between the two villages. In Alex's opinion, it was not

[118] Conversation from 3rd of November 2017.
[119] $25 for foreigners, between $2 and $5 for East Timorese people.

clear to whom the tourists were supposed to hand the money: he stated clearly that private citizens cannot take advantages of public issues. Finally, he was suggesting that having a legal 'entrance ticket' system could benefit the *postu administrativu* too (Venilale), by splitting the income into three parts. Alex was in fact suggesting that the profit could be redistributed, giving 25% to the Venilale Administration with the remaining 75% divided between Badoho and Wua'i-oli.

Conclusion

In this chapter I wanted to unpack the concept of 'community', which is central both within the text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, as well as in the East Timorese national Resolution 24/2009. In both these documents 'communities' are presented as the agents which create and safeguard ICH. But who are the social actors that shape communities? I focused on *lia nain*, representatives of the *suku* and *aldeia* communities in Timor-Leste. However, I suggest that their social status and prestige affects gender inclusion and social equality. Moreover, many are the tensions shaping the social life of the communities within Venilale.

Although people in Venilale seem to be awaiting tourism and development as unquestionable benefits for them, many are the problems related to this topic that I discussed throughout the chapter. Local fights between extended families, villages and institutions (like the one between Alex and the Xefe de Postu Administrativu) seem to be deeply rooted historically. Tourism could be an additional tool renovating and reinforcing the local and ancestral tensions. Furthermore, my identity within the community helped me understand that I was often perceived as a tourist. However, I was not comfortable in that position: people were suspicious of my presence, revealing that the large majority of the people in Venilale perceived tourism as unfamiliar.

CHAPTER III - THE POLITICS OF HERITAGE

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the East Timorese national authorised heritage discourse (AHD; Smith, 2006): what the government has recognized as national heritage and what the plans are for its protection, both nationally and within the Baukau region and the Venilale subregion. I focus on the ways in which KNTLU is collaborating with the government, namely with SEAC, and their complementary activities together, their main interest being to safeguard *uma lulik*. The national AHD is currently focused on the endangerment of material heritage (Nogueira da Silva 2019), as well as on the aesthetic elements and craftmanship of the cultural assets that the government considers as heritage, as the main documents released by SEAC and KNTLU depict.[120] In the East Timorese context, since Portuguese colonisation, and then also during the Indonesian military occupation, the aesthetic and tangible dimensions of *uma lulik* as well as other local handicrafts have been central. Throughout the chapter I will outline the ambiguities present in the current perspectives of the KNTLU and SEAC. The core element in SEAC and KNTLU publications is that an endangered dimension of the buildings corresponds to an endangered dimension of the traditions, rituals and social dimension of *uma lulik* (Gárate Castro 2010; Nogueira da Silva 2019, 203; SEAC and KNTLU 2017). The corollary is that urgent safeguarding of the *uma lulik* buildings is needed, using the 'authentic' and 'original' material for the potent buildings (SEAC and KNTLU 2017). Based on the ethnographic data collected in Venilale and on the anthropological literature on the topic, I argue that the paramount element of *uma lulik* buildings is the *lulik* potency itself and authenticity is differently nuanced than the way implied by SEAC and KNTLU. This does not mean that the material dimension of the potent houses is not relevant or is unimportant but that *uma lulik* are both physical entities and cultural categories that challenge the dichotomy between tangible and intangible, being sustained by social as well as ritual practices that animate them (Sousa 2008)**.** Ethnographic data suggests that the *uma lulik* buildings are repositories for *lulik* objects (*sasaan lulik*, T.), the latter being the core elements of *uma lulik*.

Despite the discursive practice of the SEAC and KNTLU regarding the apparent endangered dimension of local traditions, in recent years the anthropological literature has highlighted the "ritual effervescence" (Bovensiepen 2015, 13) regarding the reconstruction of *uma lulik* throughout the country in post-conflict Timor-Leste. In addition, many scholars have discussed the ambiguities and frictions existing between rural customary practices and the state-driven developmental agenda (Palmer 2018; Shepherd 2018; Trindade and Barnes 2018), often stressing the competing rationales at

[120] The volumes that I take into account as part of the national AHD are: Gárate Castro et alii (2010); SEAC and KNTLU (2017) and UNESCO Jakarta et alii (2015). An analysis of these publications will be included in the chapter.

play (Palmer 2015; 2018), and the political implications often embedded within the customary practices (Bovensiepen 2015; Sousa 2019). Many different communities have been restoring their own *uma lulik* after the end of the Indonesian military occupation, and scholars have interpreted the post-independent cultural revival in different ways. Andrew McWilliam, for example, has interpreted the revival of ritual practices as "cultural resilience" and resistance towards the violent past endured by the East Timorese population (McWilliam 2005; 2011). A quite similar argument is that suggested by Lisa Palmer and Demetrio de Amaral (2008). The authors point out that customary activities have been mobilised by local communities in Lospalos to both engage with and resist the central national government policies. Susana Barnes and Josh Trindade, considering the revitalisation of customary practices in Uatolari, analyse the ways in which rural communities imagine their social well-being: prosperity and well-being are considered to be connected to the ancestral past and they shape the ways in which future is imagined (Trindade and Barnes 2018). These interpretations, however, imply a quite homogeneous identity of the communities observed.

Other scholars have pointed out the conflictual powers imbued with the customary revival and the cultural recovery, as well as the ambiguities leading them (Bexley and Nygaard-Christensen 2013; Bovensiepen 2014b; 2014c; 2015; Nygaard-Christensen and Bexley 2017; Palmer 2015, 129-148; Silva 2018). According to Bovensiepen (2014c), ancestral knoweldge and customary practices shape authority as well as power relations, quite evident in the relations among local *lia nain*. Lúcio Sousa (2019) points out that *lia nain* in Timor-Leste are paramount agents in rural and small-scale contexts as well as at a more national and state level. As illustrated by the anthropologist Renata Nogueira da Silva, then, *lia nain* are involved in the development of the national heritage-making process (2019, 69-73) and inform the national AHD. The role of *lia nain* both within the local communities as well as within the national heritage-making process emerges as central. The words and knowledge of the ritual experts related to customary practices are often deployed to justify national policies regarding the safeguarding of tangible and intangible cultural heritage (SEAC and KNTLU, Hamutuk prezerva no salvaguarda valor kulturál hodi promove sustentabilidade uma-lulik iha Timor-Leste: Relatóriu final husi KNTLU, kona-ba rezultadu peskiza patrimóniu material Uma-Llulik husi Marobo Munisipiu Bobonaro no Rejiaun Especiál Oecusse 2017). What are the implications of the interventions of *lia nain* within the governmental apparatus? And do *lia nain* in Timor-Leste represent the *connoisseurs* involved within the creation of the national AHD?

By exploring SEAC and KNTLU activities, which I consider the two types of governmental apparatus representing the national AHD, I aim to expose the "conflicting powers of heritage regimes", as Regina Bendix, Aditya Eggert and Arnika Peselmann define the frictions between the different agents engaged within the shaping of the national AHD (Bendix et alii 2013, 16). The chapter is largely based on interviews and formal meetings that I had with the director and other representatives of the

Secretary of Arts and Culture (SEAC) and KNTLU.[121] Despite the goals of KNTLU and SEAC regarding the entire country, in the Baukau region these plans seem to be developing quite slowly and quite dissimilarly. Furthermore, according to the SEAC representative in Baukau and the *Xefe de subditritu* in Venilale, there are many local assets that could be preserved to ensure the economic development and tourism in the region. The cultural and natural assets to be safeguarded seem to differ depending on the actors I interviewed: in Dili both SEAC and KNTLU staff presented *uma lulik* as the preeminent assets to be protected nationally, while in the SEAC in Baukau and then in Venilale the assets suggested were different. Namely, both in Baukau and in Venilale, my interlocutors denounced a general lack of funds and miscommunication with the central administration of Dili. Hence, this chapter attempts to address the reasons for the distance between the decision-making centre of Dili and the implementation of the policies within the Baukau region. During my fieldwork I realised that there are many voices shaping the national AHD and friction and ambiguities are central in an understanding of the difficulties that characterise the AHD landscape in Timor-Leste. Namely, the same actors involved in the AHD presented me with disputes between the central governmental apparatus in Dili and local and regional offices, between the town of Baukau and the sub-region of Venilale. The "politics of heritage" (Harrison, 2010b) resulting from the conflicts reveals divergences between the institutional *dispositifs* (Harrison 2013, 35) – SEAC and KNTLU. I present the tensions I observed when I approached the governmental apparatus during my fieldwork research. Structural issues inform the main problematics regarding the development of the national AHD: lack of funds and communication between the central governmental and regional powers. This aspect has consequences for the regional capacity of Baukau, which is often bypassed by the central governmental apparatus. I suggest that these tensions are intertwined with wider disputes regarding economic, political and social dynamics, namely the ones between the 'centre' and the peripheries (Dili and the *foho*). Within this frame, *lia nain* emerge as significant actors implied in the AHD. The Timor-Leste context stimulated me to notice the plurality of voices within the AHD and how the actors are involved. I argue that *lia nain*, despite their apparent marginal position as local 'representatives' of the rural communities, do in fact shape the AHD, often justifying and sustaining the governmental and international guidelines regarding the safeguard of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The East Timorese context forced me to question the idea of the AHD as a clear-cut set of practices, divided between state-driven governmentalities and marginal and peripherical local voices – as suggested by Laurajane Smith (2006).

The chapter is divided into four sections. On the basis of a formal meeting that I had with the mayor of Venilale, in the first section (III.1) I present Venilale's cultural and natural assets, places and

[121] I met the director of SEAC, Dr. Cecília de Assis in her office in Dili on the 21.09.2017 and 23.09.2017; Mr. Abrão Ribeiro, representative of KNTLU, on the 12.12.2017 and Mr. Severino Feliciano in Baukau on the 05.10.2017.

sites which are generally visited by tourists and that the subregional administration intends to safeguard as local heritage. Regional and state measures have not been implemented yet for the majority of these sites, although some of them were well known and safeguarded even during the Indonesian military occupation. Despite the fact that the majority of the sites present on the territory are imbued with *lulik* potency, which is the main reason why these sites are considered important by the local population, this characteristic is not mentioned by the AHD. These places continue to be presented as "natural sites", in tourist advertising as well as by the local administration. I observe a similar attitude towards *uma lulik* as well, which I discuss in the second section of the chapter (III.2). On the one hand, the governmental institutions concerned with the safeguarding of *uma lulik* focus on the tangible dimension of the potent houses, with *uma lulik* being considered as national heritage by the government. On the other hand, though, the local communities in Venilale are concerned about the potency of the objects stored inside the buildings and the ritual practices concerning the *uma lulik* and the Houses. I suggest that the polarisation between the perspective of the state and that of the local communities towards the assets they consider important has to be understood from a historical perspective. *Lulik* in fact has been questioned since the Portuguese colonisation, and *uma lulik* in particular have undergone a process from destruction to heritagisation (Sousa 2017) that have left their intangible and supernatural dimension aside. In the third and fourth section of the chapter (III.3 and III.4) I will discuss the national East Timorese AHD and the actors involved in it by questioning the role of *lia nain* within it. Customary experts, in fact, often interact with SEAC and KNTLU representatives in the definition of the AHD. On the one hand this can be considered as a way through which the governmental apparatuses include local voices from the communities within the AHD. However, I suggest that *lia nain* actually interact as part of the governmental institutions, on behalf of the communities they live in. Their authority as customary leaders makes them political actors involved in more institutional and governmental issues, supporting authoritarian governmental perspectives.

III.1 Natural or *lulik* sites?

During the formal meeting I had with the mayor of Venilale,[122] I asked him to illustrate for me which cultural and natural assets in the territory were identified as heritage (*patrimóniu*, T.). He roughly divided them into two categories: historical and natural sites. Firstly, he mentioned the old Portuguese historical buildings present in Venilale, which are the ancient *Escola do Reino* (Pt., Kingdom School), restored by Swatch – Tempus International and by GERTil, a Portuguese group of architects, immediately after the Restoration of Independence in 2002 (Prista 2006, 76) and the old Portuguese

[122] The meeting took place on 12.10.2017.

pharmacy, which was converted into a police facility during the Indonesian occupation, and which now hosts FoV.[123] Then the mayor mentioned the Caicoli's *fatin istóriku* (T., historical site) – where the Indonesian troops and a few members of the Resistance movement, among which Xanana Gusmão, met and signed a ceasefire agreement in 1983, which eventually only lasted a few months (see Chronology) – and the *Xanana subar fatin*[124] (T., Xanana Gusmão's hiding place) in Uaioli. For these two places, connected to the recent history of the country and its struggle for independence, the mayor declared that he had submitted a formal request to the central government in order to get some funds for their protection and conservation. However, by the time of our interview, he was still waiting for a formal answer from the office for this kind of procedures in Dili.[125]

Then the mayor started to enumerate the many *fatin natureza* (T., natural sites) which are the *Ponte Natureza* (T., Natural Bridge), the Hot Water of Waikana, the Baha-Mori Lake, and Mount Ariana.[126] As mentioned in chapter II, *Ponte Natureza* is a naturally bridge-shaped earth formation over a deep transparent creek and waterfall. Not just this place, but also all the other 'natural' places in Venilale are highly renowned throughout Timor-Leste. Both foreign and local tourists (expats living in Dili) regularly visit these places.[127] East Timorese people know that all these places are imbued with *lulik* potency. All the 'natural' places just mentioned are connected to local customary stories, legends and tales, sometimes contested, as in the case of *Ponte Natureza* (see Chapter II). During the meeting I had with the mayor, I asked him for more information about the rituals and ceremonies performed for the *lulik* potency and *rai nain* of these places. He answered that the places used to have strong *lulik* powers, but nowadays, they are already 'modern'.[128] The description of '*lulik*' sites as modern was recurrent during my fieldwork. I had the chance to explore this issue more with my hosts and I realised that both Santana and Júlio used the word '*modernizadu*' (T.), implying that the *lulik* presence was less dangerous, as if it was lethargic. I suggest that this 'modernisation' of *lulik* has to be understood in relation to the Catholics' consecrations related to these sites, because this was the connection implied by my interlocutors.

[123] This is the building that is supposed to be turned into a hostel, which I referred to in Chapter II.
[124] I do not have much information about this place, but the mayor told me that it is a place in an isolated area of the forest, where Xanana Gusmão used to hide during the 1990s, in the last period of the Indonesian occupation, before his incarceration in Cipinang, Jakarta.
[125] The last chapter will focus on the commemorations regarding the fight for independence, also including the historical places.
[126] For a complete description of the tourist attractions of the area, *cf*. the website of the Friends of Venilale Association, which is the only one providing tourist services in the area, as I am going to show later in this paragraph https://venilale.com/things-to-see-in-venilale/, accessed 19.12.2020.
[127] The FoV website provides information about all the assets of the area: https://venilale.com/things-to-see-in-venilale/, last accessed 30.11.2020).
[128] The words that the mayor used more than once during our interview were *moderniza ona*/*modernizadu* (T.), which literally mean that the places are 'already modern'/modernised.

When I was living in Daralata, I spent most days between the months of March and May 2017 in the rice-fields, where I was often worried that I might injure myself. The ground was quite slippery, the water so murky and muddy that it was impossible to see where I was putting my feet. It was also easy to sink into the muddy ground, so it was not recommendable to wear shoes. Santana's helpers as well as the people I used to meet in the rice-fields thought that I was scared that some animal could appear from the water and bite me. They tried to reassure me by telling me that in the past some of those fields – the *lulik* ones – were full of dangerous snakes,[129] but since the priests had come there and consecrated the fields, the snakes disappeared. My host-mother explained that the rice-fields used to be *lulik* because the ancestors *halulik* them.[130] She told me that she was referring to the ancestors who had not converted to Catholicism yet. *Lulik* does not seem to be an intrinsic characteristic of a place, but instead the result of a relationship between human beings and the natural elements, that sometimes is the result of the accomplished domestication of the dangerous spirits inhabiting the land (see Bovensiepen 2009, 326-328). According to my host Susana, the priests' blessings and ceremonies converted the ancestors' souls (*gentiu*)[131] and, consequently, the rice-fields too. The spirits (*rai nain*) and the potency (*lulik*) that nowadays are believed to inhabit some of the rice-fields of the areas I visited are still present, but they are described as less dangerous than they used to be some decades before. The *lulik* was described as lethargic and almost anesthetised by my hosts and other interlocutors I used to meet in the rice-fields.

There are other examples of the 'modernized' *lulik* potency within Venilale. Some of the nuns living in the Venilale community as well as my hosts told me that Mount Ariana used to be a *lulik* place, which was then consecrated during the 1980s by the Catholic Church and which nowadays is a locally renowned site for pilgrimages. In 2017 a statue of the Holy Mary (*Nain Feto*, T.) was carried and placed on the top of the mountain,[132] and Júlio, my host in Waikulale, once confessed to me that he hoped the place would become an official pilgrimage site for the country, like the *Kristu Rei* in Dili, or Mount Ramelau.[133] It is often visited by the seminarists and students of Fatumaka, as well as by the Venilale's

[129] The anthropologist Judith Bovensiepen refers to the presence of snakes nearby a *lulik* place in the subdistrict of Laclubar, in the Manatuto district, interpreted by her informants as *larek nain* (Idaté), *rai nain* (T.), spirits or guardians of the land (2015, 32-33). Lisa Palmer explores the presence of aquatic animals in Baukau (among which eels, crocodiles, snakes), embodiments of ancestral spirits, known as *dai*. *Dai*, both in Waima and Makasae means ancestral spirit as well as foreigner (2015, 39-50).

[130] *Halulik* (T.) means turn something *lulik*. From what I could observe within the Venilale's territory, the belief that potent people – namely the ancestors and the *lia nain* – had the power to make places *lulik* is quite common.

[131] *Gentiu* in Tetun means a person not yet converted to Catholicism, who follows the traditional and local beliefs and rituals. The word derives from the Portuguese gentio, meaning heathen. See the Glossary.

[132] *Cf*. the Friends of Venilale's Facebook profile with the picture of the event occurred in 2017, https://www.facebook.com/groups/friendsofvenilale/search/?query=ariana&epa=SEARCH_BOX, accessed on 19.12.2020.

[133] The *Kristu Rei* (T., Christ the King) statue is the most paradigmatic Catholic monument in Dili. It is located in the eastern part of the town, on the top of a hill from which one can enjoy a breathtaking view of the city and the sea surrounding the area. The statue represents Jesus Christ on the top of a planisphere and it was installed during

nuns, novices and orphans but also by foreign tourists. Both Júlio and the mayor of Venilale often stressed to me that everyone in Timor-Leste knows this place, both due to its religious importance, as well as the lovely panorama one can enjoy from the top of the mount. The Catholic consecration seems to appear also as a kind of a brand for the local and international visitors, since it labels a site as important. Does the Catholic 'branding' contradict and contrapose the *lulik*? The day I was visiting Ariana accompanied by João, one of the Friends of Venilale employees, he told me that in secluded areas of the mountain, far from the paths that the visitors follow, the local ritual experts (T. *lia nain* and *matan dook*) still perform customary ceremonies for the *lulik* potency of the place. In a similar way, also in the Daralata *lulik* rice-fields as well as for the Hot Water of Waikana and the Baha-Mori Lake, similar customary practices are regularly conducted by the local experts to ensure a good relationship between the *lulik* and the human realm. As described in Chapter I, customary rituals are conducted to remove 'impurities' from the *lulik* springs of water, as well as to thank the *rai nain* inhabiting the water. The spirits inhabiting the landscape, in fact, have to be fed, so as to ensure the reciprocity between the human and non-human realms (Palmer 2015, 45).

When I asked the mayor of Venilale which asset that, in his opinion, the government would and should preserve, among the ones he mentioned me, he stated that the Waikana Hot Waters should be the first ones on the list. This place had been a tourist site since the Indonesian period and, according to the mayor, the infrastructure that used to be built there can still be recovered. The Hot Waters are another example of the 'modernized' *lulik* potency. One day Santana took me to Waikana to show me the place and he insisted that I should have a swim; I was hesitant because I had no spare clothes with me and because I was feeling uncomfortable having a swim, being just the two of us there.[134] On that occasion too, as in the rice-fields, he thought I was hesitant because of the *lulik*, so he reassured me by telling me that the place was not dangerous at all, and that in the past the water used to be way hotter than now.[135] In this specific case, the reassurance that Santana gave me as well as the fact that the mayor described the site as 'already modern' are both hints of the fact that, apparently, the *lulik* potency can fade. However, local experts continue to perform the rituals needed to the *rai nain* of the site regularly. This made me wonder whether the *lulik* presence has been actually fading away or if my interlocutors just used to tell me this to reassure me so I wouldn't be scared. In addition, I wonder if the Catholic blessings have interfered with the strength of the *lulik* potency or if this was just a way to reassure me. My hosts and interlocutors, in fact, used to think that as a *malae*, I

the 1990s by the Indonesian government at that time. There is more on this statue in the next chapter. Mount Ramelau or Tatamailau is the highest mountain in the country, located in the district of Ainaro. Both sites are places of pilgrimages, the first dedicated to Jesus and the latter to the Holy Mary.

[134] In Timor-Leste women are supposed to swim fully dressed, not in swimsuits.

[135] As Bovensiepen observes, it is quite common that the potency of the *lulik* is associated with hot temperatures (2015, 38-39).

was Catholic. Judith Bovensiepen and Frederico Delgado Rosa wrote an interesting article regarding the interactions between the local *lulik* beliefs and other foreign beliefs (namely Catholicism), where they state

> Things that are classified as lulik are strictly indigenous and diametrically opposed to the category of the foreign, even though these dichotomous elements can in certain situations be converted into one another (2016, 666).

The authors argue that Catholic objects and symbols would represent the foreign recognition to the local spiritual powers of the *lulik*. Hence, *lulik* powers are never replaced by the Catholic ones, but these two supernatural authorities should be considered in a dialectical relation (2016, 666). Lisa Palmer gives example of places considered *lulik*, which were consecrated by the Catholic Church, in the Baukau region (2015, 157-161). The author discusses the local tensions raised between the local traditional leaders (*lia nain*) and Catholic Church authorities. Palmer's argument addresses power dynamics implied in the tensions between the *lia nain* and the priests. The Catholic Church in fact controls economic activities and holds crucial civic functions, beyond the spiritual dimension (159). As I highlighted in Chapter II, the *lia nain* are often representatives of *aldeia* and *suku*, holding authority and power, because of the ancestral knowledge embedded in them. Both the Catholic Church and customary representatives, hence, hold authority and power, that are often in conflict with *lulik* and spiritual potency.

It has to be taken into consideration that during the Portuguese colonisation, discrimination directed towards East Timorese cultural values was quite common (Delgado Rosa 2017; Tsuchiya 2019). Namely, missionaries and the Church have tried to subjugate the *lulik* potency (Delgado Rosa 2017), hence the relation between *lulik* and the Catholic sacred is not to be understood as equal. The anthropologist Kelly Silva points out that there is a general understanding among her clergy interlocutors of the Catholic faith in Timor-Leste as being in rupture with a "previous and supposedly inferior moral order" (Silva 2018, 238). Kisho Tsuchiya (2019) points out that the term *lulik* "came to be understood as an essential part of the unique Timorese identity" in the recent post-independence period and he suggests that this "essentialist nativism" is the historical result of the negative connotation assigned to the term by Portuguese missionaries, as *lulik* was to them a clear sign of pagan superstitions (94). During my fieldwork, some of the *lia nain*, as well as other elders, were reluctant to speak much about *uma lulik*. I suggest that they were reluctant not just because such ancestral knowledge is embedded in secrecy and can be revealed only in certain occasions and to certain people – as observed by Judith Bovensiepen (2015, 49-51), but because most of the people I met assumed that my behaviour, my values and knowledge were at odds with the customary knowledge prevailing in the rural areas. Many of the people I met, especially in the rural areas of Venilale, were surprised and often taken aback by the fact that a white (*malae*, T.) educated woman, would want to study the

local traditions, ones apparently considered as 'backwards' by them. There were frequent reactions of surprise at my research: from the East Timorese nuns, both in Dili and in Venilale; from my hosts, who considered it hilarious that I wanted to learn their 'dialects', from people in Dili who openly laughed at me when I stated that part of my research was conducted among the farmers in the rice fields of Daralata, and from certain students at the university (UNTL), who recommended that I be careful with the people in the mountains because they are '*beik'* (backwards; ignorant, T.). In the beginning, I was embarrassed by these statements and I did not understand why individuals who had extended family members living in the mountains would tell me that the people living in those areas were 'ignorant'. Then slowly, during my fieldwork, I realised that those comments had to be understood in a different way. Those comments referred to my own perspective on *lulik* and local values: according to my interlocutors, as a white person, I considered their beliefs as superstitions, in a negative way.

David Hicks, exploring his historical legacy as an anthropologist in Timor-Leste, mentions that during his first fieldwork in Vikeke in the 1960s, one of his interlocutors (an East Timorese soldier) was wondering "why should a 'civilized' (*civilizado*, Pt.) person be interested in the language and customs of people who were 'uncivilized' (*atrasado* or *gentio*, Pt.)?" (Hicks, 2017, 44).[136] I would suggest that the Portuguese colonial perspective was so clear to East Timorese people, that the 'backwards' category was appropriated in the past and it is still quite present among the lowest social classes of the population, especially in the rural and mountainous areas of the country. Elizabeth Traube pointed out he ambiguity of the term *beik* (2011). Literally, the term indicates illiterate rural people and how uneducated people define themselves, in contrast to educated elites. However, the figurative meaning of the term stands for "popular wisdom and common-sense" and formal learning as stupidity, reversing the meaning of the word *beik* (134-135). Some people assume that white foreigners would always consider their traditions as 'uncivilized', but this of course does not mean that people consider their own traditions and knowledge as backwards.

During my fieldwork, I often heard *lulik* used in relation to places that should not be visited unless when performing a certain ritual to ask permission (*husu lisensa*, T.) from the spiritual guardian (*rai nain*, T.) inhabiting them through sacrifice and prayers (*hamulak*, T.). The term is also used for objects belonging to the *uma lulik*, that can be seen/shown only at special occasions during the year, namely after the harvesting of the *lulik* fields. And also, food that must not be consumed before performing ritual ceremonies, namely the recently harvested rice, corn and pumpkins (otherwise the *lulik* would be angry and, hence, dangerous). In addition, there are activities that must not be conducted or words that must not be pronounced. It is also used as a verb (*halulik*, T.), since ritual

[136] Atrasado (Portuguese) means backwards. For *gentio* in Portuguese and *gentiu* in Tetun see Chapter II and the Glossary at the beginning of the thesis.

experts, especially in the past, knew how to infuse the *lulik* potency into objects or places.[137] *Lulik* is also used to refer to human genitals, both male and female as a way to avoid more vulgar words, but maybe also stressing the potency of those parts of the body and emphasizing reproduction. As discussed in Chapter I, having children is in fact considered as the furtherance of the House, but also as a blessing from the ancestors and spirits. Finally, *lulik* can also be used to refer to Catholic practices: priests are often referred to as *amo lulik* (masters of the *lulik*, T.), for example.

The anthropologist Frederico Delgado Rosa has analysed different religious accounts from the last period of the Portuguese colonisation in Timor-Leste (c. 1910-1974) in terms of what were then considered East Timorese "superstitions". The Portuguese missionaries interpreted the local traditions and beliefs as pagan or primitive practices which deserved to be destroyed, especially the *uma lulik* and the objects stored in them (Delgado Rosa 2017). The description of *lulik* as a superstition does not rely only on the Portuguese colonisation and religious conversion to Catholicism. I met many foreigners working in local NGOs and governmental apparatuses that described *lulik* as 'superstitions'. Despite most of the time the term was not intended in a derogatory way, however the term was intended to distance local and 'traditional' beliefs from Catholic ones. The FoV website also describes the Bahamori lake as surrounded by "superstition" (https://venilale.com/things-to-see-in-venilale/, last accessed 20.12.2020). I suggest that the historical legacy of the term *lulik*, as well as its interactions with the Catholic 'sacred' also has to be analysed as a relevant issue within the heritage discourse. Why did the mayor of Venilale avoid the descriptions of Venilale's sites as *lulik* and instead presented them as 'natural sites' (*fatin natureza*, T.)? Why did my interlocutors recurrently stress that the *lulik* potency had faded away with the Catholic blessings?

The cultural assets worth preserving in Venilale were define as "natural" heritage by the mayor, as well as by the Fov website. However, locally, these places are interpreted as animated by spiritual agencies that sometimes seem to contrast when they come across Catholic symbols and beliefs. The relation between the *lulik* and the Catholic potencies seem to be antagonistic and I opened a path to a historical explanation for this conflictual dynamic. The archaeologist Denis Byrne argues that the heritage practice has been complicit in the denigration of many different "popular beliefs" throughout Southeast Asia (Byrne 1991; 2012; 2014, 53-78). He also observes that many post-colonial Southeast Asian countries absorbed the colonial perspective over their own 'popular religions', instead of rejecting it. Byrne defines "popular religions" as the syncretic cults existing throughout Southeast

[137] The majority of the interlocutors I spoke with referred to past events when special ritual experts could 'animate' certain places with special potent and forbidden words (*lulik*); they also alluded to people that have this ability in the present, but none was willing to talk about this topic with me. I take this as another hint that lulik represents a potentially dangerous power and source.

Asia, in which animism coexists with other religious influences (2014) – very similarly to what happens in Timor-Leste between the 'traditional' beliefs and Catholicism. Namely,

> a characteristic of popular religion in these parts of Asia is its focus on the magical-supernatural efficacy of objects and places which may include religious infrastructure such as temples and shrines, portable artefacts such as deity statues and amulets, as well as natural phenomena such as trees, mountains, caves, rocks, streams and springs (Byrne 2012, 298).

Byrne points out that many national governments have glossed over popular beliefs as superstitions, accusing them of being an impediment to development as well as to scientific and rational advancement (2012). This has led to the exclusion of spirit shrines or sacred sites from state heritage inventories in countries such as Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia (307). The mayor of Venilale divided Venilale's assets into two categories: historical and the natural sites, which is the way in which the state categorises the different assets present in the national territory. Byrne illustrates that throughout Southeast Asia, two heritage landscapes exist: "the locally anchored spiritually-animated landscape and the unitary landscape of the nation-state (...) and it seems clear that the field of heritage practice is solidly focused on the latter of these" (307).

To sum up, the local natural and cultural assets were advertised by many interlocutors as 'natural' heritage, often 're-branded' as Catholic – as if this label would attract more tourists, both locals and foreigners. I was often reassured by being told that *lulik* had faded away, despite customary rituals having been conducted to ensure what Lisa Palmer describes as "inclusive sociality", between the human and non-human realms (2015, 56). Governmental policies are still in the process of being formalised; however, locally these places are advertised and described as local natural heritage, both by the local administrative authorities and by the local population. The FoV association's website, a local institution that promotes tourism in the area, presents the natural beauty of the assets within Venilale, adding that 'superstition' surrounds some of the places. The *lulik* potency is obscured or minimised by the discursive practices that inform these places in Venilale. One may wonder if in the future the national AHD would promote similar discursive practices towards these sites or not. The significance of these places is based on the supernatural agencies inhabiting them. Similarly to what happens to the *lulik* potency and the "natural" assets in Venilale, the state also deprives *uma lulik* of their spiritual and intangible dimension, as I will explore in the next section of the chapter.

III.2 *Uma lulik* between Houses and the state

FoV provides guided tours to foreign tourists, not just to the 'natural' places I mentioned in the previous section, but also to some of the *uma lulik* buildings of the area. As mentioned in Chapter II, I paid FoV for a guided tour to a *uma lulik* in Fatulia, and that amount was supposed to be split between the FoV guide and the *uma hein* who granted me access to the potent house. During my fieldwork, in conversations with the mayor of Venilale, policemen and policewomen, *lia nain*, and even with my hosts or other people in Venilale, *uma lulik* were never mentioned by my interlocutors as assets worthy of being preserved by or the national government or with their help. Yet, they are included in the tourist guides provided by FoV and some families benefit financially from these tours. Timor-Leste's state and government are implementing policies in order to protect *uma lulik* as national heritage. My hosts, though, were surprised to hear that the government was financing and promoting the inaugurations of *uma lulik* and quite sceptical about the governmental decision. Some *lia nain* I talked to, considered this policy as an intrusion of the state into family business (see also Nogueira da Silva 2019, 197). Therefore, in Venilale my interlocutors were not aware of the policies that the state has been implementing for the protection of the *uma lulik* and yet FoV include *uma lulik* in their guided tours. However, SEAC and KNTLU in Dili have implemented policies aimed at safeguarding the *uma lulik* architectures throughout the country.

The policies that the government has developed for safeguarding *uma lulik* are twofold. Firstly, SEAC financially supports the inauguration of the *uma lulik* that local communities can freely nominate to SEAC. Secondly, SEAC and KNTLU are working together on the creation of a national inventory of *uma lulik*, which I will better illustrate in the next section. For now, I want to focus more on the first SEAC plan mentioned. *Lia nain* can decide to nominate their *uma lulik* to SEAC, sending their applications to the SEAC office in Dili. SEAC's experts evaluate and assess the *lia nain*'s requests to decide whether to officially participate in the *uma lulik*'s inauguration ceremonies or not (Nogueira da Silva 2019, 197-198). During the conversation I had in Dili with Dr. Cecília de Assis, the director of SEAC, she clearly specified that the registration of *uma lulik* within the SEAC repository is not mandatory, and hence not all existent *uma lulik* are registered in the SEAC office national repository. The anthropologist Renata Nogueira da Silva suggests that not all the *uma lulik* receive financial support from the government for several reasons, among which is the fact that not everyone in Timor-Leste is aware of the existence of the SEAC funds for this purpose, but also because some communities consider the government's funds as an intrusion into the Houses' *lulik* dimension (197), similarly to what my hosts pointed out when I mentioned the SEAC funding plan to them.

A few years ago, international and national funds were allocated for the reconstruction of *uma lulik* in the regions of Ainaro, Bobonaro, Lautém, Oecusse (World Bank 2013). These were strongly

criticised by some members of the local communities, as the anthropologist Alberto Fidalgo Castro points out (2015, 71-75). According to the local leaders of Ainaro, in fact, the governmental decision to re-build the houses was not legitimised by the local origin narratives (2015, 71-75). During the meeting I had with Dr. Assis, I wrongly assumed that the SEAC's financial support plan was similar to the one described by Fidalgo Castro (2015). Dr. Assis stressed strongly that the government does not provide money for the reconstruction of the buildings, but only for the inauguration ceremonies, contributing just for *kafé ho masin midar* (T., coffee and sugar). This is a very common expression used in Timor-Leste, meaning a small contribution to a *lia moris* or *lia mate* ceremonies (T., funerary/life celebrating rituals). It is a metaphorical expression meaning that the economic contribution of the participants to the event is tiny and it should not involve buffaloes or pigs, which are the consistent part of the *fetosan umane* ritual killing ceremonies. According to Renata Nogueira da Silva, the financial support offered by SEAC is up 1000 USD (2019, 197). In Venilale, only close relatives are supposed to bring *kafé ho masin midar*, while the in-laws are the ones supposed to bring more consistent goods and stocks. SEAC, a governmental apparatus and state representative, seems to act as a "close relative" during the Houses's inauguration ceremonies. What does this tell us about the ways in which the government interacts with the local *uma lulik* and their representatives, the *lia nain*? What are the political, economic and symbolic implications of the state's participation in the *uma lulik* inauguration ceremonies?

SEAC in Dili has created a privileged communication with the *lia nain*, representatives of the Houses and local communities. Hence, the state and the *lia nain* have become direct interlocutors. In order to further develop my analysis, I want to introduce another relevant representative of the national AHD, whom I had the privilege of interviewing during the fieldwork. Mr. Severino Feliciano, head of the SEAC office in Baukau. During our meeting, I asked him about the *uma lulik* inaugurations within the Baukau district, so as to understand his perspective on the topic. Mr. Feliciano confirmed that these ceremonies had occurred more than once within the Baukau district, vehemently pointing out that the SEAC in Dili excluded his office from the whole process. He added that the SEAC in Dili usually used to make a phone call just a couple of days before the ceremonies and asked him to be present as the SEAC Baukau delegate. His remark was bitter: "There is no transparency in what SEAC does in Dili". During our conversation he often stressed the impossibility of reaching the central SEAC and having access to the funds the Baukau office was supposed to receive. He emphasised the distance between the decisions made in the capital city and the inertia his office was forced to endure, by using the pronouns "us" (*ami*, T.) to refer to his office and "them" (*sira*, T.), for the SEAC Dili headquarters. From his perspective, the central office constantly bypassed the regional capacity, instead of including them within their activities. His final remarks were severe and harsh: "The communities build *uma lulik*

because they want to, not because of the governmental plans",[138] adding that the *uma lulik* had existed well before the national government was installed.

As *lia nain* are the agents and promoters of their *uma lulik* to the SEAC office in Dili, the regional and sub-regional administrative public offices are excluded from the process (at least concerning the Baukau region). Mr. Feliciano, who felt unrecognised by the central SEAC headquarters of the capital city, pointed out that *uma lulik* existed long before the state in Timor-Leste. He therefore asserted the authority of the *uma lulik*, by pointing out their precedence in relation to the state. Due to the SEAC funds policy as well as due to structural problems that I will better analyse in the last section of the chapter, the Baukau SEAC office is excluded from these dynamics, even though officially representing a governmental institution, together with SEAC in Dili. It is *Lia nain* and not the SEAC regional capacity that emerge as privileged interlocutors with the SEAC headquarter in Dili. Apparently marginal and peripherical, *lia nain* are actually central actors of the AHD.

Lúcio Sousa describes *lia nain* as traditionally linked to the mountains (*foho*), *uma lulik*, customary knowledge and values, as opposed to the capital city of Dili, which is characterised by modernity, governmental apparatuses and is the symbol of the state (Sousa 2019, 209). As mentioned in Chapter II, nowadays the role in the *suku* of *lia nain* is formally recognised as national consultants by the Constitution of the Republic of Timor-Leste. Lúcio Sousa stresses that *lia nain*'s capacity to mediate conflicts has emerged as an essential part of the nation-building process. *Lia nain* are often present for formal and official national ceremonies, celebrating the unity of the nation and they have become key actors within the public cultural policies, too (Nogueira da Silva 2019; Sousa 2019). Sousa (2019) argues that the massive presence of *lia nain* in state-sponsored ceremonies is an expedient that the government deploys in order to asserts its credibility in front of its citizens. I suggest that Sousa's argument can be helpful in order to understand the SEAC funds policy dedicated to the inauguration of the *uma lulik*. On the one hand, through SEAC the state gives the opportunity to local communities to have their *uma lulik* officially recognised by the State. However, at a more local stage (such as in Baukau and Venilale), according to my interlocutors as well as to Mr. Feliciano, the state is not supposed to assert its authority upon the potent houses, because *uma lulik* belong to the traditional customary practices which came before the nation-state. Therefore, I suggest interpreting the state funds allocated for the *uma lulik*'s inaugurations as a way through which the central government in Dili attempts to make itself credible among the *lia nain* and local communities and not the other way around.

138 The original sentence in Tetun was "comunidade halo uma lulik tamba hakarak halo, laos tamba governu nia planu".

As concerns Mr. Feliciano's words, I suggest that they should be considered as a more general complaint regarding the conditions of the rural areas, where the local population often perceive themselves as peripheral compared to the administrative, economic and political centre of the capital city, Dili. In Venilale, for example, a common refrain that people used to repeat all the time was about the poor conditions of the roads, electricity, the lack of running water, the scarcity of decent hospitals, etc. During our conversation, Mr. Feliciano deployed heritage as a political and economic tool, showing me the power dynamics embedded and implied in it. The allegations made by Mr. Feliciano that I decided to report in these pages are not to be intended as a criticism in itself towards the SEAC institution. Instead, they show the plural political and economic dynamics embedded in heritage, as Regina Bendix points out: "culture, and the cultural heritage 'extracted' from it, is lodged in a field of tensions generated by the agency and interests of actors in society, politics and economics" (2009, 259). Mr. Feliciano stressed the miscommunication between his office and the one in Dili to actually point out the structural problematics existing in the *foho* (see more on this topic in the last section of this chapter).

Kelly Silva, anthropologist who has discussed the relations between the local cultural practices and how they have been deployed and transformed by the governmental discursive practices (2014), describes *kultura* (T., *lit*. culture) as the way in which the national East Timorese State appropriates, transforms and spectacularises the local culture, especially in the rural areas (2014). Similarly, Valdimar Hafstein, in analysing the implications of turning cultural practices into intangible heritage points out that they "museify everyday practices and convert habitat and habitus to heritage" (2007, 83). Renata Nogueira da Silva suggests that the national funds and the state participation in the inaugurations events for the potent houses are symptoms of the *kultura* policies (2019, 201). SEAC and the local *lia nain* seem to come to terms in a common definition of *uma lulik* in which the potent houses are described as paramount familiar heritage that needs to be preserved and handed down to future generations, as well as a symbol of national unity (2019). On the one hand, *lia nain* are considered as fundamental actors by government apparatuses, as an active part of *kultura*. On the other hand, I wonder if the cooperation between the SEAC and the *lia nain* represent an attempt by the national government to fill the gap between Dili and the *foho* and a way through which the state attempts an appropriation of the customary values within the state apparatus.

I suggest taking into consideration the literature which has recently emerged concerning re-invention of *adat* in Indonesia. *Adat* is the set of unwritten and customary laws that are supposed to govern all aspects of the life of a person. In recent decades, since the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, a revival of *adat* has been registered in many different regions of the country by various scholars (see Davidson and Henley 2008; Hauser-Schäublein 2013). In particular, Brigitta Hauser-Schäublein (2013) points out that *adat* has been deployed for the recognition of the 'indigeneity' of the many

ethnic minorities comprised within the national context (2013, 9-12). During the Suharto's New Order regime, in fact, ethnic and cultural diversity were unrecognised, and many minorities suffered from marginalisation, discrimination and dispossession (2013, 7). The volume edited by Hauser-Schäublein praises the revival of *adat* as a way in which many ethnic, religious and cultural minorities saw their rights recognised not just nationally but also internationally, as indigenous peoples.

Another volume, edited by Jamie Davidson and David Henley (Henley and Davidson 2007), gives a quite different interpretation and analysis of the revival of *adat* and customary laws in the post-Suharto Indonesian era, however. Although the premises given by Henley and Davidson (2007) are quite similar to the ones presented by Hauser-Schäublein (2013), their conclusions are quite dissimilar. Henley and Davidson frame *adat* as the "re-invention of pre-modern sources of power" (Henley and Davidson 2007, 2), giving pre-eminence to its political dimension. Custom and tradition are often celebrated as synonyms for order and peace for many local communities and the revival of *adat* in some cases has been deployed as a symbol of protest and activism towards the central government (2007, 9). Raised with the birth of the decentralisation programme in Indonesia, the aim of which was and still is democratisation throughout the country, the authors, however, claim that *adat* has arisen in support of authoritarian forms of national governance (2007, 28-32). The authors argue that considering *adat* "as a guarantee of peace and harmony is misleading not only as a prescription for the future but also as an interpretation of the past" (2007, 33).

In the final chapter of the volume edited by Davidson and Henley, Tania Li fiercely states that "'harmony ideologies' tend to privilege elites, *especially senior men*, who are empowered to speak on behalf of a presumed whole" (2007, 365-366, *my emphasis*). I suggest that Li's perspective on the revival and re-invention of pre-modern sources of power within the Indonesian context is precious for the understanding of post-independence East Timorese context too. In Timor-Leste, the government has tried to develop a long-term decentralisation plan since 2002 (see III.4) and customary local leaders have been involved in the *suku* administrations, as well as in the participation in state-sponsored ceremonies that turned them into legitimate national authorities (Sousa 2019). As I will explore throughout the chapter, decentralisation as well as the *lia nain*'s role are quite important factors to take into consideration when analysing the East Timorese's heritage-making process.

Finally, the fact that *lia nain* are the responsible for the applications of *uma lulik* for national funds provides another nuance to what is definable as AHD in Timor-Leste. I consider this point quite central in the discussion and analysis of the national AHD. The ambiguous relation existing between the governmental apparatuses (SEAC and also KNTLU) and the local authorities, *lia nain*, leaves us wondering who the representatives and actors in the AHD are. Laurajane Smith, in *Uses of Heritage*, invites scholars to focus on the distance between the top-down perspective of the AHD and the bottom-up responses made by the local communities, encouraging the analysis of the interaction of

the latter with their heritage, so as to understand the extent to which their perspective on heritage is different from the narrative given by the AHD (2006, 35-42). I consider Smith's argument particularly interesting, especially when she argues that heritage should be conceived as a cultural process, crafted by the communities, especially by minority groups which frequently tend to be omitted by the AHD (44-52). However, the dynamics I observed within SEAC and KNTLU both in Dili and in Baukau, forced me to see that the AHD in Timor-Leste is not represented only by government actors who coordinate the heritage discourses practices. Local actors who may apparently seem peripherical and distant from state policies, such as the *lia nain*, interact with the AHD – often without mediators between them and the government authorities.

In the next section I will further explore the role of the *lia nain* within the national AHD by showing another aspect of their contribution within it. The voice of *lia nain* is largely present in the publications of SEAC and KNTLU and, by presenting the fundamental documents and topics, founding the AHD policies, I argue there is proximity between the principles regulating the heritage policies internationally and the ones informing the AHD in Timor-Leste.

III.3 National authorised heritage discourse: foundational documents

During the formal meeting I had with Dr. Cecília de Assis (Director of SEAC in 2017) she was kind enough to donate to me the final report of a research coordinated by the SEAC and KNTLU which lasted several months, about the *uma lulik* presence in the subregion of Marobo[139] (in the region of Bobonaro) and in the Oecusse special region (SEAC and KNTLU 2017). This book is among the first and significant attempts to register the *uma lulik*'s presence within the Bobonaro and Oecusse regions. The preface of the report makes clear that the study focuses on the material perspective of the buildings ('*perspetiva material nian*', T.), although the authors recognise that the tangible and intangible dimensions of the *uma lulik* are intertwined ('ligadu ba malu', *T.*) (SEAC and KNTLU 2017, 14). The book can be roughly divided into three parts: in the first introductory part (9-27) the different representatives of SEAC and KNTLU explain the aims of the book and the importance of *uma lulik* as a national symbol. The first part of the volume concerns the *uma lulik* conditions in Marobo and Oecusse, described as 'endangered' (*ameasadu, T.*). The second part of the book concerns the Marobo communities and their struggle for the rebuilding of their u*ma lulik* (33-68), while the third presents the Oecusse context (69-102). The main goal of the study is to quantitively define and register how many *uma lulik liurai* (see chapter II) are present in the territories, and the conditions affecting them.

[139] Marobo is one of the most famous tourist areas of Timor-Leste, famous for its hot-water pools since the Portuguese colonial era. It is located in the Bobonaro district, one of the westernmost regions of the country. One of the most famous ethnographic studies about *uma lulik* was conducted in this area by the French anthropologist Brigitte Clamagirand (see Introduction; Clamagirand 1982).

It is a document of paramount importance that helps understand the strategy for the implementation of heritage protection policies regarding *uma lulik*, which I am going to analyse here and in the next subsections.

During our meeting, Mr. Ribeiro, my interlocutor in the KNTLU office in Dili, pointed out that SEAC and KNTLU are mapping and registering the *uma lulik* presence throughout the country. Their aim is to understand how many *uma lulik* have already been rebuilt, destroyed, or are not yet renovated and understand the reason for their state of neglect (*cf.* SEAC and KNTLU 2017, 15-16). This is a long-term research project: collecting these data requires a constant presence in the field and hence economic as well as human resources committed in the research, as Mr. Ribeiro stressed. The main reason why SEAC and KNTLU efforts have been turned towards *uma lulik* is because the potent houses are mentioned in Resolution 24/2009 as part of the national heritage (9-27). Resolution 24/2009, approving the national cultural policy (*Política Nacional da Cultura*, Pt.), represents the first formal and official national document establishing a conceptual political framework regarding the definition and protection of national culture and heritage in Timor-Leste (Sousa 2017, 432).

> The majority of East Timorese people belong to a place and to an uma lulik and share a set of beliefs and values common to their community. In Timor-Leste, these values have their own regional dimension, arising from the contact with the Portuguese colonial presence over more than four centuries. In addition, the two and a half decades of national resistance organized against the Indonesian occupation contributed to cementing the feeling of belonging to a reality with physical, linguistic and culturally specific characteristics.[140]

The volume stresses that in Marobo most of the potent buildings were destroyed during the Indonesian military occupation, when they were abandoned due to the forced relocations imposed on the local population by the Indonesian government.[141]

In Oecusse, houses and villages are under threat of disappearing and being relocated, due to a massive national development project, which is called ZEESM-TL. The ZEESM-TL project (Zonas Especiais de Economia Social de Mercado de Timor-Leste*, Pt.*)[142] is a bold development project, included in the *Plano Estratégico de Desenvolvimento 2011-2030* (2011) which is supposed to be implemented in six areas of the country, Oecusse being the pilot area. The aim is to transform "the largely agrarian district into an urban industrial hub", even if the ways in which the enterprise is supposed to be refined are still unclear and largely questionable, as showed by Laura Meitzner Yoder

[140] *Cf*. http://www.mj.gov.tl/jornal/?q=node/1816, for the original document. Accessed on 30.10.2020.

[141] The Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (*Comissão Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor-Leste*, Pt., CAVR) conducted a very dense analysis regarding the abuses of rights conducted during the Indonesian military occupation. A part of the study published related the dislocations which occurred between 1974 and 1999 in Timor-Leste. See CAVR 2005, part 6, 2.

[142] Special zones of social and market economy in Timor-Leste. *Cf*. https://www.zeesm.tl/en/zeesm-tl-front-page-english/, accessed on 19.12.2019.

(2018, 88).[143] In order to develop the industrial, commercial and tourism sectors, the government has planned to create a rich infrastructure network, including new roads, an international airport and hotels (Almeida 2018). Concerning this region, the study was conducted by SEAC and KNTLU to understand the impact that the construction of the ZEESM-TL project was having on the local communities' *uma lulik*.[144] Mr. Ribeiro told me that the urgency of KNTLU study emerged because of the large land dispossessions that the government was responsible for in the creation of the network of new roads within the region. He was reluctant to go into details, but he mentioned that a few *lulik* places were destroyed by the construction of the roads and there were many expropriations of lands imposed by the government.[145] On the one hand the government considers heritage and cultural expressions as part of the development of the country, as symbol of the national unity (cf. *Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030* 2002, 74-81). However, the industrial and infrastructure sectors also need development, and this often clashes with what the government defines as "traditional". Moreover, despite the fact that *uma lulik* are considered as part of the national heritage, as mentioned in Resolution 24/2009, the case of Oecusse shows the ambiguities of the government apparatus and ideals (KNTLU and SEAC 2017, 69-79).

The volume produced by SEAC and KNTLU (2017) is not the first official document registering and analysing the tangible dimension of *uma lulik* in Timor-Leste, however. Another volume, entitled *Património cultural de Timor-Leste: as uma lulik do distrito de Ainaro* (Timor-Leste Cultural Heritage: the Ainaro's *uma lulik*, Pt.; Gárate Castro et alii 2010), published by SEAC, is the result of a very comprehensive research regarding the presence of *uma lulik* in the Ainaro region. The research was developed by anthropologists and SEAC representatives, among whom are Dr. Cecília de Assis, the anthropologists Luis Gárate Castro and Alberto Fidalgo Castro and Eugénio Sarmento – SEAC Representative and Manatuto's *lia nain*.[146] The study about the Ainaro *uma lulik* is also mainly focused on the tangible dimension of *uma lulik*, with a strong visual apparatus of pictures showing details of the architectural features of the *uma lulik*. However, there are many references to the intangible dimensions of the potent buildings; namely, the cosmology that the *uma lulik* buildings represent (45-60); the symbolic representation of social and kin bounds, and alliances embedded in the *uma lulik* and their supernatural and potent dimension (209-213) and, finally, the artisanal knowledge linked to the construction of the *uma lulik* (137-177).

[143] The slogan of the project from 2014 to 2017 was "Creating the Future" and the total investment is estimated to be 4 billion USD, *cf*. Meitzner Yoder 2018, 88.
[144] Personal communication with Mr. Ribeiro.
[145] *Cf*. Bernardo Almeida's detailed article about the topic (2018).
[146] The research and volume were financed by SEAC, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID), together with the French Development Agency (AFD), the Portuguese Institute for Development (IPAD) and the European Union (Timor-Leste Delegation). *Cf*. Gárate Castro et alii 2010.

The third official document regarding the national heritage is the book entitled *The living heritage communities in Timor-Leste*, published in 2015 by the UNESCO Jakarta Office, in collaboration with KNTLU, National Geographic and SEAC (UNESCO Jakarta et alii 2015, see https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235310, last accessed on 02.11.2020). Similarly to the first two volumes mentioned, this one is also characterised by quite a large visual apparatus, with pictures of the many traditional handicrafts present in Timor-Leste: *tais* (13-27); ceramic and wooden pots (28-43); basketry (44-59); wood sculptures (60-65); coffee and palm wine production (66-77); traditional blacksmithing and jewelry (78- 109), the *uma lulik* building and rituality (110-195), and, finally, traditional fishery (196-200). The aim of the volume is the description of the "living heritage" of Timor-Leste, with a clear connection to the traditions and living expressions included within UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage concept[147]. Similarly to the volume on the *uma lulik* in Ainaro (Gárate Castro et alii, 2010), this book also focuses on the traditional knowledge embedded in the 'traditional' goods and handicrafts described. However, the visual elements make the reader focus primarily on the objects themselves and, secondly, other intangible dimensions of the handicrafts are not mentioned – as I will further discuss presently.

I consider these three documents as the first and foundational texts of the national East Timorese AHD. They all describe the SEAC and KNTLU's starting points for the development of the national AHD related to *uma lulik* and other local handicrafts. In the next subsection I will delineate the ambiguities inherent in the AHD discourse: the governmental apparatus concerning heritage focus on the tangible elements of the East Timorese cultural assets, setting aside the *lulik* dimension related to the *uma lulik*, as well as other relevant social practices. In addition, SEAC and KNTLU collaborate with *lia nain* and local authorities, to plan a strategy for the safeguarding of *uma lulik* and other relevant cultural practices. What is the role of *lia nain* in the heritage-making process? How do their voices emerge within the AHD's documents?

III.3.1 Endangerment, once again

The urgency of rebuilding and renovating the houses is pervasive throughout the SEAC and KNTLU Report (2017), stressed by the recurrent repetition that *uma lulik* are endangered. But what precisely do SEAC and KNTLU perceive as being endangered regarding *uma lulik*? Browsing through the section of the SEAC and KNTLU volume concerning Marobo (2017, 10-55), the pictures show collapsing roofs, rough vegetation growing around the abandoned architectures and other visual elements providing the idea of abandonment and loss of the *uma lulik* architectures. The authors make their intent even

[147] *Cf*. https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003, last accessed on 02.11.2020 and UNESCO Jakarta et alii 2015, 215).

clearer when they compare pictures taken in the past, in which rituals were performed around the *uma lulik* edifices, to pictures taken in the present, where the buildings are not even visible anymore because they had been damaged, destroyed or burnt. The first old picture (SEAC and KNTLU 2017, 48) was taken by the French anthropologist Brigitte Clamagirand in the 1960s, during her fieldwork research in the area, resulting in a dense ethnography about the Kemak ethnolinguistic group of Marobo and their social and ritual organisation (Clamagirand 1982). It has to be noted that this ethnography contains a rich photographic register regarding the material culture of the ethnic group, collected by the anthropologist during her fieldwork research.

Experts are involved, sometimes deployed without their knowledge, in order to assess the value of heritage and, hence, to define it. I point out this issue because I assume that the anthropologist Brigitte Clamagirand had no idea that her work was going to be used by the SEAC and KNTLU more than 45 years later after its publication, to validate and assess the value of the *uma lulik* as East Timorese national heritage. What I want to point out is the heritage system dynamic itself: in order to promote a certain practice or object as heritage, the government needs experts who can evaluate, study and register that given object or practice. Clamagirand's ethnography analyses the ritual life within Marobo, focusing on ceremonies and other symbolic relevant aspects of the Kemak population. However, her study is displayed by SEAC and KNTLU to corroborate the importance of the material culture of the area, as well as to prove the disappearance of the buildings.

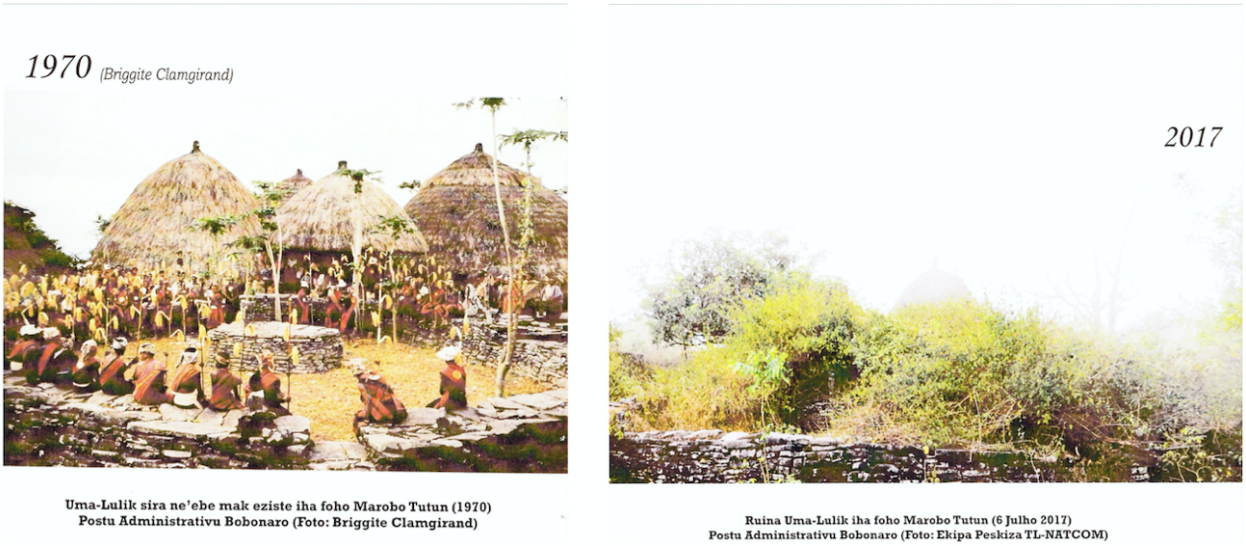

Figure 14 On the left, Clamagirand's picture, taken in 1970. On the right, the same place in 2017 (SEAC and KNTLU 2017, 48-49)

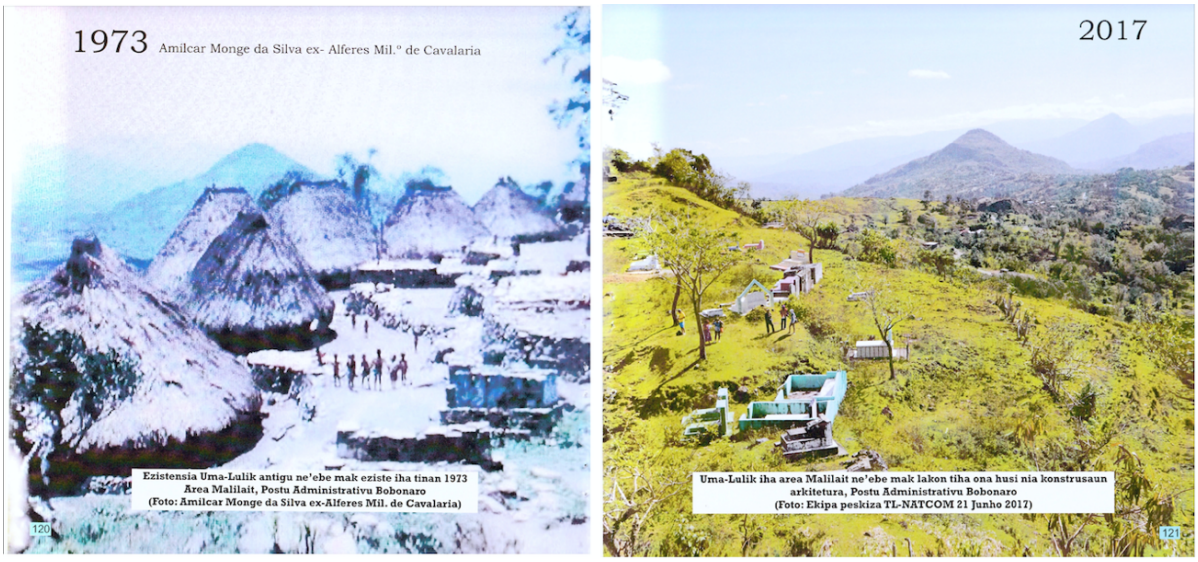

Figure 15 On the left, the 1973 photograph of the Portuguese Cavalry Lieutenant Amilcar Monge da Silva. On the right, a photograph taken in 2017, picturing the same place in which the *uma lulik* completely disappeared to be replaced by grass and a few graves[148]

The authority given by the heritage experts make us perceive the value assessed to an object or practice as something constitutive of that object or practice; however, heritage is not inherent in things or places, it is a value historically and culturally forged. Clamagirand's case, though, should not be considered an anomaly at all. It actually happens quite often that ethnographic knowledge is deployed to prove the value of certain objects, practices and places. For example, Gaetano Ciarcia, analysing the current heritage-making process and musealisation of the Dogon culture in Mali, points out that the ethnographic research developed during the 1930s-1940s by the famous French anthropologist Marcel Griaule is used nowadays in museums, tourist brochures and by tourist guides in order to present the local cultural heritage (Ciarcia 2006, 14-22).

The theme regarding endangerment is quite present in the SEAC and KNTLU report (2017), not in the sections just mentioned, but also in the second part of the volume, regarding the Oecusse region (69-102). In this area, many residents have been evicted, due to the construction of the ZEESM-TL road. This section of the book has the clear intent to highlight the endangerment that such a project could have on the *uma lulik*'s buildings, since many of them are under threat of being destroyed and relocated by the roadworks. Despite the fact that most of the interviews reported by SEAC and KNTLU focus on the historical, social and ritual meanings of the *lulik* potency, the report's target is solely the endangerment of the buildings and the subsequent disappearance of the ritual ceremonies related to the *uma lulik*. The *lia nain* of the *uma lulik Hornai* was interviewed by SEAC and KNTLU, after a brief

[148] SEAC and KNTLU 2017, 120-121.

narration of the origins and "topogeny" of his House,[149] which originated in Malaka, entered Flores Larantuka and then, finally, arrived in Lifau where they have been living until now.[150] He states very firmly that the community is not going to move the House or the village, since the *uma lulik* had existed well before the road and continues:

> even if my *uma lulik* is affected by the development of the road, I am not going to destroy it because I could get ill or die (…). It is difficult to relocate the *uma lulik* (*uma boot*, literally means big house) because our ancestors had built it here, and also this *uma lulik* has travelled as far as here, overarching the sea, and this is why this house exists: because it looks after and guards the sea. When the weaves are large, if we pray/invoke (*hamulak*) the sea can stop, because this *uma lulik* has its own strength, directly from nature itself. During the civil war in 1999, we fled to Indonesia, this house was burnt, but with our efforts, we managed to build it again (SEAC and KNTLU 2017, 70).[151]

Due to the origin account that described the ancestors' origins are in Malacca (Malaysia), crossed the sea to the island of Flores (Indonesia) to finally settle in Lifau (Oecusse, Timor-Leste), the House is believed to have a potency coming directly from the sea (*tasi*, T.) and it is supposed to control it, if proper *hamulak* are performed. Another *lia nain* interviewed says his community is not going to relocate their *uma lulik* because the *lulik* is not going to be the same, resulting in negative consequences for their lives.[152] The mayor of Naimeko (*xefe de suku, T.*) explains that the majority of the *suku*'s population had been forcedly relocated during the military Indonesian occupation, and some of them had decided to move their *uma lulik* too, a measure that required a long process and implied great expenses for the members belonging to those Houses, since there are many economic as well as social and ritual resources that have to be committed for such a decision.[153] And he continues, "some *uma lulik* are gentle, others scold you, this means that if you move/change them, they change you too, and this is a dangerous issue for the existence of the family" (SEAC and KNTLU

[149] Topogeny is a concept designed by the author James Fox to describe the recount of the ancestral journeys within Austronesian societies. These recitations relate the origins and histories of the affiliated groups (2006; or. 1997, 8-11).

[150] "Kronolojia uma lulik Hornai mai husi Malaka, tama iha Flores Larantuka mak ikus liu hakat mai too iha Lifau. Uma lulik Hornai existe tempu uluk dezde avó dirá nia tempu" (SEAC and KNTLU 2017, 69). This description clarifies the fact that the Houses represent people.

[151] Original quote in Tetun: "mezmu ha'u nia uma lulik afeta husi dezenvolvimentu infrastrutura estrada, maibe'e ha'u sei la sobu no la muda ha'u nia uma lulik tanba nia impaktu mak ha'u bele hetan moras no bele mate [...]. Susar atu muda sai uma boot tanba uluk avó sira nia tempu kedan harii tiha ona iha fatin nee, no mós uma lulik mai to'o iha ne'e, nia prosesu hakat liu tasi, tanba nee mak uma ne'e eziste hodi hein tasi. Uainhira tasi atu sa'e, kuandu hamulak tasi bele para, tanba uma bo'ot ne'e iha nia forsa natureza rasik. Uainhira funu iha 1999 ami halai ba tiha Indonesia, uma lulik ne'e hetan sunu, maibe'e ami esforsu hari'i fali".

[152] "Razaun há'u la muda sai ha unia uma lulik nee tamba uainhira muda sai ba fatin seluk mak, lulik sei la hanesan ona, neebe mak sei fo impaktu negativu ba ami nia vida moris. Iha parte seluk atu muda sai uma lulik husi fatin ida ba fatin seluk prosesu nebe naruk no difícil" (SEAC and KNTLU 2017, 74).

[153] On the same topic, see Bovensiepen 2011. The author discusses the rituals and ceremonies that the Funar's population had to conduct in order to restore a peaceful and safe relation between them and the spirits of the land.

2017, 86).[154] The potency of the building can make itself visible showing its own agency and, consequently, change the lives of the living members of the House.

The *lia nain*'s words present in the SEAC and KNTLU report (2017) extensively stress the centrality of the *lulik* potency, embedded not just in the buildings, but also in the land where the *uma lulik* is erected. The *lulik* potency of the buildings does not cease to exist with their destruction. During my fieldwork in Venilale, similar topics emerged too. My hosts in Daralata, for example, had not built their *uma lulik* yet; however, they knew what the precise place was where the *uma lulik* should be erected. My hosts in Waikulale, whose u*ma lulik* had been erected a few years before, built the *uma lulik* where their ancestors' *knua* used to be. That was the place where they used to live before the Indonesian military invasion, and where their ancestors' bodies and souls rest nowadays. Judith Bovensiepen and Frederico Delgado-Rosa point out that "lulik houses cannot be reduced to the houses' tangible edifice; they represent entire social groups, and as such they have an existence beyond their material form", even if the buildings are destroyed or burnt (2016, 679).

In the volume *Património cultural de Timor-Leste: As uma lulik do distrito de Ainaro*, endangerment also emerges as a central issue in the volume. This text represents the pivotal study and publication defining the *uma lulik* as part of the national heritage and it is the result of the collaboration between SEAC and anthropologists and researchers, both East Timorese and Spanish (Gárate Castro et alii 2010, 6-7). The authors write:

> It is necessary to implement an urgent restoration and recovery of the traditional architecture [...]. In a society such as the Timorese, submerged in an accelerated process of modernization, the protection of the past is not solely based on the protection of its vestiges, but also in the preservation of ancient knowledge, this primordial intangible heritage. (...) The inventory is indispensable for the knowledge of the wealth itself (Gárate Castro et alii 2010, 79, my emphasis).

In this case the threat is not a bold development project, which involves the construction of roads that are evicting the local population, like in the Oecusse area. In Ainaro, instead, the threat is represented by modernisation and globalisation, conceived as antithetical compared to the "primordial" local culture. The idea that traditional knowledge is disappearing due to an 'accelerated process of modernization' recalls what Valdimar Hafstein calls "traditionalist rhetoric" implicit within the heritage rationales (Hafstein 2007, 96), adding that "as a token of authenticity, backwardness needs to be maintained" (83). The implicit argument of the authors is that the *uma lulik* had always been built and conceived in the same way, throughout history. Valdimar Hafstein points out that the "sense of danger shadows the notion of intangible heritage in UNESCO discourse" (2007, 80). Globalisation is a threat, hence the urgency of safeguarding cultural practices that are at risk of disappearing. Threats and

[154] "Iha uma lulik balun mamar, balun siak, significa katak uainhira ita muda nia, nia mos sei muda ita, ne'ebe mak perigozu ba vida moris família". The mayor means that you can never tell how the ancestors' spirits and the potency are going to react to the decisions of the living members.

urgency to safeguard are what makes a practice intangible heritage (80). Fernando Vidal and Nélia Dias point out that

> the very act of defining an entity as endangered entails the duty to find instruments and techniques to protect it. Conversely, practices of preservation and documentation presuppose the previous identification of an entity as "endangered". Tools associated with those practices – lists and repertoires to begin with – re-describe certain objects as endangered entities and are by the same token expected to prompt awareness and trigger interventions. Such tools are not neutral catalogues, but result from processes of interpretation and selection, and function as calls for action and forms of argumentation (Vidal and Dias 2016, 16).

Endangerment is deployed as a banner not just by the Timor-Leste AHD; it represents an inescapable tool of the heritage's logics internationally, namely for the UNESCO concept of intangible cultural heritage (Valdimar 2007). Lists and repertoires are necessary in order to prove a practice or an object as endangered, to ensure their safeguarding. Far from being a contemporary strategy, I suggest that discussing the colonial perspective on *uma lulik* in Timor-Leste can shed light on the historical importance that the concept of endangerment entails. During the latest decades of the Portuguese colonisation in Timor-Leste (1950s-1960s), some anthropological researches focused on the aesthetic dimension of the *uma lulik*, describing them as temples, churches and museums, storing important historical as well as 'sacred' objects (Sousa 2017, 421-425). One of the most important and extensive studies of the colonial period regarding the physical presence of the traditional *uma lulik* throughout Timor was conducted during the 1950s by Ruy Cinatti, Leopoldo de Almeida and Sousa Mendes. The volume, published posthumously in 1987, illustrates the differences and continuities of seven architectural house-styles in seven different regions.[155] This study represents a very important document of the extensive presence of the *uma lulik* in Timor-Leste and, along with *Motivos Artísticos Timorenses e a sua Integração* (Cinatti, 1987), Cinatti's goal was to create a *repertoire* of the local 'art' and craftsmanship. According to Cinatti, the local material culture was under threat of disappearing due to the intense touristification of the local crafts caused by the Portuguese colonial presence (Silva and Sousa 2015, 16). The volume regarding the *uma lulik* has the clear intent of classifying the typologies of the potent buildings, to both show the differences among the regional architectures, but also to delineate the continuities of the *uma lulik*'s buildings within the regions analysed (Cinatti et alii 1987). In the present day, more than 50 years after Cinatti conducted his study, the local crafts still present in the local East Timorese culture (*tais*, *uma lulik*, *belak*, *surik* etc.) are described as

[155] Between the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the territory of East-Timor was divided into 11 regulative units by the Portuguese colonial administration. These *concelhos* (Pt.) served as the basis for the administrative governance, regardless of the former social and ethno-linguistic affiliations (Durand 2009, 77-78; Péllissier 2007, 97-103). Cinatti took into consideration the regions of Bobonaro, Maubisse, Baucau, Lautem, Viqueque, Suai and Oecussi, describing the main architectural standards encountered, which correspond – more or less – to the ethno-linguistic groups living in the areas (Cinatti et alii 1987, 55).

endangered, and repertoires are created to rescue them (*cf.* UNESCO Jakarta et alii 2015). The Portuguese colonial policies were actually focused on reconverting *uma lulik* for tourism purposes. The potent architectures were in fact listed as *arte colonial*, along with other craft expressions (Paulino 2015; Sousa 2011, 94). As I have mentioned along the chapter, currently the government has developed policies aimed at the touristification of the *uma lulik* and in Venilale *uma lulik* have been included on tourist routes.

In a recent publication available on the UNESCO website, Eugenio Sarmento, a *lia nain* and heritage expert who collaborates with SEAC and KNTLU, argues that *uma lulik* are pre-colonial forms of museums, stressing the importance not just of the architectures themselves, but also the centrality of the *lulik* objects stored in the potent buildings.[156] Nogueira da Silva has pointed out that the aestheticization of *uma lulik* is presented as defence of national unity (2019, 201). A similar argument has been suggested also by the anthropologist Alberto Fidalgo-Castro (2015) who has suggested a connection between the post-independence policies related to culture and the former Indonesian management related to *uma lulik*. According to Fidalgo-Castro, the fact that SEAC is a branch of the Ministry of Tourism in post-independent Timor-Leste reveals the aestheticization of culture and heritage in post-independent Timor-Leste (more on this topic later in this chapter). He also suggests that aestheticization is a form of maintaining control over *uma lulik* and their political authority (2015). During Indonesia's military occupation, much emphasis was given to the aesthetics and monumentality of the *uma lulik*. A symbol of the national Indonesian motto 'unity in diversity' was and still is the *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah* (Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park, B.I), Jakarta's recreational open-air area that reproduces the Indonesian archipelago in miniature. The park includes potent houses (*rumah adat*) characterising different Indonesian regions, such as the Torajan Tongkonan, or the Rumah Melayu of the Borneo region. Currently, an East Timorese *uma lulik* is also reproduced, being the only 'rumah adat' where the visitors are charged if they want to visit it.[157] The Suharto regime (1967-1998), though, instead of recognising the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity comprised within the nation, decided to focus on aesthetic folkloristic and visual elements. The anthropologist Greg Acciaioli named this phenomenon as aestheticization of culture (1985).

To sum up, the aim of this section was to highlight the endangerment rationale that informs the national AHD discourse in post-independent Timor-Leste. On the one hand, some scholars (among whom Hafstein 2007; Vidal and Dias 2016) point out the centrality of endangerment and safeguards as paramount topics of the current international heritage framework. Surely, the current East

[156] See https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000214540_tet last accessed on 04.11.2020; UNESCO Jakarta et alii 2011.

[157] I visited Jakarta and the Taman Mini Indonesia Indah in January 2017. I stayed one week in the Indonesian capital city, immediately before going to Dili.

Timorese AHD is impacted by these ideals too. On the other, though, I aimed to include Timor-Leste's current post-independent heritage-making process within a historical path. During the Portuguese colonisation, *uma lulik* and other local crafts were described as endangered and under threat of disappearing. Then the Indonesian administration attempted an inclusion of the *uma lulik* architectures within a broader national frame, celebrating the aesthetic differences, but not the respective ethnic and cultural diversity. This brief historical overview wanted to stress the importance given to both endangerment and to the tangible dimension of the local crafts, namely *uma lulik*. Currently, SEAC and KNTLU have developed national policies ensuring the protection of the intangible elements related to *uma lulik*. However, as I shall discuss in the next section, there are many intangible elements that the current AHD has left aside.

III.3.2 What is authenticity?

A vast section of the volume regarding the *uma lulik* in Ainaro is dedicated to the materials used to build the potent houses. It can be read there that "the materials must meet technical and formal requirements, but also a symbolic special characterisation that proves the suitability for the *lulik* use", specifying that "these are construction materials and processes of a traditional character, interpreting the term traditional from an emic point of view, which is what people interpret as such" (Gárate Castro et alii 2010, 167). The authors explain that sometimes specific rituals and ceremonies must be conducted in order to transfer the 'adequate qualities' to the materials chosen for the construction of the *uma lulik*. They also add that what defines a material as appropriate or inappropriate are both the social praxis and the ancestral knowledge handed down from the ancestors to the present generations of *lia nain* (2010, 167), hence intangible characteristics linked to the local cultural practices. *Lia nain* are in fact the guardians of the ancestral knowledge as well as in charge for the construction of the potent houses. The authors, then, highlight the cultural and social meanings and values attributed to the materials used for the buildings, and not just the materials themselves, giving a quite detailed description of the main 'traditional' materials used for the construction of the different parts composing *uma lulik* in Ainaro (2010, 168-173). The authors also add that metallic materials, quicklime and cement cannot be used in the construction, being some of them considered "taboo" by the local *lia nain* (2010, 168-173). They argue that the "traditional codes" transmitted by the ancestors and related to mythical and religious beliefs are coherent with the cultural perspective on nature and the landscape – inscribed with both natural and cultural elements, as already pointed out (2010, 168).

The use of materials conceived as 'original' and 'authentic'[158] is among the topics discussed in the KNTLU and SEAC report as well (2017). As mentioned, there are many *lia nain* who have been interviewed and they all present very different points of view on the topic. The main reason presented by *lia nain* and local administrators are practical and connected to the durability of the architectures. 'Modern' materials, in fact, are easier to find than 'original' ones. In addition, many customary leaders point out the fact that the choice of the materials used is never *arbiru* (random, *T.*) but it has to be done according to the words of the ancestors, who interact through prophecies and ritual sacrifices with the oracles and other ritual figures (*lia nain* and *matan dook*, T.). The wrong choice of materials can lead to deaths within the House, as stated by many *lia nain* in the volume (SEAC and KNTLU 2017, 71). Some of them used modern materials to build their *uma lulik*, because worms and insects destroyed the former buildings (SEAC and KNTLU 2017, 80). Some *lia nain* state that the ancestors have the right to enjoy modernity too (83), while others support the idea that the souls of the deceased demand 'original' materials and that custom cannot be changed (72). The points of view on the topic are many and differing. What appears clear, though, reading the SEAC and KNTLU's report, is the positioning of the government institutions. Instead of recognising the diverse perspectives on the topic, the interviews reported have the clear intent of showing that the real reason why the local population build their *uma lulik* with 'modern' materials is because of their lack of resources to build 'proper' *uma lulik*. *Lia nain* appear as privileged interlocutors of the government institutions concerned in the heritage safeguard. However, their words in this case are not used to acknowledge their competence as ritual experts. Instead, their words are deployed to stress the supposedly endangered dimension of the 'traditional' ways of building *uma lulik* – both the materials and the customary knowledge connected to them. One of the x*efe de suku*'s whose words are reported in the SEAC and KNTLU volume states:

> I informed the community that our partner UNESCO disposed that the uma lisan cannot be built with bricks and cement because our original identity will be lost, but the community pointed out the lack of financial support, since the cost of the local materials is high and the materials are very difficult to be found (SEAC and KNTLU 2017, 55-56).[159]

The concepts of authenticity and endangerment seems to be used and deployed by the governmental apparatuses to develop the set of dispositions that Harrison defines governmentality 'at a distance' (2016). However, the state *dispositif* does not seem to be accepted nor understood locally. And, most importantly, authenticity seems to be interpreted in a different way by the local *lia nain*. They give

[158] I use the terms original and authentic because throughout the text of the SEAC and KNTLU report '*orijinal'* and '*orijinalidade'* are the adjectives used to define the 'traditional' materials.

[159] "Ha'u informa ba sira katak foin dadaun ita nia parseiru husi UNESCO mai informa katak, tuir lo'os ita nia uma lisan ne'e la bele konstrui ho fatuk tanba halakon identidade orijinal, maibe komunidade sira kestiona katak falta apoiu finanseiru no kustu material lokal maka karun no difisil atu hetan", *Xefe de Suku* of Soliesu.

more importance to the ancestral knowledge and to the ancestors' indications, rather than to the materials used to build the potent houses.

During the interview I had with Mr. Feliciano, he told me that a few *uma lulik* close to the Baukau town had been made with *kalén* (T., tin) and cement: he did not seem enthusiastic about the decision. He added that in one case, the *uma lulik* had to be destroyed, since two of the members of the House had recently died and this was interpreted by the relatives as a clear sign from the ancestors. *Beiala sira* (T., the ancestors) were angry (*hirus, T.*), since the interior of the building was too hot, and the ancestors were used to the cooler temperatures of the 'original' Houses. In Venilale, the majority of individuals I have been in contact with were not enthusiastic about this new wave of 'modern' *uma lulik kalén*. Unfortunately, I have never had the chance to visit or see one. I have to admit that I consider *uma lulik kalén* a quite interesting topic to look at, hopefully for another future research. Claudino, the older brother of my Waikulale's host, is a very respected *lia nain* of the area, who knows how to build *uma lulik* properly. He told me that he used to help in the construction of many *uma lulik* in the area, besides the one belonging to his own House. He did not consider the *uma lulik kalen* as real potent houses. He claimed that his grandfathers (avó, T.) taught him every single step to build a proper *uma lulik* and that was the one and only way to build a potent house. Therefore, by transmitting the knowledge, the skills and the know-how about building the potent houses are also transmitted.

Even though I had never had the chance to visit a *uma lulik kalén*, and despite the fact that the topic regarding the authenticity of the materials used to build *uma lulik* was a marginal topic of my research, other elements helped me to focus on 'authenticity'. My hosts in Waikulale, as well as other *lia nain* I had the opportunity of talking with in Veniale, affirmed that the objects stored in potent houses are much more important than the architectures of the *uma lulik* themselves; they are being the essential core of the buildings and one of the main reasons why the buildings are erected. There is always a person guarding the potent house, living next to it (*uma hein*, T.) – so the objects inside cannot be stolen. Another hint of the centrality of the potent objects is the fact that I was never allowed to see them. During the visits I made to the potent houses in the area, the ritual experts always warned me that it would not be possible for me to see the potent objects stored. The display of these objects is in fact allowed only in particular circumstances, as for example during the celebrations related to the harvest (*sau batar*, the corn harvest and *hare foun*, the rice harvest). These objects are generally taken out from the *uma lulik* buildings through a ritual celebration in which the members of the origin group participate. My hosts told me that during the Indonesian military occupation,[160] especially in

[160] I would like to point out that among the interlocutors who mentioned the destruction of their potent houses during the horrific 24 years of Indonesian military occupation, none of them stated that the buildings of the *uma lulik* were destroyed by the Indonesian soldiers. Most of the time, the perpetrators of the destructions were East Timorese militias or members of other rival Houses.

1975, when the majority of the population were hiding in the forests, and then in 1999, when the militias took over many territories (killing people and burning places), the local population tried to save the objects stored in the houses by hiding them or taking the heirlooms with them. Unfortunately, in many cases this was not possible, and the objects were lost or destroyed. The objects guarded in the *uma lulik* can be very diverse, depending on the House. Some examples are stones and sculptures made of stone or wood, (Roque and Sousa 2020), *tais*, books and documents belonging to the ancestors, statues representing Catholic saints or sacred figures (Bovensiepen and Delgado Rosa, 2016); drums, flags, sceptres and sticks; relics belonging to the ancestors, such as nails and hair, for example; traditional jewels, such as belak; old coins (*pataca*, Pt.), etc.

In some cases, after the restoration of national Independence (2002) many Houses decided to craft the potent objects again. The members of the *uma lulik* that I visited in Fatulia for example, decided to remake a flag that had been burnt during the massacres of 1999.[161] The flag of the *uma liurai* in Fatulia had been donated by a Portuguese military official to the then *liurai* of that House, when Portugal was still a monarchy.[162] The ritual speaker I talked to during the visit to the *uma lulik liurai* in Fatulia, explained that when the members of the Houses decided to rebuild the *uma lulik*, they knew that the flag was missing. During a ritual offering to the ancestors and the oracle that was made in order to understand what the best thing to do was in regard to the flag, the ancestors revealed that a grandchild that was in Portugal at that time could help re-make the flag. The young man found a book with the illustrations of historical Portuguese flags and sent the pictures to his relatives in Fatulia via WhatsApp. The elders then decided to craft the flag again, having recognised the corresponding illustration sent by the grandchild. However, in many other cases, the members of the Houses cannot venture in the attempt of remaking the objects, fearing possible revenge from the ancestors and the possible implications this might have for the reconstruction of the *uma lulik* too. This was the case of my hosts in Daralata, who had not crafted the potent objects and had not erected their own *uma lulik* yet. As concerns the potent building of my Waikulale hosts, Júlio added that between 1975 and 1978, when the Indonesian troops managed to occupy the Baukau region, his family tried to save the *lulik* objects stored in their *uma lulik*, but unfortunately, they were not able to do so, and the objects were destroyed. He then added that, after the Restoration of Independence (2002), they managed to craft the objects again. Similarly to what happens to the potent buildings, then, the potent objects can also

[161] The *uma lulik* I visited in Fatulia is one of the two *uma lulik* in Venilale that tourists can visit. The Friends of Venilale Association organises tours and visits to local cultural and natural assets in the area (*cf*. https://venilale.com/about-friends-of-venilale/, last accessed on 10.04.2020). During my fieldwork, I also visited the *uma lulik* belonging to my Kairui-Midiki hosts, as well as another *uma lulik* built in the Liabala *knua* (village). My Makasae hosts, who live in Daralata, have not built their *uma lulik* yet, but they showed me the place where the building is supposed to be erected.

[162] The Portuguese monarchy collapsed in 1910. See Bovensiepen (2011, 53) and Traube (2011) on the importance of the flag in Timor-Leste as a symbol of political power, derived from the Portuguese colonial administration.

be rebuilt. Authenticity and originality do not lie in the origin and antiquity of the relics. Instead, ancestral knowledge, ancestors' indications and the *lia nain*'s knowledge are the elements that make an object *lulik*.

One of the foundational texts of the international AHD as well as of UNESCO is the Venice Charter (International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites)[163] of 1964. This document contains the fundamental principles that guide the ways in which ancient buildings and architectures are supposed to be preserved and restored and it is grounded on the concept of authenticity. This notion implies the importance of maintaining buildings and monuments in the same physical conditions as in the historical context when they were created. Since the Venice Charter clearly privileges European stone buildings and monuments, in 1994, ICOMOS approved the Nara Document on Authenticity. In an attempt to make the Venice Charter indications more democratic for other areas of the world, where architectures are often composed of perishable materials, the Nara Document acknowledges the diversity of world cultural and heritage.[164] How have these international indications been interpreted by the Timor-Leste AHD?

Before answering the question, I would like to add another event that helped me to question the international heritage perspective on heritage and authenticity. When I visited the *uma lulik liurai* in Fatulia, the *uma hein* who guided me and João to the top of the hill where his *uma lulik* was built, showed us three different buildings. One for the *umane-mane foun*; the other for the *fetosan* and the last one for the horses' blessings.[165] I was intrigued by the last one. The *lia nain* explained me that in the past their *uma lulik* used to have many horses, and every time a member of the House rode a new horse, they had to ask for permission and blessing from the ancestors in the *lulik* building. He kept on saying that nowadays they have no horses anymore, but motorcycles and cars. So, nowadays the blessings are for the modern (*modernu*, T.) transportations. We both giggled, and I exclaimed that I found the solution quite smart (*matenek*, T.). The *uma hein* laughed and he conducted me and João inside one of the buildings and told me the history of his House. I consider all the examples I gave as paradigmatic of an *emic* perspective on what is considered 'authentic' and 'original'. First of all, the objects crafted (the flag, other potent objects and building for the 'blessing of the horses) were crafted following codes and a certain know-how, connected to ancestral knowledge. *Lia nain* are the privileged interlocutors in this sense. Secondly – and most importantly – the function of these crafts has not

[163] https://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf, accessed on 19.11.2020.
[164] https://www.icomos.org/charters/nara-e.pdf, accessed on 19.11.2020.
[165] In Venilale, as well as in other parts of the Baukau region, horses have been used as *fetosan-umane* gifts. In addition, they are very helpful, together with buffaloes, for plowing fields and rice fields. Finally, Lisa Palmer points out that throughout the Baukau region, horses were used to pay taxes. I suggest that this element could be another hint of the historical legacy of the *uma lulik* liurai of Fatulia, and its bond to the Portuguese colonial administration (see Chapter II on this topic).

changed throughout history, despite the many historical changes involved. Despite the destruction of the *sasaan lulik* during the Indonesian military occupation or the introduction of new means of transportations (cars and motorcycles) the *lulik* potency has not ceased to exist and to inform the relation between the ancestral realms and living human beings.

According to Laurajane Smith (2006), heritage is a cultural as well as a historical practice (having originated in Europe), the values of which are attributed by *connoisseurs* involved within the creation of the so-called authorised heritage discourse (AHD) and historically, the physical tangible and aesthetic fabrics have always been the core values of the concept (29-34). To what extent, then, can the ancestral knowledge that *lia nain* are imbued with in Timor-Leste inform the national AHD? Can these help de-Westernise UNESCO's perspective on heritage? Denis Byrne (2012; 2014) argues that traditional (Western) heritage conservation practices have been 'exported' to the rest of the world, first by and during colonialism and, consequently, through the definition and application of the concepts of world or universal heritage too. The first outcome he points out is that Western practices shape the ways in which the Southeast Asian local governments and practitioners institutionally regulate conservation. Then Byrne highlights another important point. 'Universalistic' regulations, based on secular and rational descriptive technologies, conflict with the local practices and ways of conceiving ancient artifacts, which are mainly based on spiritual beliefs (2014). The distances created between everyday practices and the institutional ones can sometimes be seen also in Timor-Leste: while the *lia nain* interviewed by SEAC and KNTLU staff stressed the importance of the mythical origins of their Houses, and the *lulik* potency that constitute them, the aim of the government institutions is to register the number of the material buildings and ensure they get rebuilt with what they consider 'authentic' materials and know-how (ceremonies, rituals, etc.). Most importantly, local *lia nain* and local administrative authorities are deployed by governmental apparatuses in order to justify the governmental policies. Hafstein argues that intangible heritage "transform the ways in which communities relate to their practices, incorporating them into a patrimonial regime (...). Ultimately, intangible heritage also transforms the communities themselves" (2007, 81). *Lia nain* play a paramount role as agents between the customary authority and that of the state. Byrne notes that "heritage practice gains its authority from material-centric disciplines that privilege scientific and/or positivist methodologies, but that are unable to gain purchase on a divine materiality which slides out from under them" (2014, 207). I suggest that the East Timorese institutional approach towards heritage is affected by a Western-based approach, that Daly and Winter described as the "coloniality" of heritage (2012, 26).

In the next and last section of the chapter, I explore the ambiguities I observed within the SEAC and KNTLU offices, both in Dili and in Baukau. I address the fact that the main issues related to the

friction between SEAC and KNTLU in Dili and in Baukau are related to the distance between the capital city and the *foho*.

III.4 Ambiguities within the national authorised heritage discourse

One of the purposes of my fieldwork was to understand the cultural policies that the government has developed in recent years regarding the heritage-making process. Since Timor-Leste is still a newborn nation and its cultural agenda is still under formation, I was open to any information SEAC and KNTLU would provide to me regarding the cultural assets they have been taking into consideration for the national heritagisation process. By August 2017, when I first contacted SEAC, the institution had its central headquarters in Dili, and also local supervisors in every region of the country. Having meetings with the representatives of these institutions helped me understand the plans regarding the heritage-making process in the country. However, most importantly, these meetings provided me insights into the difficulties that SEAC and KNTLU deal with within the governmental structure, as well as in the implementation of their policies throughout the regions. Both SEAC and KNTLU staff were willing to help and collaborate with me, granting me formal meetings and interviews during my stay in Timor-Leste. In particular, the SEAC general director gave me the contact of the head of cultural policies in the District of Baukau, Mr. Feliciano, with whom I had quite a long meeting during the month of October (5th October 2017) in the Baukau SEAC Office, as well as a copy of the report that SEAC and KNTLU have been working on together (SEAC and KNTLU 2017), as mentioned in the chapter.

I would later discover during the meeting with Mr. Feliciano that there had been misunderstandings and miscomprehensions between the Dili and Baukau SEAC offices. As already mentioned in the chapter, according to Mr. Feliciano, the Baukau office suffered from a position of inferiority and lack of power and funds towards the central office in Dili, and these aspects turned the relation between the two offices quite tense. What did this tension reveal? And why is it important to take into consideration? I understood some of the reasons of the tensions between SEAC Dili and SEAC Baukau better after having a conversation with Mr. Abrão Ribeiro, who is in charge of the KNTLU Office in Dili.

Mr. Abrão Ribeiro was my interlocutor inside the KNTLU headquarter. We had a very long meeting and interview at his office in Balide (Dili, 12th December 2017). What most surprised me in our interview was that Mr. Ribeiro did not hide challenges and concerns from me that the KNTLU staff has faced in the last years. This was the first and one of the few interviews that I had with an institution in which the interviewee did not try to avoid difficult questions or pretend that there were no difficulties in carrying out their activities. The commitment to and love of his job was clear from the beginning of our talk. Mr. Abrão Ribeiro was genuinely curious and concerned about my research too (see Chapter II). As I mentioned in the introduction, SEAC and UNESCO have been collaborating since

the first steps together. The collaboration between these two institutions is in fact very close and tight, as the report of the *uma lulik* between Bobonaro and Oecusse reveals (SEAC and KNTLU 2017) and as Mr. Ribeiro confirmed during our meeting. Mr. Abrão Ribeiro was doubtful, though, about the future developments of SEAC and KNLTU activities because of the decisions taken by the administration of the government in office at that time.

On March 2017 (20th-21st) the elections for the VII Constitutional Government of Timor-Leste occurred. The government was formed with considerable difficulties only by September of the same year – due to the lack of a strong majority of the winning party in the Parliament (FRETILIN) but it did not last long. In fact, new elections were held by May 2017. During this mandate (9 months), the activities of the SEAC and KNTLU were stalled, as well as the activities of many other ministries too. But what concerned Mr. Ribeiro was the fact that with the VII Government, the administration decided to shift the SEAC and, hence, KNTLU, under the administration of the Ministry of Education, instead of leaving it under the wing of the Ministry of Tourism, like the previous government. Mr. Ribeiro pointed out that having the SEAC under the Ministry of Education would have meant to suffer a strong setback, since the priorities of the Ministry of Education are different and considered much more relevant and important for the development of the country than the ones the SEAC has. According to Mr. Ribeiro, being part of the Minister of Education would mean adjusting the SEAC and KNTLU agenda to that of the Minister of Education.

The recent political tensions in the Parliament on the revision of the curriculum for pre-primary and primary schools make the definition of a clear plan for the future on this issue quite hard.[166] Being under the control of the Ministry of Tourism would have meant having more freedom of action and access to public funds would have been relatively easier. According to Mr. Ribeiro, in fact, the funds intended for tourism are much less than the public funds dedicated to education. Consequently, SEAC and KNTLU would enjoy a more privileged position within the Ministry of Tourism than within the Ministry of Education.

Although Mr. Ribeiro told me that the SEAC had always been included in the Ministry of Tourism since 2002, a look back at past legislations revealed a slightly different story. The SEAC has shifted from different ministries during the years, depending on the governmental administration in power: from the Ministry of Education (IV, VII, VIII legislatures) to the Ministry of Tourism (under the V and VI).[167] What Mr. Ribeiro wanted to point out was that since 2007 the SEAC has been moved twice

[166] For a detailed account of this topic, *cf*. https://www.laohamutuk.org/educ/18CurriculumEn.htm, last accessed 20.12.2020.

[167] *Cf*. http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?cat=25&lang=pt. It has to be mentioned that during the VIII legislature, a new ministry was created, which is the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Culture, responsible for the university education, as well as for the development of the activities related to the arts and culture sector. SEAC was appointed under the umbrella of this new ministry.

from one minister to the other. These decisions have destabilised plans and projects of SEAC and KNTLU and, consequently, the cultural policymaking in general. Inevitably – as Mr. Ribeiro explained – this situation has created tensions, slowness in the development of projects and general unclear priority-setting within the institutions, despite the transparency that the Strategic Development Plan agenda seems to present. Mr. Ribeiro's words helped me to see a first problematic within the governmental apparatus committed in the implementation of policies concerning the protection of heritage in Timor-Leste. Namely, his observations resounded with me during the interview I had with Mr. Feliciano who fiercely denounced a lack of funds, trust and respect of the SEAC in Dili towards the Baukau SEAC office.

During our meeting, Mr. Ribeiro told me that some months before our conversations he was invited to Sulawesi for a "workshop camp" for UNESCO's agents and other heritage experts. The aim of the workshop was to ascertain whether the Indonesian policies towards the protection of the Torajan *tongkonan*[168] could be possibly helpful for the heritagisation process of the *uma lulik* in Timor-Leste. However, what Mr. Ribeiro highlighted during our meeting were not the specific policies developed in regard to *tongkonan* themselves, but rather the Indonesian fiscal, political and administrative decentralisation programme. According to Mr. Ribeiro, in fact, the decentralisation plan in Indonesia enabled and facilitated the recognition of different and specific regional assets as national heritage. Mr. Ribeiro was an enthusiastic supporter of the Indonesian decentralisation programme, especially towards the heritage decision-making process. In his view, the economic independency of the Indonesian provinces should have been implemented in the East Timorese context too. In this way, every region of the country could have developed their own policies, regarding heritage as well as other areas.

Decentralisation in Indonesia has been implemented between 1998 and 1999,[169] so as to ideally eliminate the hierarchical relationship between the central government and the other provinces of the country (Talitha et alii 2019, 7-8) and in order to develop a democratisation process throughout all the provinces of the country (Henley and Davidson 2007, 7-8). The Timor-Leste government has been trying to implement a decentralisation programme too: the 5th section of the Constitution is in fact dedicated to this topic (*cf*. http://timor-leste.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Constitution_RDTL_ENG.pdf, last accessed, 27.10.2020). Decree-Law 4/2014 provides the legal framework to put into practice the decentralisation throughout the country (see https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2015/04/03/decentralisation-and-rural-development-in-timor-leste/, last accessed 27.10.2020). However, many scholars point out that, despite a clear long-time

[168] *Cf*. https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5462/, last accessed 20.12.2020.
[169] The independence referendum in Timor-Leste was held in 1999.

national agenda dedicated to the decentralisation programme, and despite many attempts to put it into practice, the project has been delayed many times and it has not seen the light of day yet (Farram 2010; Jackson 2004; Kingsbury 2012, 267-268; Wallis 2013, 444-446). The greatest restraints to this massive national plan seem to be the fact that allocating money to the regions could increase patronage and nepotism (Kingsbury 2012). One of the main outcomes of the delay in creating a working decentralisation plan is that unemployed people originally from peripheric areas of the country had come to Dili looking for jobs and stable economic conditions. This has created an unsustainable growth in Dili's population and the unemployment rate has not improved (Kingsbury 2012, 263). The East Asia Forum platform points out that in Timor-Leste "district managers continue to be appointed by the national-level government",[170] despite the implementation of the decentralisation Decree-Law 4/2014. Damien Kingsbury points out that the government allocated to Dili increased the competition "for access to those resources within Dili and greater competition for political patronage beyond Dili" (Kingsbury 2012, 263).

The meeting I had had some weeks before with Mr. Feliciano had disclosed the importance of the same topic as well. During our conversation, Mr. Feliciano had in fact complained about the lack of transparency of the Dili SEAC office, as well as about the lack of funds for the regions for the implementation of policies and plans related to the local heritage assets. Namely, Mr. Feliciano informed me about the project regarding the Baukau Old Market. At that time, a very nice picture of the Baukau Old Market building was displayed on the SEAC's website homepage.[171] The edifice, dating back to the Portuguese colonial era, had had renovated and it was intended to be part of the bigger decentralisation government plan, the aim of which is the development of rural and urban areas outside of Dili. Since it was advertised on the SEAC website, I assumed it was a successful national as well as regional achievement. I was wondering why it had been renovated and for what purpose, since currently the actual Baukau market is placed in an open-air area of the town, far from the Old Market architecture, and the infrastructure as well as the hygienic conditions are quite poor (see pictures below). Mr. Feliciano took the opportunity to stress that the project was on hold. He confirmed it had been renovated in order to create new opportunities for local development: it is supposed to become a cultural centre for the community, with a museum, a library and a centre for the local arts and the cultural industry. "These kinds of spaces shouldn't be only in Dili, but also here, in the districts", Mr. Feliciano fiercely stated. "*Maibee governu taka matan ba komunidade*",[172] he added. The project regarding the cultural centre sounded promising and potentially beneficial to the local population,

[170] *Cf*. https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2015/04/03/decentralisation-and-rural-development-in-timor-leste/, last accessed 27.10.2020.

[171] Unfortunately, the SEAC website has crashed since 2018, being hence impossible for me to show the information that were included in it.

[172] T., lit. "But the government closes its eyes/doors to the community".

especially for the youth. It could potentially prevent internal migrations to the capital city and a general imaginative requalification of the district, since Baukau could partially emancipate itself from Dili.

Figure 16 The Old Baukau Market before and after its renovation[173]

Figure 17 The actual Baukau Market[174]

Finally, during the interview I had with the mayor of Venilale, he stressed that, despite the fact that the heritage resources within Venilale are many and although the central Dili government is well aware of the Venilale's heritage and touristic potential, unfortunately the funds had not been allocated

[173] Sources of the pictures: the Old market before its renovation (top picture) http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_pictures/8228631.stm; the Old market after the renovation (down picture) http://www.tatoli.tl/2019/08/03/dezenvolvimentu-tenke-hahu-hosi-baze/, both last accessed on 30.10.2020.
[174] Source of the picture https://www.timorleste.tl/destinations/municipalities/baucau/, accessed on 30.10.2020.

yet for heritage and touristic purposes. He also repeated a few times that the conditions of the roads within Venilale are inadequate, as well as the road connecting Venilale with Baukau and Baukau with Dili. The mayor addressed the responsibilities both to Dili and to Venilale's administration too: he explained that Dili is responsible for the bad conditions of the roads connecting the capital city to the region, but the local Venilale administration – which he was representing – was responsible for the lack of proper infrastructures for tourists, such as hotels, hostels, restaurants and proper roads to get to the most famous tourist attractions. The closest hotels are in fact in Baukau, and in Venilale there are only a few rooms available for visitors inside the nuns' community.

To sum up, the national heritage institutions in Timor-Leste have to face structural difficulties, as denounced by Mr. Ribeiro and as Mr. Feliciano revealed. These obstacles have led to complications not just with the development of the plan and policies of the institutions themselves, but also in the communication between Dili and the regional headquarters – at least concerning the Baukau region. The distance between the capital city and the rest of the country is a quite large issue, not only related to SEAC and KNTLU, but also to broader development issues. Decentralisation is proposed as a solution by institutional representatives as well as by many scholars working on Timor-Leste. However, the Indonesian case, where a massive decentralisation has been implemented since the end of 1990s, shows some of the potential pitfalls of this approach. In fact, there are many problems raised by the scholars who have analysed decentralisation and the consequent rise of pre-modern sources of social order (Henley and Davidson 2007). Customary networks of power, although being celebrated as synonyms of order and peace, reveal their radical conservatism (1). Customarily in fact, leaders tend to privilege their own interests, although speaking on behalf of the whole community they represent (Li 2007, 365-366). I suggest that quite similar dynamics could develop in Timor-Leste too, given the preeminent position that local traditional leaders in relation to the national governmental apparatus.

Conclusion

This chapter analysed the main aspects of the current national AHD in Timor-Leste, which deploys endangerment as the main rationale for safeguarding the tangible dimension of *uma lulik* and other local cultural crafts. The attention given to authenticity is in line with the international UNESCO guidelines, as well as with the past colonial policies developed in Timor-Leste. Namely, from the Portuguese colonisation and then later on during the Indonesian military occupation, governmental policies have cleaned out *uma lulik* from their supernatural dimension and values, being considered largely for their tangible dimension. In post-colonial Timor-Leste, cultural revivals have taken place, on both local and national stages: there are many communities that have decided to rebuild their *uma lulik*, and the government has defined the potent houses as national symbols. Despite the massive

presence of the *lulik* potency in the Venilale areas, the administrative apparatuses, both locally and in the capital city, seem to neglect the centrality of the *lulik* element. The structural distance between the capital city and the rural areas of the country, denounced even by governmental actors, continue to be central throughout the country, evident in infrastructural and economic issues that the country has to face. As concerns Baukau and Venilale, the government has been developed a decentralisation plan that is long in coming, but which is believed to be the solution for the marginal position of the rural areas of the country.

CHAPTER IV – NATION-BUILDING BETWEEN OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL NARRATIVES

"The origin of states
gets lost in a myth,
in which one may believe,
but which one may not discuss"
(Karl Marx, The Civil War in France, 1848–1850)

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a broad perspective on national and official commemorative practices, celebrating the recent East Timorese past, from its decolonisation from Portugal until the liberation from the Indonesian military occupation. The analysis will focus on local museums, monuments, cemeteries and public holidays interpreted as *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989), or national symbols that the state deliberately designates as core elements for collective remembrance. Michael Leach has defined these places that shape the current East Timorese landscape as sites of "difficult memories" (2008), and can be interpreted not only as elements of the nation-building discourse, but also as embodiments of the current AHD (Smith 2006). The struggle that Timor-Leste endured during the Indonesian occupation can be considered as part of the national heritage of the country, as Leach claimed (2008).

The difficult memories surrounding the Indonesian occupation have been appropriated by the state, in order to settle the origin myth of the country in the distress endured by the population but also in the heroic actions of those who fought for the independence of the country. Suffer and fight (*funu* and *terus*, T.)[175], hence, have to be considered as two sides of a coin (Arthur 2019). Andrew McWilliam and Elizabeth Traube have pointed out that "the rhetoric of the collective sacrifice is widely used in post-independence Timor-Leste to make claims on the new nation-state" (2011, 17). It is also important to consider that Timor-Leste is one of only two predominantly Catholic nations of South East Asia (together with the Philippines). The territory has endured a long fight against Indonesia, which represents not just the giant neighbour but, most importantly, the most populous Islamic country in the world. The religious aspect is of paramount importance within Timor-Leste's origin myth. On the one hand, the suffering (*terus*, T.) of the people of Timor-Leste evokes the Passion of Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for the redemption of humanity; on the other, Timor-Leste would represent the

[175] *Funu* is translated as war, while *terus* as suffer, endure (*cf*. Williams-van Klinken, 2008).

small yet smart shepherd David who, armed only with a sling, manages to kill the giant brute Goliath, proving both his faith and courage in the fight (*funu*, T.) against Indonesia.[176]

However, currently in Timor-Leste, frictions exist between the official commemorative discourse made by the state and other portions of the population, as suggested by many scholars (Arthur 2019; Bovensiepen 2014b; 2018; Grenfell 2012; 2015; Kent and Feijó 2020;[177] Myrtinnen 2014). The unofficial or counter memories, which are often expressed in subtle and reticent ways rather than harsh and noisy manifestations (Kent 2015, 7), tend to question the legitimacy of the official national narrative, which is often selective and not inclusive. The counter-memories one can witness in Timor-Leste are quite common even in other contexts, since the nationalist perspective has been imposed since the 19th century throughout Europe "maintain universalising myths only at the cost of privileging a particular representation at the expense of subordinating or actively suppressing many others" (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000, 74). Similarly, collective memories and the meaning according to memorial sites are constantly changing (MacDonald 2009), shaping different interpretations of the past. Discussing the domestic commemorative practices in Vietnam, Hoenik Kwon (2006) claims the state put a great effort into the centralisation and control of the commemorative practices, subordinating – and often denigrating – customary religious practices connected to death. The author argues that the state aspires to remove the dead from lineages and communities' landscapes in order to place them within the national framework. However, these efforts are counterbalanced by traditional beliefs and practices of conceiving death, in which national heroes and ancestors collapse within kin relationships (2006).

This chapter aims to provide a wide panoramic on the national identity discourse as well as on the discontent arising from it, both from a social as well as historical perspective. I aim to question the official and national narrative, which prioritises the commemoration of the Resistance (Kent 2012), leading to possible insurgence of unofficial or counter memories within the state-driven discourse. The violent East Timorese past and the fight for independence against Indonesia caused many violent deaths. Nowadays the state celebrates the deaths of the guerrilla fighters (*saudozu*, T.) who helped in the liberation of the country. *Saudozu* means beloved in Tetun, deriving from the Portuguese *saudoso*, and it is used to refer to the veterans and ex-combatants who fell in battle during the national fight against Indonesia.

[176] On the general topic of the Catholic ideals applied to the Timor-Leste independence, see McWilliam and Traube (2011, 17). Then also Susana Barnes on the particular case of Laclubar (2011) suggests that the concept of sacrifice is part of the myths and ancestral narrations.

[177] I acknowledge the existence of the volume edited by Lia Kent and Rui Graça Feijó entitled *The Dead as Ancestors, Martyrs, and Heroes in Timor-Leste*, published in September 2020. Unfortunately, I have not had the chance to properly consult it.

Considering a reburial ceremony of a *saudozu* in which I participated as an example of the silent dissent to which Lia Kent refers to (2015, 7), I argue that the rural communities in Venilale deploy *lisan* in order to place their local powers in opposition with the hegemonic ones represented by the state. Similar to the social dynamics analysed in Chapter III, I suggest that also in this case *lisan* imposes itself as preceding the state and hence more legitimate, following what James Fox defines as "order of precedence" (Fox 2009b, 106). Following Angie Bexley and Maj Nygaard-Christensen's argument regarding the East Timorese nation-building process (2013, 403), I suggest that the 'silent dissent' I observed during the funeral ceremony in Venilale should be understood as a negotiation between different actors, namely representatives of the state and the local population. The decision of the *saudozu*'s family to leave the body on the land he has born and lived in has to be understood as a political and moral stance, an alternative to the depersonalising way of conceiving war heroes in modern nation states. McWilliams claims that precedence is constantly contested and, hence, is reconfigured and negotiated: "any integrative and ordering authority inherent in the principle of precedence typically rests upon a negotiated and temporary consensus" (127).

In Venilale, I observed a quite present and general discontent among my interlocutors towards some governmental decisions. Generally speaking, as already discussed in Chapter III, the distance between the capital city and the *foho*, namely Venilale, was a quite strongly debated issue during my fieldwork. Because of the distance existing between the government – represented by Dili – and the rural areas of the country (Grenfell 2015), traditions and *kultura* are deployed as political and social tools against national policies that collide with local customs. This chapter is going to be shaped in three parts. The goal of the first part is the discussion and analysis of the celebration of the heroes who fought for and forged the nation. The second section is going to focus on social groups who are left out of the picture, forming the so-called "dissonant heritages" within the nation (Meskell 2002), namely, the young generations of the country. Finally, in the last part I am going to give an ethnographic perspective on the official commemorations, namely a reburial ceremony for the ex-combatant *saudozu* Antonio Guterres in which I participated when I was in Venilale. His skeleton (*restus mortais*, T.) was found and disinterred by the family members in the area of the Matebian Mount and then reburied in the place where his relatives and descendants live, despite the state wish to bury his remains in the local veterans' cemetery.

IV.1 National history's musealisations

Mr. Soares, a very prestigious and important man living in Baukau, who used to be the regional president of the region during the Indonesian occupation, like many other institutional figures, acted a 'double collaboration' between the Indonesian administrative apparatus and the fight for

independence. Like many other interlocutors that I had the opportunity to interview in 2013, my first time in Timor-Leste, also Mr. Soares used to work for the Indonesian government, but at the same time he collaborated and assisted the Resistance hidden in the forest.[178] During the interview I did in his beautiful house in 2017 he told me

> The Timorese evil is silenced, because only Fretilin made history. Fretilin killed many more East Timorese people than Indonesians (…). In 1975, in December, they (Fretilin) took so many UDT and Apodeti supporters, they took them to Aileu, and they killed them in a mass grave... more than 105 (people died). They didn't do anything wrong, the (Fretilin) just dumped UDT and Apodeti people, they just killed them (…). They are the ones who made history, they won't talk.[179]

Despite Mr. Soares being a supporter of national independence and the fact that he collaborated with the guerrilla fighters hidden in the forest, he candidly admitted that some of the events that happened during the Indonesian occupation and also protagonist voices of the independent fight have been silenced. Namely, the violent actions conducted by FALINTIL (Pt., *Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste*), the armed wing of FRETILIN (Pt., *Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente*).[180] Museums and national cemeteries are key places for analysing the official narratives regarding the resistance fight.

In Dili, the *Arquivo e Museu da Resistência Timorense* (Pt., Archive and Museum of the Timorese Resistance, AMRT) and the Comarca Balide Prison and Museum, a former political prison, currently hosting the permanent *Chega!* exhibition, are the two most important museums in the country.[181] These two institutions elaborate different discourses regarding the period in which Timor-Leste was the 28th province under the jurisdiction of Indonesia (1976-1999),[182] under the name of Timor-Timur. As Catherine Arthur points out in her analysis of the symbols composing the East Timorese national identity, *funu* (*struggle*, T.) and *terus* (*suffering*, T.) are the two core elements within the official representation of the nation (Arthur 2019, 15-36). I would personally interpret AMRT and the Balide Prison and Museum not only as two national symbols but as representations of the duality that shape the official national discourse, between struggle and suffering. In addition, as the Comarca Balide Prison and Museum is a former prison, the building is materially and symbolically related to

[178] In my MA thesis I discussed the duplicities that East Timorese citizens had to perform in order not to be arrested and tortured by the Indonesian forces, but also not to be killed by the members of the Resistance too. See Boldoni 2014.

[179] "Timor nia aat ne'e la koalia, tamba Fretilin de'it mak halo história. Fretilin oho barak Timoroan duke ema Indonésia (...). Iha 1975, fulan Dezembru, sira (Fretilin) lori Apodeti no UDT barak teb-tebes, lori ba Aileu, sira oho iha vala comum... liu 105. Sala la iha, tama deit ema Apodeti no UDT, sira oho deit (…). Sira mak halo história, sira la bele koalia", interview with Mr. Soares, who I met on 18.10.2017 in Baukau.

[180] More information about FALINTIL and FRETILIN will be given throughout the chapter. However, for a wide overview on the recent history of the country, see the final Chronology.

[181] There is also the project to create the National Museum, but the stage of the process seems quite embryonic for now (UNESCO 2018, 14). *Cf*. also http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=4278&n=1&lang=en (last accessed on 30.11.2020).

[182] The actual Indonesian invasion of the East Timorese territory began in 1975, but it was officially declared as part of the Indonesian nation in 1976.

suffering. AMRT in particular represents the struggle and the fight that Timor-Leste had to endure in order to become an independent nation, while the *Chega!* exhibition illustrates the pain that many East Timorese suffered between 1975 and 1999.

AMRT is located next to the main building of UNTL and at the back of the Government Palace, in the institutional centre of the capital city, Dili. The building itself used to be a courthouse during the Portuguese colonisation of Timor-Leste and it was partially burnt and destroyed during the 1999 riots.[183] Most of the financial as well as institutional supports and partners involved in the renovations of the building were Portuguese.[184] Not only was the project of the building itself financed by Portuguese partners, but the archive of the museum was also organized with the support of the Portuguese Fundação Mário Soares, and under the scientific supervision of the Portuguese historian José Mattoso.[185] AMRT was inaugurated on 7th of December of 2005, the 30th anniversary of the Indonesian invasion of Timor-Leste.[186] On the website of the museum as well as in its catalogue it can be read that the permanent exhibition and the two subsequent exhibitions that were added in 2006 and 2007[187] are aimed to "preserve the memory of the heroic struggle of the East Timorese people" for their independence (Caldeira et alii 2007, 7),[188] from the end of the Portuguese colonisation until the end of the Indonesian occupation. The Portuguese historian José Mattoso, curator of the archive, stresses the importance of preserving the documents written by guerrilla-fighters, as well as by sympathizers of the resistance or by members of the clandestine resistance network, as a public obligation of the state towards the memory of the nation (Mattoso 2011, 187). In his perspective, the political as well as spiritual fight of the Resistance were central in shaping a new national identity which managed to encompass the regional and local ones against the common enemy: Indonesia (Mattoso 2011, 185). The single room of the museum which is dedicated to the armed Resistance (*Resistência Armada*, Pt.) lies at the centre of the exhibition, to which all the bordering areas are connected (see the map below). Visually and symbolically, the FALINTIL were given a paramount role within the museum, being the head of the structural organization of the Resistance.

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[183] *Cf*. http://amrtimor.org/amrt/amrt_edificio.php?page=3. Unfortunately, the website of AMRT has not been active in recent months. All the links related to the website present in this chapter were visited in 2019, when the AMRT website was still available.

[184] IPAD (Instituto Português do Apoio ao Desenvolvimento); BNU-Caixa Geral de Depósitos (Banco Nacional Ultramarino); Fundo do fomento cultural; Fundação Oriente; Instituto Camões; Fundação Macau; TT (Timor Telecom) Source: http://amrtimor.org/apoios.php?lingua=pt.

[185] *Cf*. http://amrtimor.org/amrt/amrt_edificio.php?page=2.

[186] The first Indonesian attempts at invasion were registered in the month of October 1975; after the unilateral FRETILIN proclaim of Independence of Timor-Leste (28th November 1975), on the night between the 7th and the 8th of November 1975, Indonesian troops conclusively crossed the border between the two countries (Durand 2009, 109-121).

[187] "Resistir é Vencer!" (2006); and "Exposição Comissão de Consolidação de dados (CCD)". Source: http://amrtimor.org/amrt/amrt_expo_temp.php.

[188] *Cf*. http://amrtimor.org/amrt/amrt_carta_principios.php?lingua=pt.

Figure 18 AMRT map[189]

AMRT presents a wide range of documents, objects, correspondence and other items given by all sorts of individuals who participated in the struggle for independence. These are considered as significant objects that practically and symbolically helped the development of the resistance fight – such as radios, written documents, flags, weapons, etc. They are exhibited in the museum, or there is access to them through the AMRT archive online.[190] In the same building, there is also one of the few libraries of the country and one of the richest, containing a vast selection of volumes regarding the history and culture of Timor-Leste. Some of the written material preserved by AMRT has been recently taken into consideration by UNESCO as potential nominations for the international register. A report was recently published by the UNESCO Office in Jakarta and Regional Bureau for Science in Asia and the Pacific, entitled *The Documentary Heritage of Timor Leste: Survey of Selected Memory Institutions* (UNESCO 2018).[191] The Portuguese archaeologist and heritage consultant Nuno Vasco Oliveira, who helped in the elaboration of the UNESCO report cited, describes the museum as a fundamental place for the preservation of "the memory and the historical heritage of the resistance and struggle for independence of the people of Timor-Leste" (UNESCO 2018, 27), especially for the young generation who could not witness the struggle for the national independence.[192] The report does not only echo

[189] Source of the picture, http://amrtimor.org/amrt/amrt_projecto.php?page=2.
[190] Link to the online archive: http://casacomum.org/cc/arquivos?set=e_26, last accessed 30.11.2020
[191] As I will discuss later in the chapter, UNESCO included the Max Stahl documentary The Birth of a Nation and Max Stahl's Audio-visual Archive in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 2013. Cf. http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/memory-of-the-world/register/full-list-of-registered-heritage/registered-heritage-page-6/on-the-birth-of-a-nation-turning-points/, last accessed 30.11.2020.
[192] In 2012, during the speech made by Taur Matan Ruak for the inauguration of a temporary exhibition at AMRT about the Santa Cruz Massacre, the then president stated the importance of AMRT for the new generations. He

the aims of the museum itself, but also adds that the importance of AMRT is the preservation of "historical national heritage". The fact that UNESCO attests to the importance of AMRT within the national heritage in Timor-Leste adds a fundamental portion to the construction of the AHD scaffold. As Diane Losche points out, it is quite common – in many museums of the Pacific area (in which the author includes Timor-Leste) – to see a display of the struggle leading to the nation-formation, which is "turned into heroic narrative(s)" (Losche 2006, 17.2). Another aspect described by Losche is the problem of representation and violence within the museums of the Pacific, in their attempt to display the birth of the nation. In AMRT, despite the noble intention of preserving the "people's" resistance, as advertised in the museum, the narration displayed actually focuses on the segments of the East Timorese population who actively formed and helped the Resistance movement. These are the armed wing of the resistance (FALINTIL), the clandestine web, and the international and diplomatic front, represented by José Ramos-Horta.[193] Laurajane Smith in her *Uses of Heritage* brilliantly illustrates that the problem of representation within museums and, more generally, within heritage, is embedded in the construction of the AHD itself (Smith 2006, 29-43). In addition, as Denis Byrne points out, the attention given to tangible objects can easily lead to monumentalism (2009, 243).

By taking AMRT into account, I would argue that the ongoing use of the word 'people' displayed in the museum has to be read and interpreted in a rhetorical way, referring to the East Timorese people as a whole, certainly glorifying and honouring them. However, the term 'people', purposely generalising, could be a means of preventing possible unauthorized voices that could undermine the supposed national unity. Finally, it could be read as a way to bury the past and forget the suffering provoked. While on the one hand the efforts for the national liberation were made by the population as a whole, on the other hand the AHD places emphasis on the actions of the armed resistance and its collateral elements. The people rewarded were not those who resisted, though, but those who took actions and weapons against the occupier, as suggested by the motto of AMRT "Resistir é Vencer!" (Pt., to resist is to win). This is a famous slogan that Xanana Gusmão used to say as commander of the Resistance. As I will further develop in my argument throughout the chapter, the emphasis and pre-eminence given to FALINTIL is not confined to AMRT only. On the contrary, AMRT is part on a broader attempt of shaping an official selective national memory, made by the political leadership of the country.

addressed the importance of the museum as a central place where young East Timorese people can learn the recent history of their own country. *Cf*. https://expresso.sapo.pt/actualidade/e-preciso-preservar-a-memoria-do-legado-de-timor-diz-matan-ruak=f727309, last accessed 30.11.2020.

[193] Nobel Prize winner in 1996, together with Bishop Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo, "for their work towards a just and peaceful solution to the conflict in East Timor", *cf*. https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1996/ramos-horta/facts/, last accessed 30.11.2020.

The *Chega!* exhibition is placed in the Comarca[194] Balide Prison and Museum. The building was built by the Portuguese government in 1963 and it was used as a prison from the outset. The detention centre continued to be used during the brief FRETILIN countercoup (summer 1975) and, finally, by the Indonesian government (Coupland 2008, 11-12). The musealisation of the space as well as the curatorship of the exhibition, were part of the project conducted by the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR). CAVR was established in 2000 by the UNTAET Human Rights unit[195] – together with UNHCR, CNRT,[196] Catholic Church representatives, East Timorese human rights NGOs, women's groups, youth organisations, FALINTIL,[197] and the Association of ex-Political Prisoners (Assepol)[198] – in the aftermath of the referendum held in Timor-Leste by the UN the 30th August 1999. CAVR's aim was to produce truthful accounts of the human rights abuses committed between 1974 and 1999 in Timor-Leste, recounted by civilians and ordinary East Timorese people. It produced a 2500-page report of historical records of the main events which occurred between the 1970s and 1999 in Timor-Leste, as well as the human rights abuses perpetrated mainly by the Indonesian forces, and also by the pro-Indonesian East Timorese militias. The report is entitled *Chega!*, meaning 'stop' or 'that's enough', in Portuguese. The *Chega!* report represents an archive of an extremely important period of the country's past. Therefore, *Chega!* is the name of the CAVR report, as well as the title of the exhibition hosted in the Comarca Balide Prison and Museum and of the archive and research centre placed in the same building.

Lia Kent suggested that the 'production of an official record of the Indonesian period' was viewed as 'a means to cultivate a distinctive national identity, forged out of collective experience of suffering and a sense of shared history' (Kent 2012, 144). According to Damien Grenfell, there are

[194] *Comarca* is both a Portuguese and a Tetun word. In Portuguese the term means a territorial as well as judiciary subdivision. In Tetun, it means prison.

[195] UNTAET is the abbreviation for United Nations Transitional Administration in Timor-Leste, established on 25 October 1999 in order to administrate the territory until the restoration of the independence, 20 May 2002. For further information: https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/etimor/etimor.htm.

[196] *Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor* (National Congress for the Reconstruction of Timor). This coalition was created during the 1990s, in order to create a common ground of cohesion among the different parties and perspectives who were trying to fight for the independence of the country. This acronym, though, had another meaning and origin, since its predecessor was CNRM (*Conselho Nacional da Resistência Maubere*/National Council of the Maubere Resistance). As stated in Chapter I, the term 'maubere' created frictions among the different political actors involved, then the acronym was transformed from CNRM to CNRT. Later (2007) CNRT became a political party, founded by Xanana Gusmão, with the name of *Congresso Nacional da Reconstrução de Timor*.

[197] Acronym for *Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste* (Armed Forces of the National Liberation of Timor-Leste), the armed wing of the political party FRETILIN, during the 70s. the same acronym was then used from the 80s onwards, when Xanana Gusmão created the CNRT. Nowadays, the name of the military force of Timor-Leste is F-FDTL, acronym for FALINTIL – *Forças da Defesa de Timor-Leste* (Defence Force of Timor-Leste). For more information about the topic, consult http://www.laohamutuk.org/Bulletin/2005/Apr/bulletinv6n1.html#FALINTIL.

[198] *Cf*. http://www.cavr-timorleste.org/en/cavr.htm, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

parallels between the East Timorese Commission for Truth and Reconciliation and South African Truth Commission (2005). They both reveal the details of the human rights abuse, identifying the perpetrators and allowing the victims to say their truth. They are also supposed to pave the way for turning a new page and build a new peaceful future.

Named after the CAVR Report, the *Chega!* exhibition at the Comarca Balide building attempts to display the atrocities committed during the Indonesian military occupation in the prison. The Comarca Balide's musealisation consisted of keeping the original structure of the building in order to remind the visitors of its former use as a prison. Sixty-five original graffiti and paintings written and created by former East Timorese prisoners, as well as by Indonesian guards, have been preserved on the walls of the building. The CAVR website, in the section dedicated to the Comarca Balide states "from these graffiti, we hear voices from the past" (*cf*. http://www.cavr-timorleste.org/en/comarca.htm, last accessed on 30.11.2020). The steel bars on the small windows of the building were kept, as were the cells where the prisoners used to stay. Some of the cells had no windows and were very small and the prisoners used to be kept here in isolation for several days, sometimes even months (Coupland 2008, 8-9). On some of the walls of the building, there are pictures of the prison during the military Indonesian occupation, as well as paintings created by young East Timorese artists, inspired to freedom, independence and to the national reconciliation process. The building is also the headquarters of CAVR and its archive.

AMRT and the Comarca Balide Prison and Museum interpret the narratives of the tragic struggle endured by Timor-Leste in two distinctive ways. AMRT focuses on the celebration of the Resistance movement, celebrating the fierce resistant actions of the guerrilla-fighters against the Indonesian occupiers. The *Chega!* exhibition, instead, memorialised the abuses committed within the Balide prison by the Indonesian military forces. In this sense, I suggest interpreting it as a *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989), since it focuses on the suffering endured by all the East Timorese people who were tortured, killed and abused during those 24 years (1975-1999). I hence suggest that the two museums represent the *funu* (war, violence) and *terus* (suffering) that Catherine Arthur has defined as the two national symbols of the East Timorese nation. However, despite the difference between the AMRT museum and the CAVR exhibition, I suggest, following Diane's Losche argument (2006), that national museums tend to adopt the official national narrative in order to convey a consensual discourse and to forge national unity. This is the main reason why they are constitutive part of the national sites of memory (Nora 1989), along with public holidays and military monuments, which I will discuss in the following section.

IV.2 Who are the heroes?

The public holidays that are part of the national calendar in Timor-Leste nowadays are significant and relevant *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989). By focusing on the main national anniversaries,[199] as well as on some military monuments scattered throughout the country, I will provide other examples of the official selective national memory I referred to in the previous section. The public commemorations, in fact, refer to previous significant events which occurred between the decolonisation from Portugal and the fight against Indonesia, thus giving a particular interpretation of the past, in which FRETILIN and FALINTIL are considered the paramount coalitions that gave Timor-Leste its independence.

The first holiday I mention is the 20th May, which celebrates the anniversary of the Restoration of Independence in 2002, when the first national government was established after the short administration (2000-2002) held by the United Nations Transitional Administration of East Timor (UNTAET). The second is the 28th of November, day of the unilateral proclamation of Independence made by FRETILIN in 1975. After the Revolution on the 25th April 1974 (*Revolução dos Cravos*, Pt.) and the destitution of the dictatorship in Portugal, the Portuguese authorities in Timor-Leste made the creation of the first local political parties possible. The main parties formed were ASDT (Pt., *Associação Social-Democrata Timorense*), UDT (Pt., *União Democrática Timorense*) and APODETI (Pt., *Associação Popular Democrata Timor-Leste*).[200] While ASDT was considered the most 'radical' and demanded immediate independence from Portugal, UDT and APODETI advocated a more transitional process towards independence: UDT was hoping for a collaboration with Portugal, APODETI with Indonesia. The radical ideas conveyed by ASDT were interpreted as communist and considered as threatening within Timor-Leste, but also internationally (Indonesia, USA and Australia, among the principal actors). The tensions between the parties rose during 1975. In fact, UDT, with the support of Indonesia, made a coup on 11th August 1975. From that moment on, the frictions between UDT and ASDT (renamed FRETILIN from September 1974) led to an escalation of violence that one of my interlocutors vividly defined as "fratricidal fight" (Pt., *luta fratricida*; Boldoni 2014, 98-111). FRETILIN finally managed to make a countercoup by the 20th August 1975 (Niner 2007, 115-116), creating the FALINTIL.[201] These two formations slowly took over the entire territory of Timor-Leste, by means of violence, arresting, killing and torturing opponents and other parties' members (CAVR 2005, 40-48). Indonesia used the pretext of the 'radical' left-wing political ideas of FRETILIN as well as the violence resulting from the political tensions to occupy the territory. Threatened by Indonesian armed attacks and incursions

[199] *Cf*. http://mj.gov.tl/jornal/lawsTL/RDTL-Law/RDTL-Laws/Law-2005-10.pdf, last accessed on 30.11.2020. The section will focus only on the secular anniversaries, not the religious ones.
[200] ASDT, Social Democratic Timorese Association; UDT, Timorese Democratic Union; APODETI, Popular Democratic Timorese Association.
[201] *Cf*. http://amrtimor.org/crono/index_por_ano.php?ano=1975.

through the border between Timor-Leste and Indonesia, FRETILIN proclaimed the unilateral independence of the country on 28th November 1975, in an attempt to raise international awareness. The UN, though, did not recognised the FRETILIN proclamation as an act of self-determination, and Timor-Leste was invaded by Indonesia on 7th December 1975.

Despite the fact that the independence of the nation was declared in 1975 at a very critical moment by a political party that had despotically taken power over the country, nowadays, the 28th November is recognised as the day of the Proclamation of the Independence of Timor-Leste. Usually during the celebrations of these days, a grand military parade is organized and broadcast by the national TV (RTTL).[202] In 2017, during my fieldwork research, the celebrations were held in the town of Suai, in the district of Covalima; the celebrations began on 27th November by night and ended the subsequent night. The military parade, as well as the speeches of the authorities were broadcast live on national TV, almost non-stop during the whole day. It is not unusual for ceremonies and celebrations to be held during the night, after sunset – not just the official national celebrations, but also private ones, such as funerals and weddings, and the customary *adat* rituals too.

The third commemorative day is the 30th August, anniversary of the Popular Consultation Day, when in 1999, the people of Timor-Leste voted for a referendum, asking to choose between independence for the country or special autonomy within Indonesia. 98% of the population entitled to vote participated in the referendum, and more than 78% of the population voted for independence.[203] There are also other days, such as the 12th of November, anniversary of the Massacre of Santa Cruz (1991), which is National Youth Day (see more on this topic later in the chapter). 7th December is currently National Heroes Day. As mentioned above, on 7th December 1975 Indonesia entered Timor-Leste, occupying the capital city, Dili. It is significant to see that this anniversary was turned into the day of the national heroes, who fought for the independence of the country. In this way, the re-appropriation made by the national narrative focuses, once more, on the ideals of *funu* and *terus*, struggle and suffering that the East Timorese endured during the Indonesian occupation.

Apart from dates mentioned above, which are all national holidays, there are also two more significant national commemorations; these are 3rd March and 20th August. 3rd March is Veterans Day. It is hard to find reliable data on the reasons why this day was chosen to celebrate veterans, but in both the families that hosted me, there was agreement on the fact that on 3rd March 1981, Xanana Gusmão was nominated Commander in Chief of FALINTIL. This is partially confirmed by the Timor-Leste chronology that one can find on the AMRT website,[204] where it is explained that at the beginning

[202] *Radio Televisaun Timor-Leste*, T. http://rttlep.tl. Footage of the military parade of 2017 can be watched through this link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJda4tpfRts. Both accessed on 30.11.2020.
[203] *Cf*. https://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19990903.sc6721.html, last accessed on 30.11.2020.
[204] *Cf*. http://amrtimor.org/crono/index_por_ano.php?ano=1981.

of March 1981 a national conference of FRETILIN occurred, during which the CRRN (*Conselho Revolucionário da Resistência Timorense*, Pt.)[205] was created and Xanana Gusmão was nominated chief of FALINTIL. There is no specific reference to 3rd March, though. Then, the 20th of August celebrates the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of Timor-Leste (FALINTIL), the anniversary day of the birth of FALINTIL (as well as the day of the FRETILIN countercoup, as explained above). I consider the re-appropriation of these last two dates, the 3rd of March and the 20th August, quite significant. In fact, once more they celebrate and glorify FALINTIL as the heroic promoter of the Resistance fight against Indonesia.

As occurs in many other countries, in Timor-Leste the army is also given pre-eminence as a national symbol. Military forces are usually acclaimed to have helped the creation of the nation and defend it. This official narrative depicts the former combatants as heroes of the nation and this can in fact lead to the creation of hierarchies within society, in which security forces are granted special respect because of their contribution and role in wars. In the East Timorese case, the veterans – to whom 3rd March is dedicated – are granted special prestige and special public pensions, within the so-called Veterans Pensions Scheme (*more on this topic later in the chapter*). Furthermore, the government supports the veterans' families with pensions of a conspicuous amount of the annual public budget. The 2018 state budget, for example, approved $98.9 (American dollars) for pensions and broader supports for the veterans.[206] The anthropologist Henri Myrtinnen claims that the celebration of the army stimulates a conception of citizenship based on a hyper-masculine, violent and armed identity (Myrtinnen 2005). The hyper-masculinity to which Myrttinen refers has historical roots, as I will present shortly, and it is a quite visible element of some of the current monuments in Timor-Leste, as the statue of Nicolau Lobato attests (see picture below). This monument, inaugurated in 2014, is located at the centre of the big roundabout in the Komoro district in Dili. It is the first monument the visitors arriving in Timor-Leste can see, coming from the international airport of Dili, also named after Lobato. Nicolau dos Reis Lobato was the first Prime Minister of the country (28th November-7th December 1975) and leader of the FRETILIN party and was killed by the Indonesian army in 1978. Despite being both a fundamental political leader as well as a member of the armed resistance, the monument represents him as a soldier, with a rifle in his left hand and the FRETILIN flag in the right.

[205] National Revolutionary Resistance's Council.
[206] *Cf*. https://www.mof.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/BB1_Eng1.pdf, 14, last accessed 30.11.2020.

Figure 19 Monument to Nicolau dos Reis Lobato, at the centre of the adorned Komoro roundabout, welcoming visitors with a rifle [207]

Myrttinen argues that the general role models publicly displayed in Timor-Leste are often characterised by a strong hyper-masculinity, strongly connected to violent and sexualised behaviours to which the East Timorese population was especially exposed during the Indonesian occupation, but also during the previous colonial time. The author illustrates how, throughout history, violent and toxic masculine ideals have been enacted by the different occupiers with the aim of defending the national pride against the enemy, which was often identified as the local East Timorese population (2005). In the accurate analysis that Catherine Arthur makes of East Timorese national symbols, monuments and statues play a paramount role in fostering national unity (2019, 71-104). The author makes particular reference to the monuments representing the traditional warrior (*aswain*, T.), "as a key military symbol of identity" (Arthur 2019, 74), scattered throughout the territory of Timor-Leste. I want to suggest a potential connection between the celebration of the FALINTIL and the current military forces, symbolised by the Lobato monument, and the representation of the 'traditional warrior'.

Undoubtedly, two of the most important representations of the traditional combatant are the *aswain* (warrior, T.) statue in Dili and the statue representing Dom Boaventura, in Same (Manufahi district). As Arthur explains, the *aswain* statue in Dili, placed in Dili's city centre, quite close to the government palace, was inaugurated during the Indonesian occupation, and it was meant to symbolise East Timorese emancipation from the Portuguese colonial yoke. The fact that the statue of the traditional warrior was not destroyed with the independence of Timor-Leste is interpreted as a re-appropriation of the inherent values represented by the monument itself (Arthur 2019, 74-77). "There

[207] Source https://www.nomadicnotes.com/notes-on-dili-east-timor/, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

is perhaps no more powerful way to symbolically assert independence than by taking a monument constructed by the occupier and reclaiming it as a symbol of the identity the occupiers ultimately sought to eliminate" (Arthur 2019, 77). This reverse procedure tells us a lot about the ways in which monuments can be appropriated for quite distinct political purposes. Aesthetically, the *aswain* monument in Dili (and also other *aswain* statues spread throughout the country), as well as the Dom Boaventura monument in Same present many common elements. They both wear the traditional cloth headgear (*tais*) and the traditional golden necklace disk (*belak*), and they are both armed with traditional swords. Most importantly, they are both barefoot. While Dom Boaventura is depicted in a very hieratic pose, as he was on a throne, wearing many jewels and decorations, the warrior statue shows a screaming *aswain*, who seems to liberate himself from the chains on his wrists and ankles, symbolising the chains of colonialism, as suggested by Michael Leach (2008, 147).

Figure 20 On the left, the aswain monument in Dili; on the right, the Dom Boaventura monument in Same[208]

Dom Boaventura is one of the most important and celebrated East Timorese historical figures, considered by some the first hero of the national independence (Ramos-Horta 1987, 19-20). He was the local chief (*liurai*, T.) of the kingdom of Manufahi, who managed to organise a prolonged revolt against the colonial administration (1895-1912), with the help of many nearby *liurai* (Durand 2009, 85-92). As the historian René Péllissier mentions, there are three different historiographical interpretations of the conflict between local and Portuguese administrators (2007, 367-370). The first interpretation favours the political context, giving nationalistic dimension to the clash: in this analysis the revolt is explained as an anti-colonial act (Péllissier 2007, 367). This seems to be the most accepted interpretation within the current post-colonial national narrative. The second interpretation insists on

[208] Picture sources: http://thediliinsider.blogspot.com/2008/12/breaking-shackles-of-oppression-warrior.html and https://www.jornaltornado.pt/as-revoltas-de-manufahi-em-timor-leste/, both accessed on 30.11.2020.

economic reasons: the insurrection occurred because the Portuguese administration had raised the taxation, causing a general dissatisfaction towards the colonial administration, which erupted into a violent revolt. The last historiographical interpretation, which is the most relevant to my argument here, describes the Manufahi revolt as a conspiracy, coordinated by the local chiefs, the causes of which seem both political and psychological, as the historian suggests. The Portuguese governor of the time cited by Péllissier describes the local *liurais* as dishonest, sneaky, savage and with a brave and warrior temperament (Péllissier 2007, 368-369). East Timorese traditional society is described by the Portuguese authorities as xenophobic, brave and bellicose. This selfish and belligerent behaviour is opposed to the Portuguese authority, which the colonial administrator himself defines as "sincerely honest" ("*sinceramente honesta*", Pt.; 369). The Portuguese colonial administrators deliberately described the East Timorese society as inherently violent, without considering that the violent and antagonistic behaviour of the East Timorese chiefs was a reaction to the colonial rules imposed on them. The alleged dishonesty of the local East Timorese chiefs described by the Portuguese administrators was the justification for the violence that the colonial army moved against the local population.

As I mentioned in Chapter II, the Portuguese historian Ricardo Roque describes the interdependencies intercurrent between Portuguese colonial power and East Timorese warlike practices, such as headhunting: traditional headhunting was deployed by the Portuguese colonial power in order to assert its hegemony on the territory (2017). One may wonder if the current national narrative that deploys the East Timorese people as violent fighters actually originate within the Portuguese narrative of the East Timorese *liurais* as warriors. Dom Boaventura as well as the *aswain* in the pictures above are both represented in traditional elegant clothes and garments, asserting their power and status. However, I suggest that the observer might glimpse a certain proud in the way the warriors are both barefoot, which is one of the features that the West has always claimed to be a characteristic of 'savage' people.[209] It is not accidental that the feet in general and the fingers are emphasised in the statue of Dom Boaventura: the left foot seems to be moving, while the ankle is also adorned with a traditional bracelet. I suggest that the statues representing the 'traditional' warriors want to fiercely represent the 'backwardness', re-appropriated as an East Timorese characteristic. As I pointed out in the previous chapter (III), many of my interlocutors in Timor-Leste deployed a certain duplicity in exposing their traditions and customs as 'backwards', based on interpretations that Portuguese colonial actors gave of their cultural practices.

Finally, after the national calendar and some of the monuments related to the origin of the

[209] I do not refer only to colonial peoples, who were often described as inferior due to their physical appearance and for their customs, but also populations living in Europe, but considered 'outsiders', such as the Roma people, for example.

nation, I want to mention one last element celebrated by the national institutions, which are the *fatin abrigu* (T.). *Fatin abrigu* literally means shelter place, from the Portuguese word *abrigo* (shelter, refuge). A synonym of this expression is *subar fatin* (*T.*), which means hiding (*subar*) place (*fatin*). The *fatin abrigu* are isolated places scattered throughout the country where important guerrilla fighters hid during the Indonesian occupation. These are places which were used by the East Timorese Resistance during the Indonesian occupation which are nowadays being recognized as heritage and historical sites by the Timor-Leste government.

During the conversation I had with Mr. Feliciano, SEAC representative in Baukau (see Ch. III), he explained me that the *fatin abrigu* present in the district have not received governmental funds for their preservation yet. I often heard about these places, especially when I was in Venilale, but I never had the chance to visit one. The *Xefe de postu administrativu* of Venilale told me during one of our meetings that these places are considered historical national sites and he considered them as part of the national heritage. Therefore, they should be preserved. During a public debate in the municipal seat in Venilale that I attended,[210] one of the topics scheduled regarded precisely the *subar fatin* in the area. The discussion was about the public local spending priorities and among the issues on the agenda was the renovation of a *fatin abrigu* in the area. Some of the local representatives and participants during that meeting stressed the importance of safeguarding that place, because it could become a potential tourist site in the future. A similar discourse was proposed during the interview with Mr. Feliciano, who stressed the importance of the *fatin abrigu* for tourism purposes. I remember that during my stay in Venilale, sometimes during the night, the TV news referred to the inauguration of some *subar fatin* in different places throughout the country. These were presented as important events, in which the local population, as well as governmental institutional representatives such as the President of the Republic, participated.[211] During the interview with Mr. Feliciano, he declared that the expenses for the rehabilitation of the *subar fatin* were not considered in the national budget coming from the SEAC headquarters, despite the fact that – in his opinion – it was a primary concern for the preservation of the local historical heritage assets.

In short, in Venilale the *fatin abrigu* often emerged as a topic both in private conversations with the families I lived with and in more institutional gatherings, and I always had the impression that there were great expectations towards these sites for their tourism potential. Generally speaking, I

210 The debate was held on 5th April 2017 in Venilale. I assisted accompanied by my host Santana.

211 Here is the link to a news transmission of 2015, during which the then President of the Republic Taur Matan Ruak went to Manatuto to inaugurate a *fatin abrigu*, signing the commemorative plaque and reminding that the *subar fatin* should be preserved in order to enhance tourism all over the country http://tv.suara-timor-lorosae.com/abrigu-gerileirus-sira-tenki-sai-fatin-turismu/. Despite the fact that this is not the same piece of news I heard in Venilale during my fieldwork, it can still be significant for the reader since it shows clearly the discourse that the media and the national institutions and representatives shape regarding the Resistance *subar fatin*.

would suggest that the places connected to the Resistance fight and to the national independence movement are locally conceived as much more appealing than other local assets, such as the *uma lulik*, for example (see Chapter III). The *subar fatin* were a recurring topic every time I referred the heritage issue: the representatives of the local institutions I met, including some of the members of the police, but also other common citizens not directly involved within the institutions, presented the *fatin abrigu* as the most important and prominent assets to be preserved. Despite the local hopes, though, the representatives of the SEAC in Dili and Mr. Ribeiro at the KNTLU office never mentioned these projects. I assume the rehabilitation of these places might not be a priority for KNTLU and SEAC. However, the constant reference to *fatin abrigu* made me wonder if these places are such a central issue only within the Venilale context or also elsewhere in Timor-Leste and why.

Uncountable monuments are scattered throughout the country as material landmarks celebrating the brave and fearless achievements of the national liberation movement against the Indonesian occupation. *Fatin abrigu* are representative of this diffuse monumental presence too. More recently, when I was already back from my fieldwork, I attended a conference in Lisbon entitled *Memórias, Arquivos e Conhecimento*;[212] one of the speakers was Dr. Hugo Fernandes, Director of *Chega!*, the East Timorese national centre which aim is to preserve the memories of the recent past of the country, from decolonisation to national independence from Indonesian occupation.[213] During his presentation Dr. Fernandes illustrated the activities of *Chega!*, mentioning also that one of the aims of the organisation is mapping and preserving the sites of the memories related to the Indonesian occupation in Timor-Leste. He explained that since its inauguration in 2017, *Chega!* has been involved in the mapping of these sites, among which are the *fatin abrigu*, also with the collaboration of KNTLU. To date, the sites mapped and recognized are in Dili and in a few other regions, among which is Baukau. The project is newly born and in Dili, the *Chega!* staff offers educational tours for the UNTL students in the capital city, guiding them through the *fatin istóriku* (*T*., historical places) of the capital city.[214] The *fatin abrigu* issue show that the heritage-making process and tourism development are still projects in construction in Timor-Leste, hence the uneven and sometimes unclear advancement of these national programmes.

I suggest that *abrigu*, however, far from being elements related only to the recent East Timorese past, are related to more ancient times. When I was in Waikulale and I visited the *uma lulik*

212 The conference was held on 24th June 2019, at the Centro de Estudos Sociais in Lisbon https://ces.uc.pt/pt/agenda-noticias/agenda-de-eventos/2019/memorias-arquivos-e-conhecimento-20-anos-da-consulta/programa, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

213 *Cf*. http://www.centrochega.tl/organization. Neither this website, nor that of AMRT, has been available in recent months.

214 More information on the *Chega!* tours can be found on the Facebook page of the *Chega!* association https://www.facebook.com/481315372237314/posts/849744815394366?s=1386345408&sfns=xmo, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

belonging to my hosts' family, Júlio told me the importance that the place had for the *beiala sira*, the ancestors (T.). He showed me that the place was used as an *abrigu* as well as a military outpost, due to its strategic position. From Deroho, the place where the *uma lulik* have been built and where the ancestors are buried, one can see a large portion of the surroundings, from the Baukau town in the west to the Laga region towards the east. Júlio also added that the ancestors had to fight against incursions from the neighbourhood enemies, due to the strategic position of the place. In the SEAC and KNTLU report (see chapter III), there is a picture of an ancient *abrigu* (2017, 10), which the authors describe as originally used by the *beiala sira*. The report also mentions that it was probably considered *lulik* in the past, but it does not give any reference in relation to the current period. The reference to ancient *fatin abrigu* that I found in the SEAC and KNTLU report (2017), made me wonder whether *abrigu* are places which have a long history, rather than being only related to the recent East Timorese history. Were they considered important and even *lulik* by the East Timorese communities? Is it because of their ancient origin that nowadays they are celebrated and monumentalised as important sites of the national liberation? Similar to the *aswain* symbols, the *fatin abrigu* also seem to be ancient reminiscences, and not symbols that were created only in the aftermath of the national independence. Probably because of their socio-cultural importance, the current national narrative deploys these symbols as part of the national narrative, in which the remote and recent past seem to be blended.

To sum up this first part of the chapter, I explored the monumental landscape and the national calendar as *lieux de mémoire*, to give a first overview of the national narrative that these elements suggest. The heroes celebrated are also the foundational heroes of the nation. The *funu* narratives encompass the history of the country from the colonial era to the liberation of the East Timorese population. *Funu* (the war and violence), anti-colonialism (both towards Portugal and Indonesia), weapons and masculinity are the common elements of this narrative. In the next section I will focus on the national cemetery of Metinaro, another monumental symbol of the myth of the nation.

IV.2.1 National cemetery of Metinaro

Inaugurated in 2009, the Garden of Heroes (*Jardim dos Heróis*, Pt.) is located in Metinaro, (a small town one hour away from Dili), next to the headquarters of the F-FDTL, a fact that highlights, once more, the 'natural' hand-over from the FALINTIL guerrilla to the current national army.[215] It was under the 5th constitutional government chaired by Xanana Gusmão as prime minister (2007-2015) that the building of this pompous and gigantic 3-million-dollar project saw its outcome (cf. Feijó and Viegas

[215] I would like to point out the fact that the current national army acronym (F-FDTL) means FALINTIL-Forças da Defesa de Timor-Leste (Defence Timor-Leste Forces). There is a clear intention of giving continuity to the guerrilla FALINTIL within the current national army.

2016, 68). It hosts the remains of former guerrilla fighters, activists and political leaders and is located on a hill, with a breath-taking view of the northern Timor sea.

Figure 21 Jardim dos Heróis, in Metinaro[216]

As can be seen in the picture above, and as Rui Graça Feijó and Susana Matos Viegas have pertinently pointed out, this cemetery is conceived on the ideal of any other war cemetery: the squared symmetry of the graves impresses the visitor and the uniformity within the tombs suggests the communality of the combatants' lot, their equality among each other as well as the equal deference the visitants have to owe to the fallen (Feijó and Viegas 2016, 66). In addition, the spatial composition of the cemetery conveys the idea that the soldiers "are connected to one another through the sacrifice of national liberation, rather than genealogical connection or faith" (Grenfell 2012, 99). This cemetery has an impact on the visitor also because other gravesites in Timor-Leste, such as the cemetery of Santa Cruz in Dili (see below) are aesthetically as well as architectonically very different from the Garden of Heroes. In the cemetery of Santa Cruz in Dili and also in the public cemetery in Venilale, just to mention two sites, the spatial covering is generally chaotic and there is almost no space between the graves. In this kind of common graveyard, the colours and the materials used for each tomb are different, accentuating the individualised conception of the departed (Feijó and Viegas 2016, 669). In the Garden of Heroes, however, the colour of the tombs is uniform, and the graves all obey a similar pattern. In addition, the name of the place itself 'Garden of Heroes' provides an

[216] Source of the picture, https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DHj4LuHUMAEIRys.jpg, last accessed on 30.11.2020.

underlying message of peace, perhaps recalling the Garden of Eden. The fact that it is located on top of a hill provides an overview of the burials and a sort of panoptic gaze on the dead, once inside the cemetery.

The first time I entered an East Timorese cemetery was in 2013, and it was the Santa Cruz Cemetery in Dili – which is a paramount national *lieux de mémoire*, as I will explore presently. I wanted to visit the gravesite of Sebastião Gomes (more on this topic later in this chapter) and I remember I was overwhelmed by the number of gravesites, by the diversity of decorations and colours that each of them had. I was also extremely embarrassed because I did not know how to proceed inside the place, because there are no clear paths to follow: you have literally to walk on the graves if you want to get across the cemetery. In that instance as well as other times I visited civilian graveyards, the people I was with always encouraged me to follow them, reassuring me that stepping on the graves was not of great concern. Besides the large amount of flowers present on each grave, it is not uncommon to visit the deceased bringing them wine, cigarettes and food, especially for special commemorations – such as the Day of the Dead (as mentioned in Chapter I). The spatial organisation of the graves, as well as the tenderness that the living offer to their deceased, highlights the proximity between life and death.

Figure 22 Above, the Jardim dos Heróis cemetery in Metinaro; below, a portion of the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili[217]

[217] Sources of the pictures: https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DHj4LuEVYAICaOO.jpg and http://www.timorleste.tl/wp-content/uploads/DSC00356.jpg, both accessed on 30.11.2020.

The Garden of Heroes exemplifies the commemorative practices of the Timor-Leste state that prioritise those who had an active role within the national independence struggle, creating a selective memorialisation (Kent 2012). The state-driven structures

> have not been capable of absorbing the totality of the popular manifestations related to the final resting place of their deceased (…), significant strata of the population seem to have preferred more family-based, decentralized and spontaneous ways of paying tribute to their martyrs (Feijó and Viegas 2017, 106-107).

The point raised by Feijó and Viegas will be central for the latter analysis I will offer in the chapter regarding the reburial of the *saudozu* I attended. In addition, as Damian Grenfell points out, it is important to take into account that these private tributes to the dead do not necessarily contrast with the national frame of memorialisation, but they could be interpreted as processes through which the communities try to restore their stability (Grenfell 2012). The many ethnographic examples within the Lautém district given by Susana Viegas and Rui Graça Feijó confirm this thesis, presenting the involvement of both national government institutions and local kinship customary structures within the commemorative patterns (Feijó and Viegas 2016; 2017). The emergence of these bottom-up configurations, far from showing questioning of the nation or divergences between the local and the state-driven perspective, show the local desires of being recognised within the national framework (Grenfell 2012). These community-based articulations seem to address the state, in order to require more inclusivity within the republic.

Nevertheless, the Garden of Heroes prevails as the paramount monument celebrating the former guerrilla fighters. Apart from this majestic and expensive construction, the state has been building and financing ossuaries and memorials across the country in order to preserve the human remains of the fallen heroes. The local customary reburial practices are the main reasons why the state has decided to extend the presence of commemorative official places throughout the territory. In fact, the proximity between the deceased and their place of origin is considered a fundamental factor in order to give peace to the soul of the dead (Viegas and Feijó 2017). As Viegas and Feijó argue, with the birth of the nation, many people felt the need to give a proper (re)burial to their relatives and kin who had died during the Resistance period. In many circumstances, the reburials become matter of dispute between the state and the extended family of the *saudozu* (*T.*, beloved). The prerogative of the state, in fact, is to bury the human remains of the soldiers in the local ossuaries or, in the case of important guerrilla fighters, such as the case of Konis Santana described by Feijó and Viegas, in the Garden of Heroes cemetery. As the authors emphasize, there was no consensus about the reburial of Konis Santana: the relatives wanted the body to rest in his original village, while some of the representatives of the state suggested leaving the body where the veteran had died and been buried in 1998, in the Ermera district. In the end, after a long debate between the different actors involved, the former combatant's body was transferred in the Garden of Heroes, only after proper customary rituals were

conducted in his place of origin (Viegas and Feijó 2017, 105-106).

To sum up, the "territorialities of the fallen heroes" (Viegas and Feijó 2017) dotted throughout the country, show a plurality of configurations within the commemorative processes in Timor-Leste, both state-driven and community-based. They also attest to the different socio-political forces enacted in the memorial processes, forming and transforming social processes within the national discourse (Feijó and Viegas 2016). In the next subsection I will delineate another element connected to the national *lieux de mémoire*: I will discuss the potential or effective social exclusions by the state narrative that I delineate up to this point. Any national celebration configures the birth of the nation in official narratives aimed to celebrate certain aspects, excluding others. In the next subsection, by presenting the celebration of the old generations of the guerrilla fighters and the Portuguese language as part of the national identity, I will show the entanglements between this piece of narrative and the social exclusion of the younger generations by the political and administrative national arena.

IV.3 Young generations, language and representation

What emerged from the national narrative that I depicted in the previous section of the chapter is a celebration of the past generations who fought for the liberation of the country. As I discussed in Chapter I, the political scene in Timor-Leste is still dominated by the so-called *jerasaun tuan*, or old generation, and the handover to younger representatives seems to be quite difficult (Brinke 2018; Feijó 2015, 61-63). In this section I want to discuss the entanglements between the role of the young generations in post-independent Timor-Leste and their representation within the national framework, together with the choice of Portuguese as one of the two official languages of the country and its historical bonds with Catholicism.

As discussed in Chapter I, the Portuguese language is crucial in the definition of the nation, and this is intertwined with the Catholic presence throughout the territory. The current national narrative describes the Portuguese presence as having allowed the unification of the different kingdoms under the same jurisdiction, the same faith and the same language, leading to the creation of the East Timorese nation (Leach 2008, 145-146; Ruak 2001). The Catholic Church and missionaries used to administer the school system (Jones 2003), spreading both literacy and the Gospel. The Catholic Church was the social actor that translated the Bible into Tetun (Anderson 1993; Costa 2001), and also into other local languages (such as in Makasae, for example), allowing the use of the Tetun as a *lingua franca* throughout the country, including the rural areas and not only the urban centres. During many conversations I had with different priests, both East Timorese and Italian, they all stressed that before the Indonesian military occupation, priests and missionaries were engaged in the translation of the Bible into many local languages, such as for example Makasae, Mambae and Fataluku. Tetun has been used as a *lingua franca* since the Portuguese colonisation. However, I suggest that its symbolic

transformation into a national language is related to the Indonesian presence in the territory. The Catholic Church deliberately chose to offer the mass in Tetun and not in Bahasa Indonesia during the Indonesian military occupation, and hence this choice has been interpreted as an active means of resisting Indonesian integration (Budiardjo; Liong 1984, 119-124; Anderson 1993). Even nowadays the Church has a symbolic as well as a material power and status everywhere in the country, including Venilale – as I had the chance to emphasise in the previous chapters. From such a perspective, then, Catholicism as well as the Portuguese presence define the East Timorese identity as unique towards the neighbouring countries, especially towards Indonesia. As Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world, and the Indonesian territory of West Timor is mainly Protestant, Catholicism and the choice of Portuguese as a national language makes Timor-Leste a unique country within South East Asia. Timor-Leste, then, deserved to be an independent country due to its peculiar national identity. However, this kind of narrative is not considered inclusive by many East Timorese citizens. In order to better frame my argument, I suggest analysing the Santa Cruz massacre case and its memorialisation as a symbol of the birth of the East Timorese nation. I suggest that this tragic event became so emblematic internationally because of its entanglements between Catholicism and the use of the Portuguese language. However, it is also important to consider the ambiguities and frictions caused by its latter memorialisation, besides understanding the differences between what the event represented locally and how it has been interpreted internationally, specifically in Portugal.

On 20th October 1991, Sebastião Gomes died in front of the Motael Church, shot by the Indonesian army, because he was a pro-independence activist. In those days, there was much tension in Dili due to a special visit from the UN office for Human Rights and Torture. The Indonesian government had denied entrance to the country to some international journalists who were supposed to report the special meeting. After the Indonesian decision, the Portuguese delegation that was supposed to participate in the event cancelled their flight and this demoralised many East Timorese pro-independence activists. This caused many riots and fights in Dili, especially among the youths; in fact, such an international event could raise awareness of the injustices perpetrated by the Indonesian military forces on East Timorese citizens. The day of Sebastião's funeral, 12th November, there were many foreign journalists already present in Dili and many civilians also present for his funeral. Many young people wanted to pay homage to Sebastião. Some were present also to state their resentment towards the Indonesian army; others wanted to state their proximity to independentism. On the way from the Motael Church to the Santa Cruz cemetery, where the grave of Sebastião Gomes is located, pro-independence banners and East Timorese flags were raised – in a peaceful demonstration. Once the crowd arrived at the cemetery, a group of armed Indonesian policemen opened the fire on the crowd. The event was filmed by the journalist Christopher Wenner, better known as Max Stahl, whose

footage gave an international dimension to the event, renaming it *massacre de Santa Cruz* (Pt., Santa Cruz massacre).[218]

As Catherine Arthur points out, the event was the "turning point of the occupation", the "first real glimpse of the scale of the violence perpetrated by Indonesia and the point at which the cause of East Timorese self-determination was finally recognised" (Arthur 2019, 95). The vivid images of the footage have had an incredible resonance internationally. Describing the public demonstrations of solidarity that were held in Portugal for the East Timorese cause during the 1990s, the anthropologist Miguel Vale de Almeida explains how fundamental the images of the people praying in Portuguese in the cemetery of Santa Cruz were for the display of what the author calls the Portuguese "post-colonial catharsis" (Vale de Almeida 2001, 597). Luís Costa, one of the most preeminent East Timorese thinkers, author of the first Tetun-Portuguese dictionary wrote that it was through Camões' language (Portuguese) that the world acknowledged the history of the struggle, pain and suffering of the East Timorese resistance. According to Costa, listening to the young people in the Santa Cruz cemetery praying to Holy Mary in Portuguese made Portuguese people feel proud (Costa 2001, 60).[219] In Timor-Leste, Max Stahl, a fervent supporter of East Timorese independence as well as a defender of the use of Portuguese as the national language in Timor-Leste, would later be the founder and current director of the Centro Audiovisual Max-Stahl Timor-Leste (CAMSTL).[220] His audio-visual archive, located in front of AMRT, contains more than 2500 hours of audios and videos, principally recorded by Max Stahl during the 1990s and also after the independence of the country. CAMSTL is considered one of the most important archives and collections currently present in Timor-Leste by UNESCO, which in fact awarded it with the "memory of the world prize" in 2013.[221] *The Birth of a Nation: Turning Points* collection was listed in 2018 in the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register (UNESCO 2018, 23).

Despite the importance of the event and its international memorialisation, in Timor-Leste frictions exist between the governmental memorialisation of the event and unofficial and public

[218] See Max Stahl's video here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HkktBcIDzg&frags=pl%2Cwn, last accessed on 30.11.2020. Max Stahl, an English reporter, eventually managed to smuggle the footage outside of the country, with the help of a Portuguese priest (a private conversation I had with Max Stahl, later confirmed by the Portuguese priest, between April and May 2013). The video was then broadcast worldwide, focusing international attention on the Timor-Leste cause.

[219] I quote the original excerpt: "Foi através da língua de Camões que o mundo teve reconhecimento da história da luta, dor e sofrimento da resistência timorense, foi esta mesma língua que fez os corações portugueses sentirem orgulho quando ouviram os jovens no cemitério de Santa Cruz rezarem as Ave-Marias" (Costa 2001, 60).

[220] Audiovisual Max Stahl centre. For more info, visit https://timorarchives.wordpress.com/?s=camstl and the Facebook account of CAMSTL https://www.facebook.com/audiovisualarchivetimorleste/about/?ref=page_internal, both accessed on 30.11.2020.

[221] Source: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/memory-of-the-world/register/full-list-of-registered-heritage/registered-heritage-page-6/on-the-birth-of-a-nation-turning-points/.

celebrations of the event (Arthur 2019, 94-97; Kent 2015, 7-8). First of all, the East Timorese government has not prioritised the official recognition of the memory of the people died in the event yet. A monument dedicated to the Santa Cruz Massacre was erected only in 2013, despite the many requests made by the 12 November Committee to recognise and memorialise the people who died or disappeared in the tragic event in 1991 (Arthur 2019, 94-95). And even after its erection, because of the many contrasts between the representatives of the government and the members of the 12 November Committee, there has been no official inauguration of the monument yet (Kent 2015, 8). As Kent explains, the disputes arose because the members of the 12 November Committee were not consulted before the construction of the monument. The monument represents a frame of the Max Stahl's footage, in which one man is assisting another, shot and bleeding (see picture below). The two men represented by the monument, based on the Max Stahl's footage, are still alive. Lia Kent met them and found out that they were not consulted during the planning of the statue (8). They consider the state decision as non-inclusive, outrageous and disrespectful and one of them has repeatedly and formally asked to Xanana Gusmão to destroy the statue, but he never received an answer back (8).

Figure 23 On the left, a picture of the statue in front of the Motael Church: on the right, a frame from Max Stahl's footage.[222]

Even the plan to turn the Santa Cruz cemetery into a more monumental site was dropped because of disputes between the different subjects involved: the 12 November Committee, the government representatives and the representatives of civil society. In fact, the plan for the 'requalification' of the cemetery made by the government would impose the relocation of some of the graves and the civilians were against this proposal (Kent 2015, 11). So, until now, the cemetery has not undergone any structural change, even if the grave of Sebastião Gomes is always full of wreaths of flowers, candles, cards and other objects – as I had the chance to see in 2013 and in 2018. These private

[222] Sources of the pictures, https://ozoutback.com.au/Timor-Leste/dili/slides/30_20190918008.html and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HkktBcIDzg&frags=pl%2Cwn, both accessed on 30.11.2020.

displays of affections are testament, on the one hand, to the relation between the grave and the event of the 12 November 1991 and, on the other, the strong bond between the civil population and Sebastião, the "unofficial" hero of the East Timorese independence. According to Kent, these frictions reveal different processes of interpreting the past. If the state planning seems to "assign fixed meanings to past events" (Kent 2015, 11), the civilian initiatives challenge "who gets to define the narrative" itself (11) and question "whose experiences are included and excluded within it" (11), revealing problems within representation and misrepresentation.

Figure 24 Sebastião Gomes's grave, in the Santa Cruz Cemetery (author's picture)

I suggest including the memorialisation of the Santa Cruz massacre and the frictions between the unofficial and official memorialisation processes within a broader framework, already mentioned in this thesis (Chapter I), which is the lack of representation of young people within the political East Timorese national political arena. Angey Bexley and Nuno Rodrigues Tchailoro (2013) point out that, during the Indonesian military occupation, the so-called *jerasaun foun* (T., new generation) was central to the development of the resistance movement, as well as of the independentist movement. However, the authors stress that the youths were instrumentally used in the service of the fight against Indonesia, as well as "regimented and subordinate to the armed forces" (419). The hierarchical structure constituting the independentist fight, however, also continued in post-independence Timor-

Leste. We can spot the guerrilla's paramount position within the commemorative national landscape, as well as in the political and institutional roles that ex-guerrilla fighters continue to represent in contemporary Timor-Leste.

During my fieldwork, I had the chance to discuss some of the topics I presented in this section with many young East Timorese people. I stress that the majority of my interlocutors were all well-educated and all had had the chance to study abroad, mainly in anglophone countries (UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand). On the one hand, they rarely openly criticised the main political leaders (Xanana Gusmão, Mari Alkatiri, Taur Matan Ruak, to mention the most emblematic). On the other, though, my interlocutors often questioned many central governmental choices, such as the choice of Portuguese as the national language or the inference of the Catholic Church within governmental political activities. Many of my interlocutors interpreted the choice of Portuguese as a national language as a way to look back to colonialism, for example, a choice that does not fit with the practical needs of the young generations of Timor-Leste, within South East Asia. The old generation considers Portuguese as part of the historical national legacy; however, the knowledge of Portuguese is among the criteria to be hired within the governmental structure, NGOs and other national institutions. In a country where nearly the 5% of the population speaks Portuguese,[223] this linguistic criterion seems to willingly exclude the youngest from the institutional and political life of the country.

During a debate organised by the *Grupu Feminista Timor* in Dili (T., *Timor Feminist Group*), the topics debated were the interference of the Catholic Church with the governmental decisions regarding the implementation of laws regarding abortion and the use of medical devices against the spread of venereal diseases. A man stood up stating that abortion was not part of the East Timorese identity, even before the arrival of the Catholic Church; hence, the governmental decision to criminalise the practice. The young women leading the debate answered that even democracy and the Parliament were not part of the traditional East Timorese identity, however they were introduced in the country and turned Timor-Leste into an independent nation. I consider this answer particularly relevant, because it reveals and synthetises a common stance I observed in Dili among the youngest persons I had the chance to talk with. Their point was not crucifying the Portuguese colonial presence and the subsequent Catholic Church presence in the territory. Their aim was stressing the strategic use of the past and of the local authority of the Church and the past Portuguese colonisation in order to justify a certain social order and *status quo*, based on a highly hierarchical structure that does not give space for alternatives.

Michael Leach has pointed out that the young and highly literate generations "look for what they see as a more authentic post-colonial identity, looking primarily to its indigenous roots" (Leach

[223] See https://in.reuters.com/article/us-timor-language-idUSJAK30809020070422, last accessed 30.11.2020.

2008, 146). Many of my interlocutors considered traditional social practices, such as *barlake*, *fetosan umane* and other ritual traditional ceremonies as ways through which a supposedly 'real' national identity could arise. Although 'traditions' are sometimes portrayed as backwards, as I discussed throughout the chapters, many of my interlocutors belonging to the young generations of the country, reconfigured local beliefs and rituals as a sort of strategic identity, in which they felt represented.

I have discussed the current ambiguities emerging between official celebrations of the past and unofficial alternatives. The frictions informing the different perspectives are actually linked to a profound division between the old and the youngest generations – which I have also discussed in Chapter I. In the following and last section of the chapter, I will discuss the tensions between the national and local perspectives regarding the funeral commemorations of the guerrilla fighters.

IV.4 *Saudozu* Guterres reburial

On the morning of 7th October 2017, my host Alex invited me to go to a reburial ceremony of a *saudozu* (T., beloved), a veteran who died during the Indonesian military occupation, in 1978. Mr. Alex handed me the formal written invitation: a leaflet with a big picture of António Guterres Hauleky 'Wai', ex-FALINTIL member, with a big Timor-Leste flag unfurling behind his head. It was the first time I saw a formal invitation letter: usually these invitations are sent for important events, such as funerals and weddings, but also when important public meetings take place. I wondered where the relatives of the dead managed to get such a fine print. As far as I knew, there were no print services in Venilale. I then pointed out to Mr. Alex that the invitation stated clearly that he was the guest invited to the celebration: "Eis Admis. Posto Ad. Venilale" ("Former Venilale Mayor", T.) was handwritten on the first page of the leaflet. He giggled and answered "You can go. It could be good for your research. Just go and say that you are my foster child (*oan hakiak*, T.) and that I couldn't go because I feel sick". He added that he had already gone to the first funeral of António, in the year of his death in 1978 and then, later on, on the June of 2017, after the family managed to find his grave and bones in 2014 (*rate no ruin*, T.), and organised Antonio's second funeral. Mr. Alex added: "Today there is the tate ceremony (*serimónia Estadu*, T.) ... the National TV (RTTL) will even be there. It's important you go for your study".

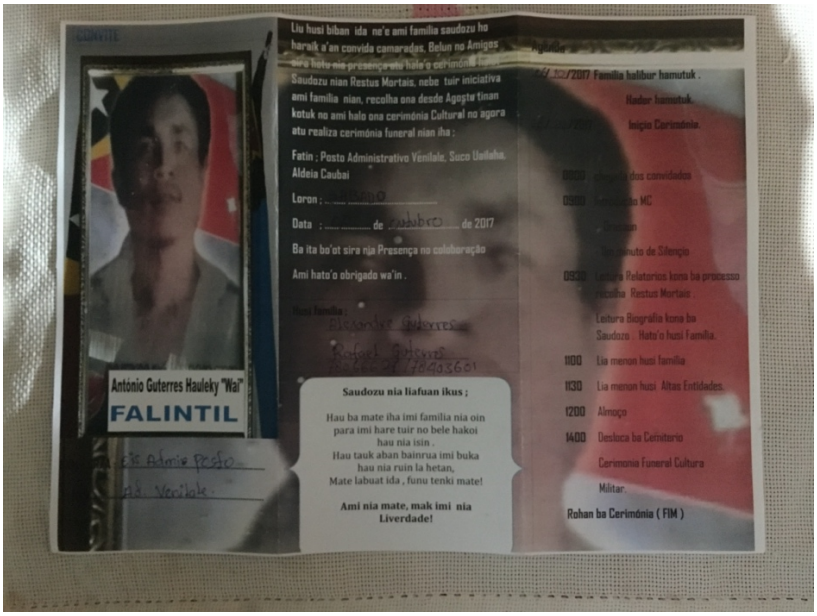

Figure 25 The invitation to António's Guterres reburial (author's picture)

Antonio and his family were from Kaubai, a small village 15 minutes by car from Alex's house. I was puzzled by the many funerals António had, and I was wondering about the reasons for the two ceremonies, after the finding of his mortal remains, in 2014. A first 'private' funeral in June 2017, that in the leaflet was indicated as '*kultural* ceremony' (*serimónia cultural*, T.) and then the state one, October 2017. I started to ask Alex a whole slew of questions, as often happened when something was not clear to me. He told me that António died in 1978, close to the Matebian Mount where the FALINTIL were hiding. During the Indonesian 'encirclement and annihilation' military campaign, the territory surrounding the Matebian Mount was in fact bombed (Taylor 2003, 166), and many civilians and FALINTIL soldiers were captured by the Indonesian armed Forces (ABRI, *Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia*, B.I.) in an attempt to come down from the mountains and go back to their original villages. António was among them and he was killed in an ambush, betrayed by a pro-Indonesian man, originally from Badoho, the bordering hamlet (*suku*, T.) of António's. The body was left in a bushy area close to Matebian and the corpse was then buried by some of the FALINTIL companions. The relatives did not know where the corpse was actually buried, but they decided to organise the funeral in any case, despite the absence of the body. My hosts were among the guests too.

Later, in 2004, two years after the Restoration of Independence, the close relatives of the deceased decided to look for António's remains, appealing for state funds made available for this purpose. Families who manage to find the mortal remains of their deceased relatives who used to be members of the Resistance, and who died in violent circumstances, can make a formal request and ask for public money to use to enable their relatives' reburial. Antonio's relatives found Antonio's remains in 2014, 11 years after the beginning of the search and 36 years after Antonio's death. The family then asked for compensation for their loss from the state, since the deceased was a FALINTIL member. The

negotiations between the relatives and the state took a long time, mostly because the government asked to bury the body in the closest Veterans' cemetery, which is located in Fatumaka, while the family wanted to keep the remains in a grave in the garden behind their house in Kaubai. In the end, the family got the better of it, so two different ceremonies were organized in 2017: the first and '*kultural*' one in June 2017, and the second one, the state ceremony, in October 2017. According to Alex, the reason for the 'delay' between the finding of Antonio's mortal remains in 2014 and the *kultural* funeral ceremony in 2017 was due precisely to the negotiations between Antonio's relatives and the state representatives over the issue of the place of the actual reburial of Antonio's remains.

In Timor-Leste, a funeral is not the last ceremony for a deceased: the last ritual that is held is called 'end of the mourning' (*kore metan*, T.) and usually many people are invited to this kind of ceremonies – as well as close relatives, also the extended family, the members belonging to the *fetosan-umane*, but also neighbours, friends and local authorities. During my stay in Waikulale, I was invited to two *kore metan* and I was surprised both times by the number of people present (300-500) and by the incredibly elegant and elaborate organization of the events.

Concerning the *saudozu* reburial wanted by the state, however, the number of the people present was different. I arrived at the event with Sr. Xico, the president of the Baukau municipality (*Presidente Autoridade Munisípiu Baukau*, T.) and Alex's friend, who kindly offered me a lift to Kaubai in his car. I sat among the audience, while Sr. Xico went on the stage with the other authorities. I thought we were early, since barely 30 people were present. We were actually the last ones to arrive, together with the RTTL cameramen, who arrived a few minutes after us, directly from Dili. The ceremony started as soon as the cameramen arrived: among the authorities, there was a presenter with a microphone, the mayor of Venilale, the Venilale chief of police, the delegate of the National Commission for the Collecting of the Human Remains (*Komisaun Recolla Restus Mortais*, T.), a delegate and representative of the National Army (FDTL, *Forsa Defeza Timor-Leste*, T.), a delegate from the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion and, finally, the mayor of Uailaha, the *suku* to which Kaubai belongs to (all of them can be seen in the picture below, in the order mentioned from left to right).

Figure 26 The authorities present at the *saudozu*'s reburial (author's picture).

The audience was divided into three sections: on the left, in front of the 'stage' with the authorities, the veterans of the area who were invited, a central area with civilians and common people, among whom I was seated, and finally, on the right, the family members. Behind the authorities, an open door led to a small, dark room, the funeral home where a simple altar with the coffin was set up. There were many flowers and candles surrounding it and, on the right of the altar, there was a giant picture of António, the same one on the leaflets. The funeral home was next to Antonio's relatives house (the kitchen of which is visible in the picture above).

The presenter announced the agenda of the event: a prayer, followed by a minute of silence, the reading of the process of the finding of the human remains and Antonio's biography. After this first introductory part, there was the part of the speeches: the first was a talk by the family, then each and every one of the authorities talked too. Once finished, we were invited to a lunch buffet at the back of the house of Antonio's family and, finally, the reburial ceremony, in the garden at the back of the house. Despite the well-structured organization of the event, and despite the presence of many authorities, including the national TV, the guests among the common people and local veterans were not many. Even the members of the family were in a small group (only 6 people). As I mentioned before, usually during the East Timorese funeral ceremonies there are several hundred people present. The lack of people at Antonio's funeral struck me and the lack of participation was also stressed during the speeches that were given by the authorities (see next subsection). I suggest that the state ceremony (*serimónia Estadu*, T.) organised for António was clearly not considered as meaningful as any other *kultural* ceremonies (*serimónia kultural*, T.) in terms of social shared significance. The *kore metan* organised the past June, though, as Mr. Alex confirmed me once I got back home, was incredibly

crowded (*rame*, T. and B.I). Given the huge participation of local and national authorities and important people in the event, I suggest that the neighbours and inhabitants of Kaubai may have felt intimidated by the massive presence of national institutional representatives. I mention this, bearing in mind a quite common refrain that I used to hear very often in Venilale: my interlocutors often defined themselves as '*ema kiik*' (T., small, unimportant people), compared to the '*ema boot*' (T.), someone important in terms of social status, economic as well as political power.

The lack of presence was remarked on by some of the local authorities' talks in a quite patronizing way, as I will stress in the next subsection. Most of the people, neighbours and friends, arrived only after lunch was finished, for the actual reburial (*hakoi*, T.) of Antonio's remains, but they were not present for the more official part, during which all the authorities gave their speeches. Even this aspect, I argue, has to be taken into consideration as a form of respect towards the family and the ceremony itself, rather than in terms of disrespect. As I have mentioned earlier, before I went to the reburial, Júlio told me that I could go as his foster child, handing me the letter: elaborate and elegant invitations were sent for this reburial to a quite short list of participants, mainly local veterans and authorities. Other people, like neighbours for example, did not come to the lunch, since they were not among those invited. The lunch was supposed to be offered to the people invited and for the family members. They were aware that formal invitations were sent, hence they did not appear at the ceremony. From what I could observe during my fieldwork, invitations were sent for *kultural* ceremonies too, not just to local authorities or people with a certain political or social status (local authorities, priests, etc.), but also to distant relatives. Close relatives, neighbours and friends usually did not receive any written invitation, but still they were supposed to be present, bring food and goods, according to *fetosan-umane* (discussed in Chapters I and II). Antonio's reburial ceremony was not conceived as a *kultural* event, but as a state function (*serimónia estadu*, T.) and hence I suggest common people did not feel comfortable attending it. However, a small yet significant crowd was there for the last goodbye to António (picture below). They were well dressed, and they gave their condolences to Antonio's relatives, showing their respect and reverence for the occasion. Antonio was a member of Kaubai and they paid their respects to Antonio and his living relatives.

I consider it significant to take some of the speeches that were given into consideration, since I argue they are a clear representation of the frictions between the official commemorative discourse made by the state and the local ways of conceiving death. The hierarchy of the authorities also shows that the boundaries between what is considered official and unofficial are not so neat, as the discourses of the local authorities show.

Figure 27 Some of the soldiers present at the ceremony of António Guterres, standing outside the funeral home where Antonio's coffin was placed.

Figure 28 A Venilale police officer and a soldier carrying the small coffin out of the funeral home, heading towards Antonio's family's garden.

Figure 29 The crowd present at Antonio's reburial ceremony. On the left, the FRETILIN flag, over Antonio's grave, placed in his family's garden.

Figure 30 Antonio's grave, full of petals of bougainvillea flowers and with the FRETILIN flag fluttering on top of it, in the garden on the back of Antonio's relatives' house.

IV.4.1 The speeches

The first speech was by one of the family of the deceased. A young man stood up, with his head bowed revealing his uneasiness in that role. He took the microphone and started to read from a crumpled paper, his voice cracking and hands shaking. He firstly thanked all the authorities, and the guests present, in order of importance – and this order was repeated by all the orators in the same way. He opened his speech recalling that, despite the grief the family has lived during all those years, they all know that Antonio died for a greater cause: the independence of the country (*ukun rasik aan*, T.). The loss and suffering, hence, were not in vain. He then mentioned in detail how much money the state

gave to the family, both for the search of Antonio's remains, and for the public ceremony that we were attending:[224] "since this is public money", he said, "it is a matter of public record".

This brief discourse was followed by a detailed biography of Antonio, which was read by a young girl, a delegate from the group of the 'Representatives of the Young People of Venilale'. She was used to speaking in public, and she was prepared to read that specific speech too. The paper she read was drafted by the National Commission for the Collecting of the Human Remains, not by the family members. António was born in 1959 in Uailaha, firstborn of 8 siblings. All of his brothers had died between 1975 and 1978 when they were hiding in the support bases (*baze de apoiu*, T.) organized by FRETILIN in the mountainous regions of the Matebian area. Since the Indonesian invasion (1975), António, who was then 16, decided to be a FALINTIL member. The speech described him as a fearless soldier (*aten brani*, T.), who despite being captured by the Indonesian military forces between 1975 and 1976, managed to escape, bringing with him a G3 rifle that he then handed over to his FALINTIL superiors, revealing – according to the speech – his nationalistic and patriotic spirit (*espíritu nasionalismu ho patriotismu*, T.). In 1978, when the military support bases were bombed by the Indonesian military forces, the population had to surrender to the enemy, so António and his family went back home but, unfortunately, a group of pro-Indonesian *preman* (B.I)[225] originally from Badoho set an ambush in the Wuaibua area, capturing and finally killing António. The speech not only described the 19-year-old as an incredibly courageous man, but it also defined him as a martyr, since António was not afraid to die. "I can't choose a different path. Rather, only one is the path I choose. I'm ready to live or die" ("*hau la iha dalan seluk neebe atu escolha. Maibee so dalan uniku ida deit maka hanesan. Mate ka moris, hau prontu simu*", T.), was the sentence that apparently António stated to his family while they were coming down from the mountains.[226] Finally, in 2002, with the Restoration of Independence, the state could finally give attention (*tau matan*, T.) to the sacrifice (*sakrifísiu*, T.) of all the people involved in the independence fight and decided to compensate all the families whose members helped the FALINTIL Resistance, among which was Antonio's. After this reading, during which the female members of the family were crying, especially when the girl was recounting the moments before Antonio's death, the presenter took the microphone, giving the floor to the mayor of Uailaha.

[224] The total amount was around 10,000$.

[225] *Preman* is a term referring to borderline-criminal marginal youths that during the Suharto regime used to be violent and used extortion against the common population, often being the illegal arm of the army and police. The terms derived from the Dutch *vrijman*, freed plantations slaves (Loren 1998, 48-51). For a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, affecting all the Provinces of Indonesia during the Suharto's regime and not just Timor-Leste, I suggest the documentary *The Act of Killing*, by Joshua Oppenheimer, 2012.

[226] *Mate ka moris, hau pronto simu* (Death or life, I am prepared for it), it is a common refrain that the FRETILIN members used to say during the 24 years of Resistance against Indonesia. We can even read this slogan on the walls of AMRT.

I had the feeling the *Xefe de Suku* felt responsible for the success of the event and he also felt obliged to justify the lack of presence at the ceremony. He thanked everyone for being there, welcoming everyone in the *suku*, as he was the master of the house. He stated that the ceremony as well as the enterprise of searching for Antonio's remains were strongly desired by the family (*familia rasik*, T.), excluding the possibility that they could do all this just for the public money. He then added that the mortal remains were found more than 2 years earlier and that a *kultural* ceremony had already been celebrated, following the *lisan* (B.I and T.) of their family. Why then, he asked, had so much time passed between the *kultural* and the state ceremony? He felt obliged to justify this delay (*naruk hela*, T.) between the two funerals, by saying that the reason was *kultura*, adding that in his opinion *kultura* had to be improved a little (*hadia oituan*, T). Antonio's relatives decided to bury the *saudozu*'s mortal remains in their garden, following the customary traditions, instead of handing Antonio's mortal remains to the state and having him buried in the Fatumaka cemetery and ossuary. The mayor also added that this was the first state ceremony for a national martyr organized in Uailaha and was a novelty for everyone. He hoped that in the future, other Uailaha veterans would be buried in the Fatumaka state cemetery. Despite the mayor's goal being to justify the family wish to bury Antonio close to their house, however, his words actually made appear *kultura* and traditions appear as aspects that need to be fixed to fit into the nation-state rationale better.

The mayor then indicated with his arms the veterans and the civil party present, stressing that the family did invite all the guests they were supposed to, but that some of the guests unfortunately could not be present (but that they had phoned to notify their absence to the family). All the local authorities were informed of this state ceremony "because this is an official ceremony: simple, yet official" ("*maske simples, maibee ofisial*", T.). He then informed people about the lunch, and, indicating the roof above our heads while looking towards the authorities, said that the gazebo and tents hosting us took around a month to be built, and both the family members and the fellow villagers helped in the construction, so he thanked everyone committed in the job. He concluded by stating that the ceremony was not a family business, but it was public – since it was supported by the state. Finally, through a long and articulated metaphor, he stated that António's blood had fallen, as if it was a necessary sacrifice for the freedom of the country itself. As Antonio's grandfather was among the founders (*hari'i*, T.) the *suku* of Uailaha, so his grandson António died for the birth of the East Timorese nation.

The next speaker was the Representative of the National Commission for the Collecting of the Human Remains. He opened his speech by stating that despite the fact that the Commission pushed the family very hard to hand over the body of the deceased to the state, the family have never acceded the request. He justified the family's insistence by saying, "I understand that *kultura* did not allow the handover to the state. Never mind. This is also the first time that this happens here in Uailaha, so that's

fine" ("*baseia ba kultura familia dehan katak la bele. La buat ida, primeira ves mak akontese iha suku Uaila'ha, maibee la buat ida*", T.). He then added that the law should be improved and that the state should give more recognition to these deaths, and more money should be given to the families, so the handover would be easier. Was he implying that the family would have left Antonio's remains to the state if they received more money? I would suggest that the words of the Representative of the National Commission for the Collecting of the Human Remains can help understand the purposes and expectations regarding the event itself. If the goal of the event was the celebration of the memory of a hero of the nation, why then was the custody of Antonio's human remains so important?

This speech was followed by that of the FDTL captain; this was the longest one and when all the previous speeches were given, he could not keep still on his chair, as if he wanted to reply to every single sentence that was previously pronounced. I was ready for a very long discourse, since he was representing the authority of the army, which is considered the prosecution of the FALINTIL armed Resistance. He opened his contribution by pointing out that some of the authorities had arrived late and this was incredibly disrespectful towards him – who had woken up at 4 AM to get to Uailaha on time – and all the other guests. He then added that, although he did not know personally the martyr, this did not mean he could not understand the *saudozu*'s behaviour ("*maske hau koalia dook husi ita nia saudozu nia mate, maibee nee laos signifika hau dook husi saudozu nia hahalok*", T.). "We are here to remember a martyr of the nation, who died for each and every one of the guests", continuing in a rather patronizing way that he was not happy with the poor presence at the event. "You have no love, you have no memory nor conscience", he stated to the absent Venilale veterans and Uailaha citizens ("*imi ha iha domin, imi la iha hanoin, imi la iha konsiensia*", T.). He persevered with this tone and attitude throughout his speech, stating that the veterans, in particular, were liars (*bosokteen*, T.), since they had received the invitations months before, but did not appear at the ceremony. "Once one becomes a veteran, then his attitude has to change too", adding commonplace opinions, such as the fact that the young generations have no responsibilities because they replicate their fathers' attitude and behaviour. In the final section of his speech, he justified the choice of the family to keep the martyr's body with them, by stating that flowers and candles should always be present on a grave and that the government should provide more money, so they would be able to visit the state cemetery of Fatumaka on a daily basis (*halimar iha rate*, T.).[227]

The underlying topic of all the speeches that were given was the ownership of the *saudozu*'s body. The family did not even mention the issue, aware of the stir that it could have created. Instead, all the other authorities mentioned the issue, and in some cases the reburial place of the *saudozu*'s

[227] The distance between Fatumaka and Uailaha is approximately 20 km; the road is currently quite bumpy, and it takes around 40 minutes to get from one place to the other, by car or motorbike.

body was the central topic of the speech. The mayor, for example, was the first one to mention the issue, justifying the decision as connected to the importance that *kultura* has in Uailaha. In this way, though, instead of reconfiguring the reburial as part of the local and social identity, the mayor implicitly denigrated the family's attitude, as part of a cultural heritage that should be left aside in order to give space to the progressive state's attitude and decisions and supported by the national laws. Ironically, the speech that justified the decision to bury the martyr in the house's backyard and not in the local veteran's cemetery, instead of celebrating the local culture and traditions connected to the funerary ceremonies, declared that *kultura* must be fixed and give way to the state's claims. In a way, the speech given by the Representative of the National Commission for the Collecting of the Human Remains can also be interpreted in a similar way. He assumed that giving more public money to the family, could be a way to convince the relatives to give the *saudozu*'s body to the state. The family of the *saudozu* did accept the money from the state, since they recognise Antonio's role in the national independence. They did not question the legitimacy of the state; rather, their claim is something different. They did not accept the depersonalisation of their deceased within the national and official narrative. However, the speeches I presented compared the state with *kultura* and local burial customs, indirectly accusing the family of acting against the state's purposes. For his relatives, though, António, before being a martyr of the country, is and will always remain a member of his family, of his House (*uma fukun*) and for these reasons he needs to be buried in the place where he belongs, his original village.

The Kaubai's reburial ceremony and the frictions and negotiations implied, recall the contemporary Vietnamese commemorative practices discussed by Kwon:

> in the magical landscape of the ancestral rite, the spirits of fallen soldiers (...) join the crowd and become part of the community of descendants, living or dead, who together commemorate the truly important heroes of the place—the legendary ancestors who planted the seed of life in the village (...). The transformation of war heroes from passive objects of commemoration to active participants in local memory was an effect of bringing the war memorial to the domain of kinship. The ghosts of war heroes may join the domain of ancestors (2006, 119).

I suggest that in Timor-Leste similar dynamics interact. The fact of Antonio being a martyr fallen for the country adds importance and pride to the *uma fukun* and to the village. He became part of the local and national memory, instead of being just one among the many national heroes in the Fatumaka cemetery, where no kin bonds are elicited. I hence suggest that instead of considering the *saudozu*'s family decision to bury their relative in the domestic space as an open conflict towards the state's decisions, their decision should be interpreted as a negotiation between the local customary burial practices and the state's recognition of António as a veteran. However, it is true that this negotiation also implies recognising that *kultura* and tradition precede state and national decisions, hence the clash between the authority given by the state and that implied in local customs.

Conclusion

In this last chapter I discussed the ambiguities and frictions existing between official and state means of memorialising the recent East Timorese past and other, unofficial and alternative ways of remembering the tragedy endured by the East Timorese population. The national narrative celebrates the guerrilla fighters as the heroes of the nation, creating a hierarchy of importance which sanctions who is worth being remembered and who is not, excluding many actors by the official narrative of the birth of the nation – among which are women and young people. I analysed local monuments, museums, cemeteries and public holidays interpreting them as *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989), mental and material places that the national narrative openly deploys as core symbols of the collective remembrance. Focusing on an official reburial ceremony I attended during my fieldwork in the Venilale subregion, I argued that the rural communities in Venilale deployed *lisan* in order to oppose their precedence to the hegemonic ones represented by the state. As discussed in Chapter II and III, precedence, authority and power are connected in Timor-Leste, and hence asserting precedence means asserting power and authority too. In addition, death and ancestors represent fundamental symbols within the East Timorese culture, hence the decision of the *saudozu*'s family to keep the mortal remains of António with them has to be interpreted through different lenses. On the one hand, locally geographical and spatial origins are considered fundamental; on the other hand, António, besides being a member of his *uma fukun*, was also a veteran, a role that provides prestige to the family and village which he belonged to. According to Angie Bexley and Maj Nygaard-Christensen's argument, the East Timorese nation-building process should be understood as a negotiation between different actors and perspectives (2013, 403). Lia Kent pointed out that local dissatisfaction regarding the official commemorative discourses is rarely articulated in open and loud protests and conflicts among different social actors, but rather deployed as "silent dissent" (Kent 2015, 7). Similarly, I suggest that the choice of the veteran's family not to bury the *saudozu*'s body in the national cemetery, as well as the critiques exposed by my interlocutors in Dili regarding the official and governmental decisions, can be understood as a form of silent – yet powerful – dissent.

Conclusion

The aim of my research was to explore the East Timorese heritage-making process, pointing out the ambivalences and the tensions inherent in this process. The analytical tools offered by the theoretical framework of the Critical Heritage Studies helped me in reconfiguring heritage as a set of active practices and discursive processes that turns cultural practices and objects into heritage in the present (Harvey 2001; Harrison 2013; Smith 2006). In post-colonial contexts, such as in Timor-Leste, the coexistence of different cosmologies and worldviews raises questions towards the so-called international AHD and its way of defining cultural and natural heritage, as well as tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The context of Venilale has helped me to question the international AHD. More specifically, local understandings of *rikusoin* have allowed me to overcome the dichotomic tensions between natural and cultural and tangible and intangible cultural heritage. However, despite the central role that the Critical Heritage Studies have had in questioning the very paramount ideals within the AHD, such as monumentality, the centrality of tangibility and the dichotomic division between the natural and the cultural, as well as tangible and intangible cultural heritage, I also stressed the limits of this conceptual framework. In fact, the multi-sited ethnography I conducted between the rural areas of Venilale and the urban contexts of Dili and Baukau, allowed me to question the division between AHD and unofficial perspectives on heritage, as suggested by Smith (2006). Within the context of Venilale, I analyse both the tensions within the institutional level and the ones embedded at the grassroots level.

On the one hand, it is undeniably true that the documents published by SEAC and KNTLU, as well as the policies developed by the national East Timorese government do present some of the same problematic assumptions questioned within the international AHD by the Critical Heritage Studies scholars. And the presence of the international AHD bias within national policies and documents is a matter of concern for different scholars working on heritage-making processes throughout South and South East Asia (see Byrne 2014; Prabha Ray 2019; Winter and Daly 2012). My suggestion to translate heritage as *rikusoin* has to be understood from this perspective: the practice of preserving valuable things may exist as a universal and transcultural dynamic; however, the different ways in which it is conceived as well as its diverse contents, must be acknowledged. On the other hand, in this thesis I highlight the ambiguities between the official heritage-making process and everyday cultural practices in Timor-Leste, by analysing the political and power relations underlying the so-called AHD and local power dynamics. By focusing on the many actors involved in the heritage-making process and questioning the very idea of community as a unitary and peaceful entity, I have emphasised the limits of considering the AHD in an exclusive opposition to grassroot dynamics. Instead, I have tried to highlight the interactions between the institutional discursive practices and local dynamics. The thesis

focuses on the intersections of the normative and non-normative discursive practices regarding heritage, taking into consideration the ambivalent dynamics existing among the actors involved: SEAC and KNTLU's representatives and the local communities and *lia nain* within Venilale. The national policies regarding the safeguarding of heritage have taken distinctive configurations throughout Timor-Leste. Particularly in the Baukau region and in the Venilale sub-region, the national cultural policies seem to be at a quite embryonic stage, despite the fact that local administrations consider tourism as an important aspect for the territory that needs to be urgently developed. I had the privilege of observing a context in which the heritage-making process was still in the making, and I hope to be able to witness future developments as well, both at a national and local level, in Venilale and elsewhere. I suggest that the distance and the problematic relation between the Venilale (and Baukau) and Dili identified throughout the chapters, could be potentially be applied to other contexts in Timor-Leste.

I have discussed the connections between the current East Timorese national heritage-making processes and former colonial policies imposed on the territory. This presents just a first attempt and further investigations are needed. For future research, I would like to broaden my research to examine the heritage-making policies developed during the Indonesian military occupation and the Indonesian governmental perspective towards local traditions and beliefs. Another interesting topic that unfortunately I did not have the chance to investigate is the presence of *uma lulik kalen* within the Venilale subregion. I suggest that it would be interesting to investigate the reasons behind the choice of building potent houses with 'modern' materials, as well as trying to understand the ways in which the living community negotiates the decisions related to the materials used with the ancestral presences and agencies.

Another topic that I would like to expand in the future concerns gender issues and social inclusion related to heritage, which I mentioned in Chapter II. I would like to focus on the clashes between international human rights, local traditions and the social role of women, and try and understand how and if heritage can help develop more inclusive gender and social dynamics within society. Similarly, I suggest that investigating the ways in which the young generations cope with traditions and relate to heritage could open interesting paths of investigation: looking at how the young generations conceive heritage could be a potential resource of social inclusion too. From this perspective, I consider the film collective Malkriadu Cinema a fascinating topic of inquiry. This collective proposes a quite unusual perspective on both trivial and important aspects of the East Timorese cultural reality, punctuated by pungent irony and sarcasm (see, for example, the short-film *Hamrok Ba Ran*, T., bloodthirsty; available on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpqWF9O5_7s, last accessed on 20.12.2020). Their first film *Ema Nudar Umanu* (see the trailer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RIjvqGkQWU, last accessed

on 20.12.2020) has been presented in various film festivals throughout South East Asia in recent years. It is the story of the dream of a dead woman recounted to a man born from a duck's egg; while in *Hamrok ba Ran*, a thirsty yet gentle vampire wonders the streets of Dili by night, giving advice to whoever he meets, with the aim of appeasing his thirst.

As mentioned throughout the chapters, in Dili I was in contact with the *Grupu Feminista* and with other collectives of young East Timorese, involved in the promotion of cultural events. On 10th and 11th November 2017, for example, the Finadu Festival (FinFest) took place in Dili, a food festival inspired by the East Timorese *finadu*. During the event there were local food sellers; local restaurants run by young East Timorese entrepreneurs, proposing local East Timorese food and recipes; traditional rituals and prayers (*hamulak*, T.) turned into artistic performances. It was one of the many attempts of the young urban generations to interpret traditional rituals and ceremonies and turn them into an event addressed to tourists and expats living in Dili. It was also a way through which the organisers attempted to shorten the distance between the rural areas and the capital: the products sold were cultivated in distant and rural areas of the country; the recipes proposed were handed down by the *beiala sira*, in the *foho* area. Turning 'traditional' rituals and *hamulak* into a performance was a way through which deepen the understanding of far-away areas and practices that usually tourists and expats do not know. If on the one hand the commodification of local traditions and products was quite evident, on the other, I suggest these kinds of events reveal the ways in which young people try to use and appropriate the traditions of their own Houses, regions and *lisan* and to turn them into contemporary national cultural events.

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Chronology

The information of this section was taken by the AMRT website chronology section. Unfortunately, AMRT website has not been available in the past months.

1974

25 April 1974
Military coup puts an end to the dictatorship in Portugal.

11 May 1974
Birth of UDT Party (Timorese Democratic Union).

13 May 1974
The Governor of Timor establishes the Commission for the self-determination of Timor.

20 May 1974
Creation of ASDT (Timorese Social Democratic Association), which on 11 September became FRETILIN (Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor).

27 May 1974
Creation of APODETI (Democratic People's Association of Timor).

27 July 1974
Publication of Law 7/74, which defines the modalities of decolonisation processes.

03 August 1974
Portugal submits a memorandum to the UN affirming its obligations under Chapter XI of the United Nations Charter.

September 1974
The Australian Prime Minister meets with General Soeharto and publicly expresses his support for Timor-Leste's integration into Indonesia.

16 October 1974
An Indonesian delegation, led by General Muertopo, visits Portugal.

1975

20 January 1975
UDT and FRETILIN are working together for a process of autonomy that will ensure, within 5 to 10 years, the independence of Timor-Leste.

09 March 1975
Delegations from Portugal and Indonesia meet in London to discuss Timor-Leste.

07 May 1975
The Timor-Leste Decolonisation Commission discusses with the Timorese Parties the application of the Timor-Leste Decolonisation Law.

20 May 1975

FRETILIN demonstration in Dili on the occasion of the first anniversary of its creation.

17 July 1975
Promulgation of Law No. 7/75, which defines the process of decolonisation of Timor.

August 1975
Serious incidents with Indonesia on the border of the enclave of Oecusse.

10-11 August 1975
UDT launches an armed coup to seize power.

20 August 1975
FRETILIN's counter-coupe, which takes control of the situation in most of the territory. The FALINTIL (Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste), the armed arm of FRETILIN, was born.

26 August 1975
The Portuguese Administration leaves Dili for Ataúro.

September 1975
FRETILIN controls the whole territory. A few thousand Timorese seek refuge on the western side of the island.

October 1975
Indonesian forces are intervening in northwest Timor, occupying border areas and launching land, air and naval operations.

28 November 1975
FRETILIN declares the unilateral independence of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (RDTL).

29 November 1975
Portugal does not recognise the unilateral declaration of independence or the integration in Indonesia advocated by some parties.

30 November 1975
Representatives of UDT, APODETI (Timorese Democratic People's Association), KOTA (Klibur Oan Timor Aswain) and the Labour Party sign, under Indonesian control, a "Proclamation of Integration" or "Balibo Declaration", in which they advocate the integration of Timor-Leste into the Republic of Indonesia, calling for "immediate measures to protect the lives of those who now consider themselves to be part of the Indonesian People living under the terror and fascist practices of Fretilin consented to by the Government of Portugal".

07 December 1975
Indonesian air, naval and land forces launch "Operation Komodo" to invade Timor-Leste.

07 December 1975
Portugal denounces the invasion of Timor-Leste and cuts off diplomatic relations with Indonesia.

07 December 1975
Resistance in and around Dili. Mass murders by invaders and widespread flight of people to the mountains.

08 December 1975
The Portuguese Administration leaves the territory.

12 December 1975
UN General Assembly Resolution 3485 condemning Indonesian military intervention in East Timor.

17 December 1975
The invading Indonesian troops create a puppet government ("Interim Government") in Dili.

22 December 1975
UN Security Council Resolution 384 condemning the invasion of Timor-Leste and calling for the immediate withdrawal of the invading forces is voted unanimously.

1976

11 March 1976
FRETILIN begins broadcasting "Radio Maubere", the only channel of communication with the outside world.

15 May to 2 June 1976
1st plenary session of the FRETILIN CC (Central Committee) in Soibada.

17 July 1976
The Republic of Indonesia publishes Law 7/76, which integrates Timor-Leste as the 27th Province.

08 March to 20 May 1977
The FRETILIN High Council meets for the first time in the mountains (Laline) and approves the principle of "prolonged popular war based on their own forces".

1977

August 1977
FALINTIL advises the civilian population to return to the towns and cities and to submit to the Indonesian administration.

September 1977
Beginning of the "encirclement and annihilation" operation (1st phase).

14 September 1977
The Permanent Council of the FRETILIN Central Committee expels Mr Xavier do Amaral, hitherto President of FRETILIN and RDTL, "for a high treason crime to the Fatherland".

1978

May to June 1978
2nd phase of the "encirclement and annihilation" operation.

September 1978
3rd phase of the "siege and annihilation" operation. Siege of Matebian.

22 November 1978
Indonesian forces control Matebian. Only five Resistance bases survived the intense military attacks.

Xanana Gusmão, Matan Ruak, Mau Hodu and other resistance fighters leave Matebian.

12 December 1978
Maubere Radio stops broadcasting.

31 December 1978
Nicolau Lobato, leader of the Resistance and president of FRETILIN, is killed in combat in Mindelo/Turiscai.

1979

July 1979
The Indonesian census shows that more than a quarter of the population died from war and famine. The Catholic Church estimates that more than one third of the Timorese have disappeared.

1980

May 1980
Xanana Gusmão contacts the civilian population and the resistance fighters in the Centre area.

1981

01-08 March 1981
FRETILIN National Conference. The CRRN (Revolutionary Council of National Resistance) is created and Kai Rala Xanana Gusmão is chosen as Commander in Chief of FALINTIL.

07 April 1981
The Catholic Church approves the use of Tetum as a liturgical language.

May to September 1981
Operation "Kikis" or "Pay Betis": tens of thousands of Timorese are used as human shields by the occupying forces to attack the guerrillas in the mountains.

13 October 1981
In the procession in honour of Na Sr.a de Fátima, in Dili, Bishop Martinho da Costa Lopes, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Dili, denounced the massacres committed by the occupying forces, and was ordered to withdraw from Dili.

19 November 1981
D. Martinho Lopes is received by Soeharto together with the Indonesian Bishops' Conference and denounces the atrocities of the Indonesian army in Timor.

1982

September 1982
Meeting of D. Martinho Lopes with Xanana Gusmão in Mehara.

23 November 1982
By only 4 votes difference, the UN General Assembly adopts Resolution 37/30, which "asks the Secretary General to initiate consultations with all parties directly concerned". It is within this framework that, seventeen years later, on 5 May 1999, the New York Agreement for a referendum on self-determination will be established.

1983

20 March 1983
Xanana Gusmão, National Political Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief of FALINTIL, is in Buburake, Viqueque, with the commander of the Indonesian troops of Timor-Leste, Colonel Purwanto, and a cease-fire is agreed. He later meets the governor of Timor, Mário Carrascalão, in Lariguto and later in Kaikoli, Venilale. He also receives the Salesian priest Locatelli at Gattot Camp.
10 May 1983
Xanana Gusmão, in a press release, proposes talks between Portugal, Indonesia, Australia and FRETILIN, and FRETILIN with other nationalist forces in Timor.

1984

April 1984
Xanana Gusmão declares the ideological independence of FRETILIN and reshapes the structure of armed struggle.

1985

April 1985
The Indonesian government imposed "birth control" in East Timor, with support from the World Bank and the Ford Foundation.

February to March 1985
Re-establishment of the connection between the leader of the Resistance, Xanana Gusmão, and the Heads of the PALOP nations (Portuguese-speaking African countries) and to the UN Secretary General, denouncing the atrocities in Timor-Leste and calling for the intervention of the International Community.

1988

June 1988
Mário Carrascalão, as governor of Timor-Leste, proposes to Soeharto to open Timor to the outside.

20th June 1988
Creation in Indonesia of RENETIL (Resistência Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor-Leste), under the direct responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief of FALINTIL, Xanana Gusmão.

31 December 1988
Creation of the CNRM (National Council of Maubere Resistance). This structure consisted of a President, a post held by Xanana Gusmão, a Secretary of the FRETILIN Steering Committee, in the person of Ma'Hudo, and a Deputy Secretary, held by Ma'Huno.

1989

06 February 1989
D. Ximenes Belo writes to the UN Secretary General requesting a referendum in Timor-Leste.

09 May 1989
Discussions on the visit of the Portuguese parliamentary delegation to New York, under the auspices of the UN, began.

12 October 1989
Pope John Paul II visits Dili accompanied by journalists from all over the world.
At the end of the Mass, young Timorese demonstrated in favour of independence and were arrested. It is the first of many demonstrations organised by clandestine networks.

1991

12 November 1991
Santa Cruz's massacre.

1992

20 November 1992
Xanana Gusmão, President of the CNRM and Commander of FALINTIL, is arrested in Dili. The direction of the struggle is taken by Ma'Huno.

1993

01 February 1993
The trial of Xanana Gusmão begins at the Court of Dili.

September 1993
The various sectors of the Resistance accept the direction of Konis Santana. Matan Ruak takes military command.

1996

11 October 1996
Announcement of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to D. Ximenes Belo and José Ramos-Horta.

15 October 1996
Inauguration of the statue of Christ the King in Dili Bay with the presence of Soeharto.

10 December 1996
Award of the Nobel Peace Prize to D. Ximenes Belo and José Ramos-Horta.

1997

15 July 1997
Nelson Mandela dines with Xanana in the guest house of the Indonesian Presidency and asks for his release to Soeharto.

September 1997
Economic and financial crisis in Indonesia. The value of Rupee in January 1998 is 1/7 of its value in September 1997.

1998

21 May 1998
Contested internally and externally, Soeharto resigns as President and is replaced by the Vice-President, Yusuf Habibie.

1999

25 January 1999
Yusuf Habibie makes the first public reference to the possibility of Timor-Leste separating from Indonesia.

05 May 1999
Signature of the New York Agreements between Portugal and Indonesia, under the aegis of the United Nations Secretary General, for the organisation of a Popular Consultation of the People of Timor-Leste.

11 June 1999
The Security Council adopts Resolution 1246 establishing UNAMET (United Nations Mission in East Timor).

14 August 1999
Start of the popular consultation campaign.

30 August 1999
Popular consultation: 98.6% of eligible voters voted.

04 September 1999
The UN Secretary General announces the results of the referendum: 94,388 (21.5%) voted in favour of the autonomy proposal presented by Indonesia and 344,580 (78.5%) voted against, following the guidelines of CNRT and the Resistance.

05 September 1999
Indonesian military and their armed and protected militias unleash violence throughout the territory, destroying, looting and killing. People flee to the mountains and deport over 250,000 Timorese to West Timor. The Episcopal Residence in Dili is attacked and set on fire. Bishop Belo goes to Rome and informs the Pope of the gravity of the situation. In Portugal, demonstrations of solidarity with the Timorese people are held, calling for the rapid intervention of the international community. Similar demonstrations are taking place in many other cities around the world. First meeting of a Timorese leader, José Ramos-Horta, with a US President, Bill Clinton, at the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) Summit. The contacts made at this meeting of Heads of State and Government of the Asia Pacific pave the way for the creation of INTERFET (International Force in East Timor).

15 September 1999
The UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1264 authorising the establishment of an international force for Timor-Leste (INTERFET).

20 September 1999
INTERFET forces, under the command of Australia, begin to enter Timor-Leste.

28 September 1999
Portugal and Indonesia transfer sovereignty from Timor-Leste to the UN.

19 October 1999
The Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly recognises the outcome of the popular consultation of 30 August and no longer considers Timor-Leste as the 27th Province of Indonesia.

25 October 1999

The UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1272 establishing the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).

31 October 1999
The last Indonesian military leave the territory.

2000

29 February 2000
The first democratically elected President of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid, visits East Timor and, at the Santa Cruz Cemetery, apologises for his mistakes.

15 July 2000
Constitution of a mixed government (UNTAET/Timorese).

30 August 2000
Dissolution of CNRT.

23 October 2000
Creation of a transitional administration composed entirely of Timorese.

2001

01 February 2001
FALINTIL dissolves and gives way to the Defence Forces of Timor-Leste (FDTL), adopting after independence the name F-FDTL, FALINTIL - Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste.

30 August 2001
Elections to the Constituent Assembly.

2002

22 March 2002
Approval and signing of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

14 April 2002
Presidential Elections. Xanana Gusmão is elected President of the RDTL with 82.69% of the votes.

20 May 2002
Solemn Proclamation of the Independence of Timor-Leste.