Political Symbols and National Identity in Timor-Leste

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RETHINKING PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES
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Political Symbols & National Identity in Timor-Leste

Catherine E. Arthur

Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies

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Catherine E. Arthur

Political Symbols and National Identity in Timor-Leste

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CONTENTS

- 1 Struggle, Suffering, and Symbols: Narratives of Nationalism and Representing Identity 1

Part I Commemorative Symbols

- 2 Flying the Nation's Colours: Commemorations of the Past and the National Flag of Timor-Leste 37
- 3 Monuments and Memorials: *Funu*, *Terus*, and Constructing an East Timorese National Identity 71

Part II National Heroes

- 4 The Spirit of Rebellion: National Heroes, Dom Boaventura, and Personifying National Identity 107
- 5 'Big Brother Xanana': The Cult of Personality and the Creation of a Contemporary National Hero 137

Part III Symbols of Peace and Prosperity

- 6 The Struggle Continues: Peace and Prosperity, Democratic Values and Development in Political Party Flags** 171
- 7 Painting Peace and Prosperity: Street Art, the *Geração Foun*, and Identifying with an Evolving ‘East Timorese-ness’** 203

Part IV Conclusion

- 8 Conclusion** 241
- Glossary** 249
- Index** 251

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1	The national flag of Timor-Leste	43
Fig. 2.2	The flag of the <i>Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente</i> (Fretilin)	45
Fig. 2.3	Shop fronts in Dili displaying the national flag and bunting	56
Fig. 2.4	Bunting of the national flag of Timor-Leste hanging from shops in Dili	57
Fig. 2.5	The party headquarters of the <i>Partido Democrático</i> (PD)	58
Fig. 2.6	The national flag flying alongside the PD party flag at its headquarters	59
Fig. 2.7	Supporters of the <i>Associação Social Democrata Timorense</i> (ASDT) party cheering on a Fretilin rally as it passes	64
Fig. 3.1	The <i>aswain</i> statue in the central park of Dili, Timor-Leste	75
Fig. 3.2	The Cristo Rei statue at Area Branca, Dili	82
Fig. 4.1	A T-shirt designed by the <i>Associação Social Democrata Timorense</i> (ASDT) party and given to supporters at rallies, featuring the images of (left to right) Dom Boaventura, José Ramos-Horta and Xavier do Amaral	120
Fig. 4.2	An ASDT party's 2012 election campaign banner in Dili	121
Fig. 5.1	A CNRT election campaign poster featuring the iconic photograph of Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão as Commander in Chief of the Falintil	148
Fig. 5.2	A group of CNRT supporters en route to a party rally, accompanied by Xanana	150
Fig. 5.3	A CNRT campaign rally in Dili, where many supporters wore T-shirts with Xanana Gusmão's portrait on them	151

Fig. 5.4	A CNRT baseball cap, given to supporters at election campaign rallies in 2012 and also featuring the image of Xanana	152
Fig. 5.5	A CNRT election rally in Dili, featuring veterans wearing military fatigues and waving the original Falintil flag	153
Fig. 5.6	A man wearing military fatigues, a beret, and dreadlocks is painted in a mural in Dili	155
Fig. 6.1	The flag of the <i>Unidade Nacional Democrática da Resistência Timorense</i> (UNDERTIM)	182
Fig. 6.2	The flag of the <i>Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor-Leste</i> (CNRT)	182
Fig. 6.3	The flag of the <i>Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste</i> (Falintil), the armed wing of the resistance	182
Fig. 6.4	The flag of the <i>Conselho Nacional de Resistência Timorense</i> (CNRT), the reformed resistance movement	183
Fig. 6.5	The flag of the <i>Frente de Reconstrução Nacional de Timor-Leste – Mudança</i> (Frenti-Mudança)	187
Fig. 6.6	The party symbol of Frenti-Mudança	189
Fig. 6.7	The flag of the <i>Partido Democrático</i> (PD)	190
Fig. 7.1	An aerosol piece reading ‘every man deserve to earn, every child deserve to learn, each and every one deserve to earn’	217
Fig. 7.2	Large piece in Dili from 2006, with the words ‘ <i>domin</i> [love]’ and ‘ <i>dame</i> [peace]’	219
Fig. 7.3	A faded piece on a wall reads ‘ <i>Kria dame Hamutuk ida deit</i> [Create peace, together only one]’	220
Fig. 7.4	Large piece in Dili, painted in 2006	222
Fig. 7.5	A faded piece reads ‘ <i>Paz no Dame</i> ’, the Portuguese and Tetun words for ‘peace’	224
Fig. 7.6	A small, faded graffiti in Dili, reading ‘ <i>Timor nia kultura laos funu maibe dame</i> [Timorese culture is not war but peace]’	226
Fig. 7.7	A large-scale piece near to port in Dili states ‘ <i>Dame bahu husi hau</i> [peace starts with me]’	229
Fig. 7.8	A piece at the Centro Arte Moris (Dili), featuring a stencil portrait of Bob Marley, an aerosol spray image of a tank, and the words ‘Make art not war’	230
Fig. 7.9	Bob Marley’s likeness is painted on a wall at Arte Moris, accompanied by the words ‘peace’ and ‘one love’; the red, gold, green and black of the Rastafarian flag; and two smaller stencils of men with dreadlocks	232

CHAPTER 1

Struggle, Suffering, and Symbols: Narratives of Nationalism and Representing Identity

Nations and nationalism have been powerful and emotive political concepts throughout history. People have lived, killed, and died for their nations; for the idea of a community with which they share an identity, history, culture, (perhaps) language, and symbols. Yet the idea of the assumed commonality of nations is problematic when we think of how large and diverse these communities are. To speak generally of nations has the potential to homogenise a complex group of individuals, reducing them to one single identity and not allowing for the inherent diversity therein. Since nations are large, diverse political communities by nature, it is in fact impossible for members to relate their own ideas of identity, history, and experiences of nationhood to each other in an exact manner (Parekh 2008, p. 59). Yet Benedict Anderson's thesis of *Imagined Communities* (2006) posited that unity in diversity is possible, and nations can collectively identify through a process of imagination. Crucially, through a similar process of imagining and meaning-making, symbols bind such groups together and enable their coexistence and positive, collective identification. It is precisely through processes of imagining that symbols of national identity give and are given meaning, and are able to be interpreted and reproduced by a wide range of people. British social anthropologist Anthony P. Cohen encapsulates the power of symbols as follows:

Symbols are effective because they are imprecise. Though obviously not contentless, part of their meaning is "subjective." They are, therefore, the

ideal media through which people can speak a “common” language, behave in similar ways, participate in the “same” rituals, pray to the “same” gods, wear similar clothes, and so forth, without subordinating themselves to a tyranny of orthodoxy. Individuality and commonality are thus reconcilable. (1985, p. 21)

Symbolic representations of the core concepts of a national identity, with which all members of the collective can identify, thus enable a unified ‘nation’ to exist. Symbols are consequently crucial components of nation-building, that is, the process by which a nation comes to share in a sense of unity and commonality through a shared, collective identity, and culture (Alesina and Reich 2015).¹

Within a context of post-colonial, post-conflict nation-building, the importance of political symbols in national identity formation cannot be underestimated. The very fact of colonialism brings with it complexities of identity, language, and cultural heritage, and inevitable aspects of hybridity (Bhabha 1994). Different imaginings of nationhood, and experiences and negotiations of a colonial past can present significant challenges to fostering a unified national identity, and therefore to nation-building itself. In societies that undergo transition from a state of conflict equally experience challenges to fostering widespread unity, particularly those regions that have experienced civil war, local ethnic conflict, and state terror and violence. In such contexts of potential division and disharmony, the unifying function of symbols is of paramount importance as it allows a plethora of imaginings of identity to join under one visual object. If one flag can bring groups and individuals together, where previously there had been bitter conflict, then it performs a vital role in creating and sustaining nationhood. It is for this reason that identity symbols are deserving of more attention in studies of nation-building and national identity formation than current scholarship would suggest. This book seeks to demonstrate how symbols play a vital role in the life of nations through the case study of Timor-Leste, which still deals with the legacies of colonialism and conflict but which has developed a very strong sense of ‘East Timorese-ness’.

¹ Nation-building differs from state-building in that the latter focuses primarily on state institutions and developing the political infrastructure of a state, whereas the former is concerned with fostering a collective identity, rooted in a common history and shared cultural heritage.

Timor-Leste is one of the youngest nation-states in the world and, after only sixteen years of self-determination, is still in the process of nation-building. This book examines political symbols as some of the most powerful vehicles for fostering an East Timorese national identity, taking flags, monuments and memorials, national heroes, and street art as key symbolic forms. Symbols and visual representation of identity take on a heightened importance in Timor-Leste as a result of persistently low literacy levels; adult literacy rates from 2008 to 2012 were estimated to be around 58.3% (see UNICEF 2013), despite the fact that the National Development Plan had stipulated the importance of popular literacy to be achieved by 2020, as part of state- and nation-building.² It is perhaps difficult to conceive of the abstractions of identity without a visual representation of some sort and it would arguably be more difficult to do so for a national community that places more reliance on visual signs. Considering this context, this book critically analyses how a diverse population has interpreted an evolving East Timorese nationalism throughout the first decade of independence, from 2002 to 2012, and how symbols have had, and continue to have, a central role in this ongoing process.

An analysis of such symbols will inevitably include a discussion of significant socio-political factors that have influenced the nation-building project, including victimhood and recognition; the political role of cosmology, spirituality, and commemorating the dead; democratization and electoral politics; and post-colonial generational differences and divisions. Each of these challenges has tested the possibility of a unified national identity at different points of nation-building, and this book discusses how certain symbols have either helped or hindered it when mobilised in different contexts. An analysis of political symbols within the context of post-colonial and post-conflict nation-building enables a deeper understanding of national identity formation, considering both top-down and bottom-up agency, and allows for the inherently heterogeneous nature of those identifying as a nation.

Perhaps most importantly, this book is informed by primary ethnographic field research, conducted in Timor-Leste in 2012. The data I

²It is interesting to note that one of the motivations cited for tackling illiteracy in the National Development Plan was a national consultation that found that 70% of the population prioritised education as one of the three most important sectors to be developed, followed by health (RDTL Planning Commission 2002; see also Boon 2007).

collected during my fieldwork primarily consisted of photographs, due to the nature of the study of visual, political symbols. To inform and contextualise this analysis of symbols and national identity, however, it was essential to collate samples of personal opinions, official definitions of the symbols, and a range of interpretations of East Timorese nationalism. Consequently, the book is informed by personal interviews, newspapers, political party manifestos, and government documents. This required some knowledge of the languages spoken in Timor-Leste, in an attempt to address some criticisms of primary research on the region.³ This book has thus incorporated local languages where possible, including Tetun and Portuguese.⁴

Though the theoretical framework for the book necessarily draws on some of the most eminent scholars of nations, nationalism, and symbols within the Social Sciences, the ethnographic element is critical to the study. Ethnography adds great depth to a discussion of nation-building which, by nature, directly affects the everyday lives of people. The field data provides the analysis with a unique and truer account of the processes of identification within the context of nation-building. Since nations are complex and diverse communities, it is important to include a range of individual voices in the conversation about nation-building, which is so often dominated by political and intellectual elites (see Borgerhoff 2006). The multidisciplinary approach of the book thus seeks to overcome the limitations of a purely theoretical examination of national identity, to avoid issues of methodological nationalism, and to provide an often overlooked grassroots, indigenous perspective. It hopes to offer a platform for East Timorese voices to speak about the past, present, and future of their nation, in their own words.

CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP ON POST-INDEPENDENCE TIMOR-LESTE

Due to the recent nature of the conflict in Timor-Leste, its transition to self-determination and post-independence nation-building has been the focal point of much ever-developing research. Michael Leach's recent seminal work, *National Identity and Nation-building in Timor-Leste* (2017)

³Jacqueline Aquino Siapno has critiqued the lack of local language use in contemporary research on the half-island (2013).

⁴The interviews cited in this book were all conducted during my fieldwork in either Tetun or English. Where translations have been offered throughout, they are my own.

offers a comprehensive and insightful examination of the evolution of national identity, from its initial stirrings through to the present day nation-state. Expanding on Helen Hill's work on East Timorese nationalism in the 1970s (2002), Leach's study traces the history of national identity formation and the complex layers of colonial legacy, laying the foundation for this book. Leach highlights how collective identification is a contested and conflicted process and that throughout the history of the half-island nation, foreign occupation has been a key influence in how the East Timorese nation imagines itself and on internal rifts since the return to independence. Leach rightly notes that nation-building is often overlooked in post-conflict state-building missions (2017, p. 5), where processes of state-building, political infrastructure and institutions remain a focal point of analysis. Even more neglected is the role of political symbols and symbolism in nation-building. This book aims to address this deficit and build upon the existing scholarship on East Timorese nationalism by providing detailed and close analysis of various political symbols that are, by nature, emotive political mobilisers.

Histories of the island of Timor often begin with creation myths,⁵ and outline the precolonial kingdoms that structured society as detailed by Frédéric Durand (2006) and James Fox, before the colonisation of the island by European colonial powers from the early sixteenth century (for example, see Leach 2017, pp. 19–27).⁶ The eastern half of the island remained under Portuguese administration for over four hundred years, as documented by John Taylor (1991), C.R. Boxer (1960), Hans Hägerdal (2006, 2007), and Steve Farrah (1999), for example. Colonial rule was swiftly followed by a brutal occupation by Indonesia from 1975 to 1999. The indiscriminate violence perpetrated by the Indonesian military resulted in mass human rights violations and the deaths of around 200,000 people (or a quarter of the population at

⁵Origin myths in Timor-Leste recount the tale of a crocodile that, stranded on land and near death, was saved by a little boy who returned him to the sea. The crocodile befriended the boy and they travelled the world together. When it came time for the crocodile die, he turned his body into a beautiful island for the boy to live on as a way of showing his gratitude and friendship to the boy (see Wise 2006, p. 211).

⁶Portuguese colonisation of the island of Timor began in the early sixteenth century and the Dutch colonial powers invaded the western half of the island in the early seventeenth century. After numerous conflicts, the border between east and west Timor was established in 1749, and has not altered significantly since the (see Hägerdal 2006, 2007).

the time), before self-determination was achieved in 2002.⁷ Accounts of this period of conflict have been extensively documented by the *Comissão de Acolhimento Verdade e Reconciliação* (CAVR), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was established after the occupation, and by numerous scholars since the 1970s.⁸

In the context of centuries of foreign occupation and now a rapid nation-building project, the construction of an independent national identity is of paramount importance. A number of historical, cultural, spiritual, and political factors have influenced this process in the post-independence years. Issues of victimhood and transitional justice following the atrocities of the Indonesian occupation continue to be contentious, as extensive research by Lia Kent (2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2016a, b), James DeShaw Rae (2009) and others demonstrates. Cosmology, spirituality, and the role of the dead are fundamental to East Timorese society and social life, and therefore crucial to understanding the politics of the new nation-state. Elizabeth Traube (1977, 1986, 1995, 2007, 2011), Josh Trindade (2011, 2014, 2015), Judith Bovensiepen (2011, 2014a, b, 2015, 2016), Andrew McWilliam (2011, 2015), Kelly da Silva (2008a, b, 2011), and Damien Grenfell (2012, 2015) have made great contributions to scholarship on this aspect of social life in Timor-Leste, and this book will expand on how cosmology enhances the power of political symbols in this specific cultural context, and how it influences their role in politics. Damien Kingsbury (2000, 2007, 2009a, b, 2010, 2012a, b, 2014), Joanne Wallis (2012, 2016), Michael Leach (2002, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2017), James Scambary (2009, 2012, 2017a, b) have led studies of the post-independence state, national politics, and the role of democratic governance and state policy in the early years of independence. Challenges to national unity have emerged along partisan lines and in the form of controversial policies, including state language policy,⁹ and political symbols have been used to both unite and divide in different contexts.

⁷It is important to note that the final figures vary depending on the source. The final report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CAVR) however states that the Indonesian military forces were responsible for the deaths of at least 180,000 East Timorese (see Comissão de Acolhimento Verdade e Reconciliação 2006).

⁸Such scholars include Matthew Jardine (1999), Arnold S. Kohen and John Taylor (1979), Ben Kiernan (2002), Paul Hainsworth and Stephen McCloskey (2000), Ian Martin (2001), John Pilger (1994, 2010), Charles Scheiner, Jill Jolliffe, and Geoffrey Robinson, for example, as well as activists and lobbyists for independence.

⁹See Michael Leach in particular for studies on language policy (2003, 2008).

Ironically, while processes of nation-building and national identity formation have highlighted points of consensus and common identification, they have simultaneously created divisions in East Timorese society because of the ways in which they have been conducted, and by whom. The focal point of identity formation for the state has been the former national liberation struggle from Indonesia and a subsequent valorisation of the resistance. National identity in Timor-Leste is founded on the core tenets of *funu* (struggle) and *terus* (suffering) in the name of regaining self-determination. In particular, the armed wing of the resistance, the *Forças Armadas De Libertação Nacional De Timor Leste* (Falintil), has been esteemed above all other factions as the liberators of the nation, who fought and died for independence. A debt of gratitude, respect, and honour is widely believed to be owed to veterans and those who led the resistance movement to liberate the nation.¹⁰ As a result, a social hierarchy has emerged with Falintil veterans and resistance leaders at the top and attributes them significant social and symbolic capital in the post-independence state. The post-independence state leadership has commemorated the recent past and national liberation with the intention of uniting the nation in a common sense of respect and identity. This book considers how state leadership has barely changed in ten years and how the *way* in which the struggle has been valorised has, at times, achieved the opposite. Key figures and aspects of the liberation struggle have been highlighted by former resistance leaders in such a way that it has enabled a monopolisation of nation-building to legitimise their continued leadership in the post-independence state, while alienating others (Kent 2016b). Yet at a grassroots level, people have reacted to this situation and made symbolic claims of ownership of the struggle, highlighting their sufferings and contributions as equally valid. This book examines how the concepts of *funu* and *terus* are seen and utilised by civilians, and are central to several symbolic conflicts of identity, ownership, and legitimacy.

It is through an in-depth analysis of political symbols, coupled with ethnography, that these contentions of identity become most clear. The creation and use of symbols in certain contexts reveals conflicts of ownership and claims for at least a share in the symbolic capital of the resistance. Attesting to the role of symbols, however, is the fact that

¹⁰For in-depth discussions of veterans and their post-independence political situation, see Kate Roll (2011, 2014), and Gordon Peake (2009).

despite serious differences and political divisions, the core points of unanimous respect and common identification remain unchanged, and symbols are the locus through which this shared identity is made possible. This book argues that political symbols are powerful vehicles for fostering national unity and identity, but that they can also be obstructive to it; their function is dependent upon the context in which they are used and how their meanings are interpreted by those who engage with them. It aims to demonstrate their critical importance to identification at state and grassroots levels, and to provide a multidisciplinary framework for analysis of national identity in other political and cultural contexts, particularly in post-colonial, post-conflict nation-states.

THEORIES OF NATIONS, NATIONALISM, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY NARRATIVES

Nations and nationalisms are conceptions that reside in the Bourdieusian doxa (Bourdieu 2006, p. 166): they are taken for granted and are an unquestioned part of social life. Nations and nationalities are assumed to be essential to modern life for both individuals and collectives, as leading nations theorist Ernest Gellner notes:

the idea of a man [sic] without a nation seems to impose a strain on the modern imagination. A man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears [...]. Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such. (1983, p. 6)

The vast body of research that exists on nations and national identities not only attests to the importance they are believed to have, but it also indicates the complexity of the subject. This study adopts a modernist approach that broadly understands nations to be continually (re)constructed, (re)invented, and (re)imagined by each member of the national collective.¹¹ This idea is perhaps most clearly outlined in

¹¹While other schools of thought, principally Ethnoscymbolism, led by Anthony D. Smith (1987; 1991, 1999a, b, 2009), contest the invented and constructed nature of nations, there is agreement over the agency of the collective in their (re)interpretation of history and heritage. Ethnoscymbolists counter the argument of construction or invention with one of ‘*reinterpretation*’ of pre-existing cultural motifs and of *reconstruction* of earlier ethnic ties and sentiments,’ which still affirms the agency of the collective (Smith 2013, p. 90, emphasis in the original).

Benedict Anderson's thesis of *Imagined Communities* (2006) and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's theories of *The Invention of Tradition* (2013). Such an approach is best suited to a discussion of symbols because of their constructed nature and the processes of imagining that give them their meaning and power.

Anderson argues that nations 'are *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (2006, p. 6, emphasis in the original). According to Anderson, a belief in a common cultural heritage, a shared past, and a sense of kinship unites people under a national 'imagined community'.¹² These beliefs are founded on state narratives of a national history and identity, and strengthened by symbols that are attributed and that emit meanings reflective of this commonality. Such nationalist narratives are often established by government institutions, school textbooks, marked by public holidays and ceremonies, and articulated by state officials and public figures. Hobsbawm and Ranger affirm that 'nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories [...] rest on exercises in social engineering which are often deliberate and always innovative' (2013, p. 13). This social engineering is a form of Foucauldian governmentality (Foucault 1991), with the aim of fostering national unity, positive identification, allegiance to the state, and a particular set of values, behaviours, and norms (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2013, p. 1).

National histories are often imagined by their members as being rooted in an almost mystical, mythical, and distant past (see Bhabha 1990, p. 1). Nations are imagined to have their roots in time immemorial, and have an ancient, innate character and identity shared by its members. This is often the case despite the fact that the nation-state as we know it today is a modern construction, and especially for younger post-colonial nation-states that only gained their independence in the twentieth century, such as Timor-Leste. Hobsbawm and Ranger refer to this as the 'curious, but understandable, paradox' of nations:

¹²For criticisms of Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities, see Jonathan Culler and Pheng Cheah (2003), and Nor Faridah A. Manaf and Mohammad A. Quayum (2011). Anderson addresses such criticisms in the preface of *Imagined Communities* (2006, pp. xi–xv).

modern nations and all their impedimenta generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely human communities so “natural” as to require no definition other than self-assertion. (2013, p. 14)

In this way, no matter how ‘young’ a nation may be in constitutional terms, its historical narratives can inculcate a belief in its long and unique past in order to conceptualise a shared identity, history, and heritage (Antze and Lambek 1996, pp. xxi–xxii). Historical narratives are crucial to constructing nations because understandings of the past influence a sense of identity in the present. They require a trajectory and sense of continuity, and thus create identities that draw on events from the past but that are constructed in such a way as to serve their present needs and future goals (Smith 1991, pp. 19–20).

Despite the inherently diverse and heterogeneous nature of national communities, any divisions and differences can be overcome by these narratives that are deliberately constructed to fulfil the aim of fostering unity. It is in reference to this reason that Edward Said, one of the most eminent Postcolonialist scholars, notes: ‘national identity always involves narratives [...] these narratives are *never undisputed* or merely a matter of the neutral recital of facts’ (2000, p. 177, emphasis added; see also 2012). State discourses of national identity are never neutral and actively create, shape, and form the social relations and imaginings of members of a national community (see Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). For example, an accurate account of East Timorese history would include the conflict between traditional kingdoms, clans, ethnic, and language groups that can be traced through the (pre)colonial history of the territory. Yet official state narratives present a history of revolt against the Portuguese colonizers and foreign powers, establishing the ‘occupied-occupier’ binary that frames national identity today. This is despite the fact that few rebellions were actually anticolonial in nature; numerous conflicts were often simply between kingdoms and *liurais* (traditional kings), ethnic groups and clans. However, if one kingdom had the backing of the Portuguese administration, then its enemy could of course easily be portrayed as being the anticolonial rebel in retrospect (see Gunn 2001, p. 7). The most famous ‘anti-colonial’ rebellion was led by Dom Boaventura in 1912, which is now celebrated in the post-independence state as an initial step in the national liberation struggle, despite the fact that it was not an uprising against the Portuguese

at all but a feud between his kingdom in Manufahi and another *liurai* in Suro-Ainaro (Hull 1999, p. 64).¹³ However, historical accuracy is trumped by the need for unity, inspiration, and an exemplar for the national community. A truer narrative would simply be counter-productive to the aims of nation-building and national identity formation. It is for this reason that national narratives are selective: to promote the political agenda of national unity and to avoid internal divisions, bringing to the fore what are regarded as the most important aspects of a common past that compel a collective to identify as a nation.

Nonetheless, national historical narratives are institutionalised, widely validated, and accepted as accounts of the collective's past that acquire an aura of truth because they are supported by the authority of the state. In the context of state- and nation-building, the subjectivity of national historical narratives can become problematic when certain groups' interests are served better than others (Abizadeh 2004), and the power relationships of the nation are subsequently reflected in the narratives that are constructed. The values and identities of a small political élite who construct these narratives can thus be imposed upon the rest of the nation, rendering it an ironically unrepresentative foundation for national identity. As this book will argue, this was precisely the case in post-independence Timor-Leste, which has seen a select few resistance-era leaders dominate the first decade of nation-building, leading to numerous symbolic conflicts of identity. However, Michel Foucault highlights that such discourse is 'neither uniform nor stable' and thus is able to be appropriated and adapted by anyone within a given society:

We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (Foucault 1976, pp. 100–101)

Moreover, Foucault argues that the binary between dominant and dominated discourses should not be emphasised, so much as the multiplicity of discourses that exists (1976, pp. 101–102). The various

¹³Chapter 4 will discuss the significance of Dom Boaventura as a constructed exemplar and iconic figure within processes of nation-building.

discursive elements that influence our reality exist to ensure certain knowledges and powers, and necessarily define the relationships between members of the collective, but resistance and criticisms of them are also inevitable (Foucault 1976, p. 102). Thus, while national history and identity narratives constitute a constructed discourse that is produced by a political élite, counter-narratives and discourses are also present to challenge, contest, and modify the official ideas of national identity, heritage and history. This resistance and reaction to dominant identity discourses has taken place in Timor-Leste and is expounded by symbols created at a grassroots level, as later chapters discuss.

The core tenets of any nationalism are those aspects that are generally undisputed and uncontested, common to both state and grassroots articulations. These are the elements that members of national communities identify with and which form popular imaginings of national identity. Intangible aspects of a nation, such as the idea that there is a single collective identity, are *believed* to exist because they are articulated by the nationalist narratives and accepted by the members of the imagined community (Wodak et al. 2009, p. 28). An ongoing and mutually sustaining relationship between narratives and the imagination process allows for nations and national identities to exist. Yet there is more to a nation and national identity than a mere linear narrative; if people have always been willing to die for their nation, there must also be great feeling involved. The emotional element that drives people to war and self-sacrifice for the nation, however, is absent from a modernist conception of national communities. In order to explain this emotional element and the motivations for people to willingly die for the abstraction of the ‘nation,’ it is necessary to expand upon the theory of a constructed, imagined community.

Benedict Anderson argues that a sense of fraternity, or community makes it possible ‘for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as to willingly die for such limited imaginings’ as the nation (2006, p. 7). However, his thesis of ‘imagined communities’ has been critiqued for its portrayal of nations as limited to the imagination, to the realm of cognitive activity, and therefore lacking the emotional attachment that in fact fosters a sense of fraternity (Smith 2013, pp. 85–87). Indeed, Anderson asserts that the fraternal imagined community is bound together by a ‘*disinterested* love and solidarity’ (2006, p. 148, emphasis added). An Ethn-symbolist approach to nations and nationalism, which holds that national communities are not simply modern constructions, is useful

because it responds to the apparent limitations of a largely cognitive, imagination process. The willingness to kill and die for a nation must stem from a broader sense of attachment than is implied by Anderson's theory of imagining. The founder of Ethnosymbolism and nationalism studies, Anthony D. Smith, argues that emotion is crucial:

What matters for an explanation of the power and durability of nations and nationalism is that *the narratives and images of the nation strike a chord with the people to whom they are designed to appeal*; and that "the people" and their cultures can, in turn, contribute to the process of reconstructing the nation. Only when they can "re-present" to the mass of the population *an acceptable and inspiring image or narrative of the nation* can elites exert any influence and provide some leadership. (2013, p. 89, emphasis added)

Inspiration, heroism, and sacrifice for the nation are necessary to instill this bond and strengthen the belief in a unified community. National narratives must therefore be constructed with an emotive appeal in mind, to instill the loyalty and maintain positive identification.

State narratives that evoke an emotional response can foster loyalty and positive identification with the nation but a narrative alone is not enough. While certain knowledge of the past can be presented in more tangible ways (in books, speeches, etc.), crucially assisting popular belief and imaginings of nationhood, the emotive components that bind the national collective together remain abstract and intangible. Consequently, symbols are crucial to consolidating the national, imagined community because they objectify such abstractions and make them tangible and real. Emotive bonds and a sense of fraternity are fostered and sustained by the use of symbols that evoke imaginings of nationhood, as David Kertzer asserts:

people are not merely material creatures, but symbols producers and symbol users. People have an unsettling habit of willingly, even gladly, dying for causes that oppose their material interests, while vociferously opposing groups that espouse them. It is through symbols that people give meaning to their lives; full understanding of political allegiances and political action hinge on this fact. (1988, p. 8)

Meaning is therefore given to members of the national community by objectifying abstract concepts such as identity, a shared past, culture, and heritage through symbolic forms. Symbols provide a visual and

physical object with which we can identify, making both constructed and subjective ideas more comprehensible and familiar, and allow us to interpret what and who we are, individually and collectively (Kertzer 1988, p. 4). As this book will discuss, social and political life in Timor-Leste is saturated with symbolic representations of imaginings of ‘East Timorese-ness’.

SYMBOLS, SYMBOLIC MEANING, AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NATION

Symbols are powerful vehicles of identity, communication, and power in any political or social context. As Raymond Firth notes, ‘Man [sic] does not live by symbols alone, but man orders and interprets his reality by his symbols, and even reconstructs it’ (1973, p. 20). They are devices for enabling individuals to visualise and understand concepts, constructed with the ultimate purpose of fostering unity and commonality among diverse groups and organisations (Firth 1973, pp. 76–77). Political symbols that represent national identities are therefore highly potent mobilisers and meaning-makers, as they seek to unite a vast number of people under one identity and foster a common sense of fraternity, solidarity, and nationhood (Morris 2005, p. 1). The most powerful national identity symbols are those that embody the emotive abstractions of the national character and heritage that are outlined in state narratives. Once these characteristics and identity tenets are enshrined in visual representations and symbols, these can become the loci of identification that facilitate the everyday cohesion of the national community.

For symbols to have a real influence on processes of identification, continual popular interaction is crucial (see Bryson and McCartney 1994, p. 4). It is precisely in the interaction between people and symbols that meaning is received and recognised. When members of the national community react to symbols it gives them potency and reproduces their meaning, but in order for this to take place there must first of all be evident meaning in the symbol for the national community to react to. The meaning attributed to symbols from narratives is what enables members of the national community to engage them, by objectifying abstractions of their collective identity and thus allowing identification to take place. As members of the national community identify with identity symbols, they are able to attach their own individual interpretations and meanings to them. This process closely parallels the imagination

process by which nations foster a belief in their unity, enabling ‘imagined communities’ to exist. This reciprocal cycle of meaning-making must be repeated in the ongoing processes of national identification. Upon gaining popular recognition of their symbolic meaning, these national symbols perform their crucial representative and unifying functions, and are incorporated into popular imaginings of a shared national identity.

Symbols provide a sense of community and emit symbolic meanings by making abstractions (such as traits of the national character) visible and comprehensible, but they are also given meaning through the diverse interpretations of those who identify with these symbols. Leading social anthropological theorist Anthony P. Cohen states that ‘the reality of community lies in its members’ perception of the vitality of its culture. People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity’ (1985, p. 118; see also Cohen 1974). The fluidity of symbols and their meanings is crucial to their function as representations of a diverse national community; indeed, Cohen attests that ‘it is the very ambiguity of symbols which makes them so effective as boundary markers of community’ (1994, p. 55). The power of national symbols is expounded by the fact that they enable unity and solidarity without *de facto* homogeneity (Kertzer 1988, pp. 67–69), and allow for a plurality of meanings, from both state narratives and counter-narratives. Consensus between people on the meaning of a symbol is not necessary, only agreement on the fact that the symbol has value and represents their identity (Morris 2005, p. 5). This consensus on the importance of the symbol to the representation of the collective is therefore a unifying force in itself. As a result, identification with a collective symbol, regardless of the many diverse interpretations of its meaning, is possible and it is through such common identification that national unity is achieved.

National symbols are the visual and physical objects that give form to social, cultural, and symbolic capital. They objectify the abstract elements of national identity, character, and heritage, and take their meaning from those narratives which define them. Without the national symbols to make these abstractions comprehensible, there would be no identification among a diverse group as a unified collective. Crucially, if we assume that nations are ‘imagined communities’ and exist through popular imaginings and a belief in a shared identity and heritage, the power of symbols is further expounded as it is through this imagination process that symbolic meanings are received and made. Thus, if an imagined national community exists through a belief in a common past and culture, then national

symbols are the visual signs that represent and sustain that belief. Nations and a sense of national consciousness emerge when members of the community recognise that they share an attachment to identity symbols (Morris 2005, p. 4). Symbols are potent because they invoke the emotive aspects of the national narratives and foster the sense of attachment felt by its members. It is the shared attachment and emotive tenets of nationalist narratives that instils them with symbolic power.

Symbolic capital and power are the fundamental elements of a symbol that render it valuable, prestigious and important within a particular context and social system. Pierre Bourdieu's theories of symbolic power are of critical importance because in any nation, certain tropes and traits are believed to acquire and bestow significant symbolic power. Bourdieu defines this power as

the power to make things with words. It is only if it is true, that is, adequate to things, that description makes things. In this sense, *symbolic power is a power of consecration or revelation*, the power to consecrate or to reveal things that are already there. (1989, p. 23, emphasis in the original)

National symbols retain great symbolic power because they reveal those essential parts of a national identity that are valued the most and are able to bestow similar value on others, in accordance with state discourse. Indeed, Bourdieu argues that '[the] consecration of symbolic capital confers upon a perspective an absolute, universal value, thus snatching it from a relativity that is by definition inherent in every point of view, as a view taken from a particular point in social space' (1989, p. 22). Symbolic capital is given to, or acquired by, those symbols that represent the 'true' and esteemed aspects of a national identity as outlined by the state. Moreover, symbols that are believed to retain such prestige by the national community attest to the power of national identity narratives, and affirm that they are widely accepted. Symbolic capital and power are recognised and mobilised in complex ways in Timor-Leste, always in relation to the struggle for independence, as we will see.

SYMBOLIC CONFLICT

Within processes of nation-building and national identity formation, where identity narratives are subjective and constructed by an elite with the potential to monopolise them and their capital, symbolic conflicts

are inevitable. Simon Harrison's thesis of symbolic conflict is vital in understanding the role of symbols in these political endeavours because it affords us greater insight into how symbolic capital is used and mobilised by different actors. Harrison asserts that '[c]ompetition for power, wealth, prestige, legitimacy or other political resources seems always to be accompanied by conflict over important symbols, by struggles to control or manipulate such symbols in some vital way' (1995, p. 255). In essence, symbolic conflicts are attempts to mobilise and distribute symbolic capital in certain ways, to further the interests of those members of a collective who do the mobilising.

Symbolic conflicts are typified by rules of a zero-sum game, in which one actor or group's gain in terms of symbolic capital leads to the loss of other competitors for the same capital (Harrison 1995, p. 269; see also Bourdieu 1990, p. 121). We can see this zero-sum game play out in post-independence Timor-Leste, where former Falintil and resistance leaders have claimed ownership of and mobilised the symbolic capital of the liberation struggle. As later chapters discuss, this has often been to the detriment of others' claims to ownership of the same capital, such as members of the former youth and student resistance movements, and the clandestine wing of the resistance. This in turn has impacted on recognition of their contributions to the struggle and thus the legitimacy of their claims to membership of the national community (see Arthur 2016, p. 198–200). It is from this situation that symbolic conflicts have emerged and groups of East Timorese have disputed symbols in some cases, and used and appropriated symbols to further their ownership claims in others.

Simon Harrison defined four types of symbolic conflict over capital that take place in a range of political contexts (1995). Two of these types of symbolic conflict are most prevalent in post-colonial and post-conflict societies: proprietary contests and innovation contests.¹⁴ When symbolic capital and those symbols that objectify it are undisputed, the power and prestige associated with them are inevitably sought after by a range of different groups. A proprietary contest is the subsequent conflicts of ownership, or claims to the rights of the symbolic capital

¹⁴Simon Harrison writes these conflicts in about Northern Ireland, which is renowned for the political and cultural significance of flags and murals in relation to social divisions. These social divides stem from the ethnic conflict of the Troubles (1969–1998), which itself is a legacy of British colonialism.

(Harrison 1995, p. 258; see also Harrison 1992; Kertzer 1988, p. 43). Innovation contests occur when existing identity symbols and capital are adapted or elaborated in some way, or new symbols are created (Harrison 1995, p. 261). In the case of the latter, this can lead to a wealth of new symbols and make the system of symbolic capital valuation more complex, as has been the case in the political arena of post-independence Timor-Leste. These two types of conflict have been the most common in the new nation-state and elucidate the challenges to national identity formation, as part of nation-building.

A core issue of this study is how symbolic conflicts have taken place throughout the first decade of self-determination in Timor-Leste. Interestingly, two of Harrison's four types of symbolic conflict have not occurred. His valuation contests (where the symbolic value of one symbol is pitted against that of another, with the aim of positioning one more highly) and expansionary contests (where two groups compete against each other for survival and the losing group's identity symbols disappear completely; Harrison 1995, pp. 256–258, 263–265) have not taken place. This in itself tells us a lot about East Timorese nationalism and popular imaginings of nationhood. There are certain aspects of this national identity that have remained uncontested, unanimous points of respect and positive identification, namely the concepts of *funu* (struggle) and *terus* (suffering). The fact that proprietary and innovation symbolic conflicts take place is crucial to understanding the difficulties there have been in nation-building in Timor-Leste. Equally critical to the study of nation-building is the fact that the symbolic capital of the resistance itself is not questioned; the struggle and the associated suffering and sacrifice are unanimous points of respect and identification, and it is rather a case of different groups (including youth and victims' groups) laying claim to a share in that aspect of the past.

MAUBERISM, FUNU, AND TERUS: THE ORIGINS OF AN EAST TIMORESE NATIONAL IDENTITY

Like many post-colonial nations, East Timorese nationalism emerged from the anti-colonial, pro-independence movement that began in the 1970s. Following the deposition of the Salazar regime in 1974, the Portuguese colonial powers began a process of decolonization from Timor-Leste which presented the East Timorese people with the opportunity to decide their own future after centuries of foreign

rule.¹⁵ In the wake of the withdrawal of the colonial administration, a brief but bloody civil war broke out in the summer of 1975 (see Leach 2017, pp. 71–72).¹⁶ The civil war resulted from divisions over the future governance of the nation-state between the two principal political parties, *Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente* (Fretilin) and the *União Democrática Timorense* (UDT).¹⁷ A third political party, Apodeti, was in favour of integration into Indonesia, though it was small and had minimal popular support (see Molnar 2010, pp. 37–45; Bovensiepen 2015, pp. 22–23). Fretilin was in favour of an independent republic free from outside influence, while the UDT sought a continued association within a federation with Portugal. Fretilin emerged as the victors of the war and formed the first government of an independent Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (*República Democrática de Timor-Leste*, RDTL), declared on 28 November 1975. However, that independence was to be short-lived; after only a few days Indonesia invaded Timor-Leste (5 December 1975), and it was during the brutal occupation that followed that the concept of Mauberism was redefined.

The term ‘Maubere’, and subsequently Mauberism, derived from the phrase which can be translated as ‘my brother’, and became synonymous with the new East Timorese identity—distinct from Portugal and Indonesia—for many during the brief period of independence. Indeed, in the words of Elizabeth Traube, ‘the phrase *mau bere* – my brother – became a pervasive refrain, a call for Timorese unity, for to be a *mau bere* was to be a son of Timor’ (Traube cited in Taylor 1991, p. 42). It is a Mambai phrase that had been adopted by the Portuguese

¹⁵Whilst the Portuguese powers were resolved to devolve power back to their colonies, the focus of the decolonization process seemed to be centred on the African colonies of Angola and Mozambique. In Timor-Leste, the same process was not implemented or completed and the Portuguese withdrew abruptly as a result of the civil war. This was reflective of the detached attitude of the Portuguese colonial administration towards the territory. This is perhaps best captured by British naturalist and anthropologist Lord Alfred Wallace, who observed: ‘the Portuguese government of Timor is a most miserable one. Nobody seems to care the least about the improvement of the country’ (1869). I use the term ‘decolonization’ here to refer to the withdrawal of Portugal from the territory.

¹⁶The CAVR report also documented the violence and fratricide of the civil war (2006, pp. 40–52).

¹⁷The Mambai people are the second largest ethnic group in Timor-Leste, located primarily in the central highlands.

colonizers to refer to the indigenous East Timorese people (see Traube 1977, 2011). It was used pejoratively by the Portuguese and had negative associations with a ‘backwards’ people from the interior of the island, who were deeply connected to indigenous traditions and rituals (Ramos-Horta 1987, p. 37). In the wake of decolonization, the concept was appropriated by Fretilin as part of a discourse that inverted its negative associations to become one of national pride and synonymous with independence (Taylor 1991, p. 42).¹⁸ For Fretilin, to be ‘Maubere’ became the ideal that the people should strive to achieve: a poor, oppressed people that have retained their cultural vitality throughout centuries of foreign occupation, and that would go on to liberate themselves (Taylor 1991, pp. 41–42; Hill 2002; Traube 2011). Following Fretilin’s victory and leadership in November 1975, this understanding of Mauberism became the foundation for its emerging nationalist movement.

It was during the uncertain period following the departure of the Portuguese in 1974, and just prior to the Indonesian occupation, that imaginings of East Timorese nationalism were ‘still quite thin on the ground’ (Anderson 2001, p. 237). However, the presence of an aggressive foreign occupier instigated a heightened process of collective identification and othering of Indonesia, and Mauberism encapsulated the identity that the majority of the East Timorese people sought. After the invasion and in a devastating context of human rights abuses, genocide, and mass repression at the hands of the Indonesian military, the East Timorese nation actively and collectively identified as Maubere: an oppressed people who have a great capacity to suffer and endure in the struggle for liberation.¹⁹ José Ramos-Horta, one of the leading members of Fretilin at the time, noted that Mauberism had quickly become a powerful vehicle for fostering a sense of nationhood: ‘*Maubere* and *Mauberism* proved to be the single most successful symbol of our [Fretilin] campaign. Within weeks, *Maubere* became the symbol of a cultural identity, of pride, of belonging’ (1987, p. 37). Fretilin enjoyed the support of the majority of the population because it was a political

¹⁸Fretilin was the pro-independence organization that evolved from the original ASDT (*Associação Social Democrata Timorense*), formed in April–May 1974. The organization was reformed and renamed five months later.

¹⁹For an account of the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste that highlights the human rights abuses and violence suffered, see Geoffrey Robinson (2009).

movement that emerged to lead and shape the nationalist sentiment that was felt among the people (Hill 2002, p. 180). The concept of Mauberism thus sustained the resistance to the Indonesian occupation, conceptualised imaginings of national identity, and became the basis for constructing an historic national identity as part of nation-building following the return to independence.

Following the UN-sponsored ballot on self-determination on 30 September 1999 and the official restoration of independence on 20 May 2002, the nation-building project began to institutionalise a national history. Nation-building is defined by Andre Borgerhoff as an inherently top-down process, which has been headed by the leadership of the resistance era in Timor-Leste (2006, pp. 103–104). He argues that it is

the deliberate interest- and ideology-based formation of a national format which creates collective identity and affiliation of the population with the nation-state. [...] it aspires to unify the national community within the state container, with the objective of political stability. (Borgerhoff 2006, pp. 103–104)

An official East Timorese national identity is being constructed around a past characterised by foreign occupation, framed by the ‘occupied-occupier’ binary and primarily in relation to the more recent Indonesian occupation. Indeed, state discourse has outlined the fundamental character of the East Timorese people as having ‘*uma personalidade de luta, de suor, e de determinação de vencer os obstáculos*’ (Gusmão 2004, p. 105).²⁰ The institutionalisation of such ideas has enshrined this part of the national past in official identity narratives and laid the foundations for popular imaginings of nationhood.

Mauberism is still invoked in patriotic speeches from state leaders, though it is largely in reference to the past and the struggle for independence from Indonesia. Mauberism was born of a specific historical and political context by Fretilin and as a result of its ties to the recent past and

²⁰‘A personality of struggle, of sweat and of determination to overcome the obstacles.’ Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão was the leader of the resistance movement and has held the offices of President and Prime Minister in the post-independence state. See Chapter 5 for an analysis of his cult following in national politics, and the role of his hero status in contemporary imaginings of national identity.

partisan roots, it is perhaps less flexible in the post-independence state.²¹ The broader, more malleable concepts of *funu* (struggle) and *terus* (suffering) are consequently presented as the primary tenets of contemporary East Timorese nationalism, as they are inextricably connected to imaginings of the resistance to Indonesia. East Timorese scholar Fernando da Costa affirms that ‘the *maubere* concept remained significant and continued to grow in the consciousness of the individual. Each person in Timor-Leste who participated in the struggle for independence gives significance to this concept’ (da Costa 2010, p. 22). As the principal ideology of the resistance movement throughout the Indonesian occupation, Mauberism is inevitably understood to encompass the sense of *funu* at the heart of a nationalism that was fostered at that time. Moreover, a retrospective interpretation of the Maubere identity also incorporates the notion of *terus* in light of the loss of life and repression under the occupation (da Costa 2010, p. 22).

While Mauberism provided the foundation for an East Timorese national identity that was initiated in the 1970s, identities inevitably evolve with the changing needs and values of the collective. Fernando da Costa asserts that while the core tenets of struggle and suffering are still central to national identity, there is also a need to incorporate the post-independence values into the national consciousness:

One’s identity as an East Timorese person that was created and has been developed over many years cannot just be forgotten. Identity as an East Timorese person, as *maubere* and as someone who speaks Tetun is fundamentally important to the nation-building process. [...] Identity that was developed during the resistance time and other types of positive social identity are the “soul” of our identity in the time of independence. Universal principles such as democracy are also important [...] Timor needs to preserve and unite traditional and modern principles so they can *coexist* throughout the continuing nation-building process. (2010, pp. 24–25, emphasis added)

As a result, the concepts which define these identities must also be capable of change. Due to their more ambiguous nature, the tenets of struggle and suffering are reinterpreted in the present and with regards to the future.

²¹Reference to Maubere and Mauberism are used in election campaigning by Fretilin but generally not by other political parties because of the historic partisan connections.

As the following chapters discuss, these changes are reflected in identity symbols; older symbols are reinterpreted in a new light due to changing political contexts and new symbolic forms are created from both the top-down and bottom-up.

CHALLENGES TO NATION-BUILDING (2002–2012)

Since the return to independence in 2002, the road to nation-building has been far from smooth, and numerous social divisions have presented significant challenges to fostering a unified national community. At the heart of each division is arguably a symbolic conflict of ownership and claims to the capital of the resistance, struggle, and suffering, as recognised by the state. The monopolisation of state discourses and identity narratives by a select few resistance-era leaders has led to a narrow valorisation of the resistance movement, where contributions to the struggle from those who were not Falintil or members of the ‘Generation of ‘75’ (ICG 2011, p. 18) are overlooked or undermined.

The most significant event of the first decade of self-determination that posed a threat to national unity was the 2006 Crisis, during which 38 people were killed and more than 100,000 people were internally displaced. Though divided along regional lines, the contestation of contributions to the glorified national struggle was a central cause of the crisis (see Leach 2017, pp. 175–189). This turbulent period began with a strike by members of the army, the *FALINTIL-Forças de Defesa de Timor Leste* (F-FDTL), who felt that they had experienced discrimination in terms of promotion because they were from the western regions of Timor-Leste (*Loromonu*). Sentiments of disrespect and discrimination stemmed from the reports that older members of the military who were from the eastern regions (*Lorosa’e*) had contributed more to the liberation struggle and had ‘won the war’ against Indonesia (Grove et al. 2007, p. 4). This was not only a matter of career advancement; it was a matter of pride and even belonging in a nation where legitimate membership is dependent on contributions to the liberation struggle. Indeed, many of the soldiers from the east had been former Falintil guerrillas and were thus in a position of significant influence as the most esteemed members of East Timorese society. Hundreds of soldiers, later known as ‘the Petitioners’, went on strike and were later sacked for their absence. Armed police, including the infamous ‘Major’ Alfredo Reinado, became involved and the crisis escalated into widespread civil unrest, violence,

and political instability.²² As this book will discuss, the 2006 crisis has had a serious impact on nation-building and has underlined just how powerful national identity narratives of legitimacy and claims of contributions to the struggle have been.

A further social divide that has presented challenges to national unity in Timor-Leste, though in a less violent manner, is the so-called ‘generation gap’. The generation gap is directly tied to notions of legitimacy and ‘true’ East Timorese-ness, and is telling of the exclusivity of nation-building throughout the first decade of independence. This division comes from and is characterised by the distinct cultural, educational, and linguistic legacies of the Portuguese and Indonesian occupations of the half island. The older generation of East Timorese who have dominated the early years of independence were born and educated under Portuguese rule, and have institutionalised their own cultural-linguistic heritage as the cornerstone of ‘true’ East Timorese-ness. Consequently, the *Geração Foun* (the ‘new’ or younger generation) who grew up under Indonesia have been alienated from nation-building and their claims to legitimate membership of the national community have been undermined (Arthur 2016, pp. 176–181). Moreover, their contributions to the liberation struggle through the youth and student factions of the resistance movement have been overlooked in state commemorations. This cultural alienation from their nation, coupled with limited prospects in terms of education and employment, has led to the estrangement of more than 60% of the population (Arthur 2016, p. 174; Wigglesworth 2012, p. 41, 2016).

With the establishment of a democratic state and the freedom of political membership and association, political rivalries have also represented a further source of dispute. The 2006 Crisis saw friction at the highest levels of government; then-President Xanana Gusmão openly clashed with the Fretilin government over the military strike and ultimately called for the resignation of its Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri. Both Gusmão and Alkatiri are key political figures in the post-independence state because of their respective roles in the recent past: Xanana Gusmão was Commander in Chief of the Falintil and head of the overall resistance movement, and Mari Alkatiri was a founding member of the first pro-independence movement, ASDT/Fretilin, in 1974. As such,

²² Alfredo Reinado was one of the most famous of the Petitioners because of his escape from prison and evasion of capture for nearly two years. Chapter 4 discusses his influence on national politics and his role in the 2006 Crisis in detail.

they retain significant capital and influence as leaders of the ‘Generation of 75’. After a decade of independence and in the wake of the 2012 parliamentary elections, the old tensions between Gusmão and the Fretilin leadership seemed to re-emerge; Xanana Gusmão had formed a coalition government that excluded Fretilin, despite the fact that the latter had received a significant share of the votes. This perceived snub led to days of riots across the capital city, leaving one dead and dozens of cars and homes burnt out (see Feijo 2012, pp. 47–52); a reminder of the fragility of the peace and stability that had been established. Divisions in the state leadership are indicative of the power that comes with symbolic capital and the struggle for those at the top to retain their positions.

This book aims to examine how symbols have been used in such conflicts because of the capital they retain. This capital is acquired because of the national identity that they represent. Symbols thus provide insight into the universality of the tenets of struggle and suffering in collective identification and the popular imaginary, but also reflect the diversity of interpretations as to who can claim ownership of them and how.

REPRESENTING THE STRUGGLE: SYMBOLS OF AN EAST TIMORESE NATION

The chapters of this book are divided into three parts that trace the representation of aspects of an East Timorese national identity; from symbols that commemorate the past, through heroes and prominent leaders of the present, and culminating in symbols that represent hopes for the future of the nation. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on commemorative symbols that enshrine an historic identity and the core concepts of *funu* and *terus* in relation to the national past. Chapter 2 critically analyses how the national flag of Timor-Leste and the Fretilin party flag exemplify the role of symbols that commemorate emotive aspects of the national past; it elucidates how flags have been significant sites of symbolic conflict; and it argues that ultimately, the core tenets of identity that they represent have ensured their continued power in the national imaginary. Chapter 3 analyses the same components of struggle and suffering that constitute a powerful unifying force in collective identification, represented in monuments and memorials. It elucidates the ways in which new meanings can be attributed to old symbols, and how symbols created at a grassroots level can influence official notions of nationalism from the bottom up, especially in relation to victimhood.

In Part Two, Chapters 4 and 5 incorporate theories of national heroes to demonstrate the similar representative role that they perform in national identification. Symbols objectify abstractions of a collective identity and national heroes embody and personify them, presenting an exemplar to the national community. Chapter 4 is a study of national heroes and how they perform a representative function similar to symbols, taking the figure of Dom Boaventura as an example of the personification of national identity and symbolic capital. Chapter 5 analyses the ways in which Xanana Gusmão—one of the most influential leaders in Timor-Leste—presents himself to the national community as a contemporary national hero. Drawing on theories of charismatic leadership, national heroes, and symbols, it examines how he has visually and discursively (re) presented himself as the embodiment of the national character.

Part Three focuses on political symbols that represent the values and hopes of the national community for the future. Since 2002, the ongoing nation-building project in Timor-Leste has raised an acute awareness of the socio-economic and political challenges that remain. Discourse at the level of the state continues to reference the liberation struggle but now in a figurative sense; the struggle continues against poverty, illiteracy, and disunity. This discourse reflects the changing needs and values of the national community and demonstrates the ways in which national identity evolves. Chapter 6 discusses the symbolism of political party flags, created since the 1999 independence ballot, that represent a reconceptualization of the concept of the national struggle for peace and prosperity. Chapter 7 examines the way in which the *Geração Foun* has identified with the redefined, figurative national struggle through their primary medium of symbolic expression: street art. This typically subversive art form is telling of the cultural and political marginalisation that this generational group has experienced since the return to independence. The chapter examines how younger East Timorese from the *Geração Foun* negotiate the generation gap, utilising street art as a platform and site of symbolic conflict to critique the monopolisation of nation-building by an older generation of resistance leaders.

The final chapter concludes my discussion of the ways in which national identity has evolved in the recent past in Timor-Leste, highlighting the core tenets that remain unchanged and retain significant symbolic capital, and those elements that have adapted to the changing circumstances of the post-conflict, nation-building project. I present my findings and raise questions for future research in this area which is thus

far under-researched, yet critical to the contemporary politics of one of the world's youngest nation-states.

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PART I

Commemorative Symbols

Flying the Nation's Colours: Commemorations of the Past and the National Flag of Timor-Leste

Flags are primary markers of nations and national identities, and constitute powerful symbolic representations of a national community's historical and cultural heritage. Alongside a nation's other emblems, anthems, and symbols, they project an image of that identity not only to the nation itself, but to others in the international community (Cerulo 1993, p. 243; see also Kolstø 2006, pp. 676–701). However, the symbolic power of flags is dependent on more than a state's projection, and they need continual popular interaction with them since symbols only gain power and meaning once the members of the nation react to them. Benedict Anderson posits that communities draw their imaginings and being from signs and symbols, primarily through written language (2006, p. 13). Lucy Bryson and Clem McCartney argue that culture itself is a language and cultural symbols constitute the signs that allow for imaginings of community to take place:

“culture is a language” in the sense that culture consists of signs which are structured and organised like language. Flags and anthems are such cultural signs. From this perspective the flag is just a piece of cloth [...] until people react to it in ways which give it meaning and significance. (1994, p. 4)

As with all symbols, the meanings attributed to the flag are what engage members of the national community, by objectifying abstractions of their collective identity and allowing imaginings to take place. As members

identify with the flag, they are able to attribute their own individual interpretations and meanings to it, and this cycle is repeated in the ongoing process of national identification. Upon gaining popular recognition of their symbolic meanings, flags perform the unifying and representative function of national symbols; flags become the ‘glue’ that states develop to bind together their national emblems, identity, and notions of nationhood (Leib and Webster 2007, p. 31).

In Timor-Leste, flags are common and powerful symbols of identity. Two flags in particular exemplify their symbolic role of representing identity and evoking aspects of the national past: the national flag of Timor-Leste and that of Fretilin (*Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente*), one of the largest and most influential political parties. The symbolic power of flags is augmented in an East Timorese cultural context as they constitute particularly powerful markers of authority as well as identity.¹ For centuries, flags have been holders of great symbolic capital, and seen as markers of political and judicial power since the Portuguese colonial era (McWilliam and Bexley 2008, p. 71). Moreover, cosmologically flags are seen as sacred objects that possess a sense of *lulik* or spiritual potency, and should thus be handled with respect and reverence (Traube 1986, p. 51). This established cultural understanding of flags and their political importance instantly ensures that all flags are attributed significant symbolic capital, and especially the national flag of Timor-Leste and the Fretilin party flag as symbols of identity.

The national and Fretilin flags exemplify the importance of commemorative symbols in representing the core tenets of *funu* (struggle) and *ternus* (suffering) of East Timorese nationalism in the post-independence state. These flags are relatively ‘historic’ symbols: the political parties that were established after the 1999 independence ballot have since created their own flags but the national and Fretilin flags originated in the 1970s, and are thus some of the oldest symbols of the young nation-state. Since they were both created by Fretilin before the 1975 Indonesian invasion, they incorporated the history of Timor-Leste up until that point into their symbolism. The sense of struggle that defines East Timorese nationalism was consequently imagined in relation to Portuguese colonialism at that time. Yet as national identity evolves with changing circumstances, the meanings attributed to these political symbols also developed and changed. As a result of their representative role in the resistance movement, the national

¹For further discussion of the historical, political, and cultural significance of flags in Timor-Leste, see McWilliam and Bexley (2008), Leach (2002), Hohe (2002), and Traube (2011).

flag and Fretilin party flag are now imagined to represent the primary concepts of *funu* and *terus* and a nationalism that has been (re)constructed in light of the more recent Indonesian occupation. Like all symbols, these historic flags have been flexible enough to adapt to new meanings that coincide with official state narratives, ensuring their continued endorsement since 2002. By tracing the changes in symbolic meanings, this symbolic function becomes clear and the flags' relevance to contemporary imaginings of national identity in Timor-Leste is underlined.

In a discussion of flags in Timor-Leste, it is impossible to consider the 1975 national flag without the Fretilin party flag, and vice versa, for two main reasons. Firstly, the flags were two of the most widely recognised symbols of the resistance movement that mobilised and gave form to stirrings of East Timorese nationalism under the Indonesian occupation. Second, at a glance, it is immediately apparent that the flags share clear aesthetic and symbolic traits, as a result of their common Fretilin authorship in the 1970s. When we consider that a primary objective of nation-building is to foster unity among a diverse group of people, and that this process has established a democratic state in Timor-Leste, any partisan connections to the national flag are problematic. Given that a primary source of symbolic conflict in the post-independence years has been the domination of nation-building by a select few resistance-era figures, including Fretilin and its leadership, these flags present particularly interesting case studies of identity symbols. This chapter asks the pertinent question of why the Fretilin-authored national flag was reinstated after independence was regained, instead of the state simply creating a new flag. It examines the shared histories of the two flags to reveal the motivations behind the continued endorsement of the 1975 national flag in the post-independence state. By shedding light on the ways in which its symbolism has evolved through new popular imaginings, we can understand how partisan ties to Fretilin have diminished with time and how the flag has come to represent all of its citizens, regardless of political affiliation.

MONOPOLISING THE NATION-BUILDING PROJECT? FRETELIN AND ITS FLAGS

A study of these Fretilin-authored flags exemplifies how the social hierarchy, based on contributions to the national liberation struggle, has enabled a small elite to monopolise sources of symbolic capital and thus nation-building in Timor-Leste. As the following chapters will discuss, it

is this concentration of symbolic power in the hands of a select few that has led to numerous conflicts of ownership and legitimacy in relation to recognition and membership of the national community. In the post-independence state, a national flag that is strikingly similar to the flag of a prominent political party is problematic, especially within the context of a recently established democratic system of governance. With regards to collective identification, a national flag should hold meaning for the whole nation as diverse as it may be (Elgenius 2007, p. 26). Therefore, any explicit association with a political party in a democratic state, especially if that party is not the most popular, is problematic for two reasons. First, it does not fully represent the pluralist nature of the democratic, political system. Second, if processes of national identity formation were tied to a single political party, then that party's role in nation-building could be too overbearing. It has been asserted that this has been the case in the early years of independence and that Fretilin has monopolised nation-building, with the national flag cited as an example of this. Indeed, the evident aesthetic similarities between the two flags point to issues of ownership of symbolic capital, the authority it bestows on others, and full and fair representation within the nation-building project.

Whilst Fretilin played a significant role in creating an East Timorese national consciousness in the recent past (see Hill 2002, especially pp. 61–92), it is not the only political party to have large popular support in the post-independence era. In the first elections for the Constituent Assembly in 2001, Fretilin secured 57% of the vote, a victory that demonstrated the party's popularity immediately prior to full national self-determination (King 2003, p. 747). However, in the 2007 national parliamentary elections the party saw its support decrease, receiving 29% of the vote (McWilliam and Bexley 2008, p. 75). This was the best result of any political party in that particular election, but the smaller majority reflected the number of newly-created political parties and the diverse alternatives that the electorate had to Fretilin as a result. In the 2012 parliamentary elections Fretilin lost its majority, coming second to the CNRT (*Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor-Leste*) which won 36.6% (Secretariado Técnico de Administração Eleitoral 2012).² Though Fretilin remains a primary contender for government, it is evident that

²The 2017 elections saw Fretilin return to power, albeit with a minority government, which ultimately collapsed and led to further elections in May 2018.

the party is no longer the nation's only favourite and cannot legitimately be the sole leaders of the nation-building process.

Fretilin's state-leadership in the years immediately following self-determination placed the party in a prime position to monopolise the sources of legitimacy and symbolic power of the nation; this is because 'the state [or leadership] is a referee, albeit a powerful one, in struggles over this monopoly' of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1989, p. 22). By taking the lead in the initial years of nation-building, Fretilin was also able to establish the discourses, symbols, and instigate the nationalist ideology that would ensure continued reverence of the resistance era and thus continued legitimization of its leading role in state politics. Symbolic conflicts over the authority to lead the nation-building project have been instigated by some who reject the national flag and assert that Fretilin has wrongly dominated the process of national identity construction. A number of small groups, for example Colimau 2000 (a ritual arts group), have argued that the 1975 national flag is too similar in appearance to the Fretilin party flag and is therefore unrepresentative and unacceptable (Myrntinen 2013, p. 213). Others, such as the Conselho Popular Demokrátiku (CPD)-RDTL veterans' organisation, have not disputed the design or construction of the national flag but have instead claimed it as their own, arguing that Fretilin has unrightfully monopolised the symbol (Myrntinen 2013, p. 213). Though these non-state actors are small in size and number, their criticisms of the apparent partisan connections between Fretilin and the national flag raise pertinent questions about its efficacy in representing the nation, and provide one example of the discontent felt when claims of ownership of symbolic capital are exclusivist in nature.³

From the perspective of those who criticise the post-independence endorsement of the 1975 national flag, the symbolic capital of the resistance movement has been exploited and monopolised by Fretilin in the young democratic state.⁴ The process of creating a national history and heritage is typically subjective and is prone to symbolic conflicts because nations are inherently diverse communities. Simon Harrison's

³This conflict over claims to symbolic capital is an example of Bourdieu's 'social relations'. He argues that "social problems" are social relations: they emerge from confrontation between two groups, two systems of antagonistic interests and theses' (Bourdieu 1980, p. 269).

⁴While Fretilin constituted the political representative of the East Timorese people throughout the occupation, the resistance movement was reformed in 1987 to become an umbrella organization without overt partisan ties (Niner 2001, pp. 21–22).

concept of a ‘proprietary contest’, in which the rights, claims, or ownership of symbolic capital is disputed, explains how such symbolic conflict has taken place in the first decade of independence (1995, p. 258). Symbols depend on recognition by the collective in order for them to have potency, and ownership of symbolic capital is also legitimated by the population. The imaginings of the national community not only establish which symbols represent the collective, but they affirm those actors who can legitimately utilise and own them. The role of the people in these processes is fundamental, and it certainly problematises the 1975 national flag authored by Fretilin. Yet the agency of the majority also suggests that, after a decade of nation-building and no change in national flag, there is capital attributed to this symbol that has ensured its continued endorsement.

When tracing the evolution of meaning in the national flag of Timor-Leste, it is important to outline its origins because they predate the nationalist narratives that have been established in the newly independent state. The national flag was constructed in 1975 and *before* the Indonesian occupation, one of the most important and defining periods of the national community’s history. Indeed, it is in recalling this period of time that an East Timorese identity, founded on suffering and sacrifice for independence, is expounded. Moreover, as the Indonesian occupation is still retained within living memory for many, this identity is rendered more emotive and profound than a more distant past, as hundreds of thousands of East Timorese suffered, lost loved ones, and died in the fight for self-determination (see Saul 2001; Kiernan 2002). While the official symbolism of the flag does encompass a commemoration of the centuries under Portuguese colonialism, it does *not* include references to this defining moment of national history. In light of this, on paper, the symbolism of the national flag does not fully represent this most central component of East Timorese nationalism.

Nonetheless, it is important to reaffirm the fact that the meanings attached to the national flag by the people are not static. Popular identifications with this historic symbol in a post-independence context can accordingly shed light on the ways in which national identity continues to be (re)produced at a grassroots level. The role of both the national and Fretilin flags in resisting the Indonesian occupation has changed their symbolic meanings, and popular imaginings of the national flag’s symbolism now coincide with national identity narratives, demonstrating the flexible nature of symbols that accommodate changing

contexts. Contemporary interpretations of the flags, articulated from the top-down and from the bottom-up, see them as symbols of the revered struggle for independence which render them key national symbols of the new nation-state. Comparable symbolic associations can be made with the Fretilin party flag as a result of its similar role under the occupation, allowing the party to retain significant symbolic capital and respect in the post-independence state. Crucially, though the official symbolism of these flags does not incorporate a commemoration of the Indonesian occupation, there is a popular *belief* in or of imagining of their representation of the history of the nation at this time. It is in this way that the flags demonstrate the flexible nature of symbols and their meanings, as well as the agency of the national community in legitimising their representative symbols.

CONSTRUCTING MEANING IN THE FLAGS OF RESISTANCE IN TIMOR-LESTE

Upon its design in 1975, the national flag of Timor-Leste was deliberately constructed by Fretilin to represent the national community and commemorate its history to date (Fig. 2.1). Red, which is the most predominant colour of the flag, symbolises the fight for national independence and freedom: in other words, the notion of *funu* (RDTL 2007, p. 5). The yellow triangle symbolises the remaining influences of colonialism; the black of the other triangle represents the obscurantism left by colonialism that must be overcome; and the white star represents the ultimate goal of peace (RDTL 2007, p. 5). Whilst war and bloodshed represented by red and peace symbolised by white are common symbolisms in flags across the world, in the national flag of Timor-Leste these concepts were understood within a particular historical context in the 1970s. Red specifically encompasses the concept of an indigenous *funu* and struggling against foreign occupation, specifically Portuguese

Fig. 2.1 The national flag of Timor-Leste

colonialism; white symbolises the peace sought after the fratricide of the 1974 civil war and conflict with external forces (see CAVR 2006, pp. 23–49). Further, the meaning attached to the colours of yellow and black was constructed to apply specifically to Timor-Leste’s history of Portuguese colonialism and to commemorate shared post-colonial heritage. It is worth noting that the original meaning given to the yellow segment—the wealth of the land—was shared exactly with the same colour symbolism of the Fretilin flag. The change in meaning was made with the 2002 Constitution and demonstrated a subtle shift away from the flag’s partisan roots (Leach 2017, p. 140). Nonetheless, when the national flag was created in 1975, it exemplified the way in which such symbols and their meanings are constructed to represent a specific national community: a truly East Timorese flag, a product of its history.

Other than the slight change in relation to the symbolism of yellow in the flag, none of the symbolic meanings have been changed or officially updated by the state since the 1970s. Much is still shared by both the national and Fretilin flags. The aesthetic resemblance to the Fretilin party flag is not mentioned in official government references to the national flag or in party documents, despite their common structure, meanings, origins, and authorship. The same colours representative of war, sacrifice and peace are contained in both flags and parallels of meaning and symbolism can be drawn from both. The Fretilin flag is made up of red and yellow rectangles, with a white star on a black background and the name of the party clearly marked in the centre (Fretilin 1998; Fig. 2.2).⁵ The symbolism that it evidently shares with the national flag can be seen in the red that also signifies *funu*, and the black that also represents the time during which Timor-Leste was colonised (Fretilin 1998). Yellow now differs somewhat in meaning in the Fretilin flag, retaining its original significance of the natural richness of the land of Timor, and its white star shares the symbolism of peace and hope for the future (Fretilin 1998).

The global historical and political context of the creation of the Fretilin party flag in 1974 is crucial to analysing its symbolism. Fretilin chose a combination of colours and symbols common to other anti-colonial movements across the world, rooted in a socialist ideology and also seeking national liberation. The independence movements in

⁵The details of the symbolism of the Fretilin flag comes from a Fretilin manual, given to those members who attended the National Timorese Convention in Portugal, 25–27 April 1998. This information was kindly shared with me by an individual present at this conference.

Fig. 2.2 The flag of the *Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente* (Fretilin)

Mozambique and Angola shared in ideology with Fretilin, and the flags created by each respective movement present clear parallels in terms of structure and symbolism. The national flags of Mozambique and Angola—also former Portuguese colonies—contain some aesthetic similarities to the East Timorese national flag. In the Mozambican flag, the shapes used (a triangle imposed upon a rectangle, divided by stripes of different colours) and the colours red, black, yellow, and white are all present in the flag, in which the five-pointed star is also an important element. In the Angolan flag, the colours are red, black, and yellow and the same star is also present.

The colour red immediately brings to mind certain connotations of the particular political context of the creation of the flags in the 1970s. Since the late nineteenth century, red has been adopted as the main colour of socialism and symbolised revolution, radicalism, and leftist dissent (Sawer 2007, p. 41). Throughout the twentieth century—particularly during the Cold War—the colour became almost synonymous with communism, and socialism is still represented by the red rose today (Sawer 2007, pp. 41–42). The use of the five-pointed star in each of these flags is also associated with leftist politics as the flags of the former USSR, China, and Cuba (all socialist or communist states) also contained stars.⁶ The choice of red within the East Timorese, Mozambican, and Angolan national flags as a symbol of revolt was deliberate, stemming from the revolutionary movements' common leftist and anti-colonial ideology.

Within this context, the similarities found between the national flag of Timor-Leste and the Fretilin party flag are not as unusual as they might first appear. The Mozambican national flag was constructed by

⁶Though the Cuban flag was first raised in 1902, long before Castro's 1959 revolution instated a socialist government, throughout the Cold War Cuba and its national symbols and iconography were synonymous with communism.

the revolutionary FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*), a Marxist movement and a contemporary of Fretilin in the 1970s that also sought independence from Portuguese colonial rule (see Luke 1982; Bowyer-Bell 1971). It is believed that FRELIMO could have been a significant influence and inspiration for Fretilin (Wise 2004, p. 157); several party leaders spent time in Mozambique before the declaration of independence in 1975 and many Fretilin members (including Secretary General Mari Alkatiri) who were exiled after the Indonesian invasion spent the years of the occupation there (Hill 2006). The Mozambican national flag was created by FRELIMO after gaining independence and similar to Fretilin in Timor-Leste, the movement created a national flag that reflected its political roots but that was subtly different from its own flag. Similarly in Angola, the revolutionary pro-independence movement, the MPLA (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*), authored the Angolan national flag once self-determination had been regained, basing its construction and colours on its own party symbol. The primary distinction between the Angolan flags is the absence of the central five-pointed star symbol from the national flag to ‘remove’ party ties.

The context in which these movements and their symbols were created is critical to the evolution of their symbolic meaning because as contexts change, identities are renegotiated and redefined. Consequently, the symbolic representations of an identity must also be capable of change and evolution. Although Fretilin had originally leant towards a revolutionary socialist ideology, today the party has moved from the left of the political spectrum towards the centre (Shoesmith 2011, pp. 28–31). The change in status from an occupied, colonised territory to one of self-determination has inevitably softened the political leanings of Fretilin, having achieved the goal of independence. The symbolic meanings of the East Timorese national flag that were once associated with a socialist ideology have been superseded by nationalism and more recent, imaginings related to the Indonesian occupation.⁷

When it was raised for the first time in November 1975, the national flag of Timor-Leste was presented as a symbol of independence in itself, in addition to the specific symbolisms of its components. In the following decades of the Indonesian occupation, this symbolic meaning

⁷Indeed, as Sawyer suggests, in the twenty-first century ‘[a]ppeals to patriotism are seen to trump appeals to socialist solidarity’ (2007, p. 42).

became heightened and it came to symbolise the freedom that the East Timorese people hoped to regain. Similarly, the Fretilin flag initially embodied the political party and its historic origins, but went on to represent the resistance and the opposition to the Indonesian presence in Timor-Leste as well. Subsequently, the two flags became almost interchangeable symbols of the independence movement as a result of their aesthetic similarities and because of their shared symbolism of the struggle. The first national flag came to represent the defiance of the East Timorese people to being subsumed into Indonesia whilst the Fretilin flag was the symbol of the organization that politically represented that ideal. It was in this way that initial associations of the flags with an emerging national identity became evident.

When Timor-Leste officially regained its independence in 2002, the change in context influenced meanings and interpretations of the national flag, which was of critical importance to imaginings of national identity. People no longer directly associated the national flag with its Fretilin origins or even freedom from Portuguese colonialism, as much as with the resistance to Indonesia and the more recent liberation struggle. The evolution of the national flag's symbolism paralleled the evolution East Timorese nationalism, developed through popular imaginings. The decision to re-adopt the 1975 national flag as the official flag of Timor-Leste was a deliberate choice to recognise and respect the first declaration of independence and its restoration (Hohe 2002, p. 81). The justification for this decision to reinstate the original national flag, created by Fretilin, comes from memories of the Indonesian occupation and the ways in which the East Timorese people re-imagined its symbolic meaning.

‘MATE-BANDEIRA HUN’: REMEMBERING THE STRUGGLE AND SACRIFICE FOR THE FLAGS

Upon its creation in 1975, the East Timorese national flag was symbolically connected with *funu*, or the sense of struggle against foreign rule, firstly in relation to Portuguese colonialism and reaffirmed by the Indonesian occupation. However, the symbolic connections to the concepts of suffering and sacrifice as core elements of contemporary East Timorese-ness were only later attributed to the national flag by the people as a result of its role in representing the resistance movement, and the brutality that was perpetrated by the Indonesian military as a result of its presence.

As the East Timorese national flag came to represent the goal of self-determination and dissent following the 1975 invasion, it was commonplace for the Indonesian military to respond with repression to its public display. Retaliations to the flying of the East Timorese national flag were extreme and violent because the Suharto dictatorship had ruled that the only flag that could legally be flown in its territories was the *Merah Putih*, the national flag of Indonesia. This law had been implemented since the invasion to symbolically demonstrate Timor-Leste's incorporation into Indonesia. The decision to enforce the law was perhaps recognition of the cultural significance of flags in Timor-Leste as markers of political authority. The flag law was a message directed at the East Timorese people, since the territory had been effectively shut off from the outside world until 1989 when a Portuguese parliamentary delegation was due to visit. In preparation for international media attention, the visual power of flags was further recognised: the Indonesian government bought 30,000 Indonesian flags to be flown from East Timorese houses, as a way of enforcing its policy of 'normalization' and to visually portray an 'integrated' East Timorese population to the outside world (see Moore 2001, pp. 23–24). Those East Timorese who had not fled the territory after the invasion were forced to 'accept the red and white' and fly the *Merah Putih* outside their homes, or face violent consequences (Bartu 2001, p. 82). Indeed, the Indonesian flag and its colours would be associated with fear and repression for the East Timorese population: the Indonesian-sponsored militias (such as the *Besi Merah Putih*, *Sakunar Merah Putih*, and the *Gumtur Merah Putih*) were identified by the red and white colours of their uniform, and were notorious for their brutality towards those thought to be independence sympathisers (Bartu 2001, p. 82; see also Moore 2001, pp. 23–24).

The symbolic act of supporting the resistance by flying the East Timorese national flag, and thereby breaking Indonesian law by rejecting the *Merah Putih*, was synonymous with defiance during the occupation. Equally, the East Timorese people's identification with a different national flag from that of the occupying forces visually demonstrated the notion that the two nations were fundamentally different. This is a primary function of flags: these are key symbols that demarcate 'groupness' and boundaries between ingroups and outgroups, where the groups are national communities (Schatz and Lavine 2007, p. 332). In light of the fact that flags perform the function of symbolic boundary markers for collectives, this was a powerful statement. The distinctions between the East Timorese and the Indonesian nations were highlighted in practice on a

daily basis by the resistance movement through language and religion (see Taylor 1999, pp. 149–167; Archer 1995, pp. 120–133), but the most visible sign of differentiation was the national flag that was flown. Thus, the 1975 national flag visually delineated the symbolic boundary of the East Timorese national community, and symbolised the right of its people to self-determination. The violence that was perpetrated against those who displayed the flag has secured the connection made between the national flag and the notion of *terus* and sacrifice, as well as *funu*, in memories of the recent past that underpin contemporary nationalist narratives.

The association of the national flag with suffering in the struggle for independence was such that, as Raphaël Pouyé states, ‘to be “*mate bandeira-hun*”’—to be “of those who die by the flagpole”—was a colloquial Timorese phrase designating selfless patriotism’ throughout the occupation (2005, pp. 48–49). The colloquialism’s significance is underlined when we recall the cultural importance of flags in Timor-Leste as sacred objects and symbols of legitimate authority (Hohe 2002, p. 79; see also Molnar 2010, p. 16). This specific understanding of flags expounds the significance of rejecting the *Merah Putih* in favour of the East Timorese national flag, and highlights the importance of the first declaration of independence to the East Timorese people. For the majority of the population, legitimate political authority resided with those who raised the national flag of Timor-Leste. Within this context, there is recognition that to die under the East Timorese national flag—the symbol of legitimate authority in popular imaginings—was to be a true subject of the nation. There is also an implication that to question the legitimacy of the national flag would be to undermine the sacrifices made under it (Pouyé 2005); this would be considered not only as an act of disloyalty to the resistance but also to the national community that had begun to form and collectively identify under it. The connection made between the symbol, suffering and sacrifice has presented those who died under the national flag as martyrs to the sub-state during the occupation. Popular memories of these martyrs continue to mingle contemporary conceptions of the nation and the resistance movement.

Similar violent reprisals were also committed against the many East Timorese who flew the Fretilin party flag. Fretilin unified the population under the Indonesian occupation and transformed the resistance into a ‘shadow state’; that is, a state operating within a state in which Fretilin ran education and welfare programmes and health centres for the populace, defended by its own armed forces, the Falintil (*Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste*) (Pouyé 2005,

pp. 1–60; see also Cabral and Martin-Jones 2008, pp. 156–157; Ramos-Horta 1987, p. 39). Throughout the occupation Fretilin was politically active and its party network, operating at a sub-state level, spanned the whole territory (Hohe 2002, p. 72). The fact that the majority of the population supported the resistance movement signified a belief in a common cause, a sense of unity, and the beginnings of imagining a national community. Tanja Hohe affirms that ‘[a] national identity laid its roots in this period and very much through Fretilin’s activities’ (2002, p. 71). As a result of Fretilin’s leading role in the resistance movement, identification with its symbols and the cause of liberation was demonstrated through the flying of the party flag.

Following the invasion of Timor-Leste, it was common that whole families and local communities were shot for flying Fretilin flags outside their houses (Taylor 1999, p. 69). The public display of the Fretilin flag was a powerful statement. It suggested that whilst Timor-Leste was occupied and had no official independent leadership, the people identified with the party as their political representative and with its flag as a symbol of the nation in resistance. As such, it was a ‘national’ symbol of *funu* in the imagination of the East Timorese people before they had a nation in constitutional terms. The constant threat of violence and death towards Fretilin sympathisers has also forged a symbolic connection between the party flag and contemporary narratives of suffering and sacrifice. If those who died under the Fretilin flag were also considered to be martyrs to the shadow state during the occupation, any commemoration of them in the present also connects Fretilin to ideas of struggle and suffering in imaginings of the national past. As Angie Bexley summarises, for many East Timorese ‘Fretilin, as a symbol of a social movement, embodies a sense of struggle of what it means to be a “pure” Timorese: to fight, to suffer, in order to be free from colonial structures’ (2007, p. 81). Given the power of these emotive components of official East Timorese nationalism, associations made between them and the Fretilin flag have attributed it significant symbolic capital in the post-independence state.

Indonesian repression against the display of either of the Fretilin-authored flags was common throughout the occupation, even to the last days of the UN-sponsored independence ballot in 1999. The Suharto regime was very aware of the international attention that would be focused on its ‘27th province’ for the vote, and the potency of flags as identity markers was not underestimated. Adopting a similar policy on flag flying to that of 1989, Jakarta intensified its enforcing of the public display of the

Merah Putih in the build up to the ballot. Charles Scheiner, an eyewitness in the days after the East Timorese people overwhelmingly voted for independence, noted that ‘new Indonesian flags flew in front of every house on the street. The militia had visited each home, threatening to kill people if they were pro-independence’ (1999). An individual’s position on independence (or integration) was demonstrated by the flag that appeared outside their home and those who did not fly the *Merah Putih* risked their lives by symbolically demonstrating their vote for independence. Regardless of the fact that aesthetic similarities may help to blur the distinctions between the East Timorese national flag and the Fretilin party flag, they had both become symbols of the liberation struggle and the goal of self-determination for Indonesian as much as for the East Timorese people.

After enduring the further violence that took place after the ballot, the East Timorese people finally regained the independence that had been taken from them in 1975. Since self-determination, these historic flags have both held great symbolic capital and evoke the emotive tenets of nationalist narratives—*funu* and *terus*—rendering them symbols with which the majority of the population identify. Sharing in their histories, symbolic meanings, and capital, the national flag of Timor-Leste and the Fretilin party flag were some of the most powerful instigators of national identification and unity when contextualised in the recent past. By 2002, the original national flag was directly linked to the concept of independence from Indonesia in the minds of the people, though its official symbolism remained in reference to the history of Portuguese colonialism. Abner Cohen argues that with the passing of time and with the evolution of collective identification, ‘old symbols and ideologies become strategies for the articulation of new interest groupings [...] [and] *old symbolic forms perform new symbolic functions*’ (1974, p. 39). In other words, symbols collect and acquire symbolic capital and take on new meanings in different contexts. This is precisely how the original 1975 national flag came to be endorsed in the post-independence era and was distanced from its partisan origins.

NEW SYMBOLIC FUNCTIONS: POST-INDEPENDENCE PERSPECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL FLAG

By recalling and representing memories of the Indonesian occupation and those who struggled against it, the national flag continues to provide a locus for national identification and facilitates national unity,

crucial for the nation-building project. It is widely accepted that national flags and symbols are powerful political tools and vehicles for rallying popular support, allegiance and even sacrifice (Schatz and Lavine 2007, p. 330). This was certainly the case for both the national flag and the Fretilin flags during the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste. It was perhaps inevitable, in light of the recent past and the sacrifices made under the national flag that the 1975 national flag would be reinstated in the new nation-state. Indeed, the Fretilin party flag carried with it the same connotations of sacrifice that secured significant popular support for the party in the immediate years following the 1999 ballot. It was the changes in historical and political contexts—from freedom from Portuguese colonialism to subjugation under Suharto—that caused the flags to be reimagined by the population. The popular imaginary has rendered them powerful in the post-independence state and while some minority groups have protested the reinstatement of the original national flag, the new meanings given to it seem to have prevailed with the majority of the population.

The critical decision to endorse the 1975 national flag was made with the intention of consolidating the unity that was fostered under the resistance movement in the new nation-state. This was in itself an acknowledgement of the new meanings that were evolving and the power that they would have. At the flag raising ceremony to mark the acceptance of Timor-Leste into the United Nations in 2002, the then-President Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão made the link between the national flag and notions of sacrifice explicitly clear: '*aqui honramos os mortos e os vivos, honramos também os homens e as mulheres das várias partes do mundo que contribuíram para a independência de Timor-Leste*' (Gusmão 2004, p. 74).⁸ As the head of state made reference to the dead and to those who sacrificed for independence at the flag-raising ceremony, a connection was made between the 1975 national flag and an emerging nationalism, and the idea was publicly reiterated that honour

⁸ 'Here we honour the dead and the living, we also honour the men and women from the various parts of the world that contributed towards the independence of Timor-Leste'. This translation and all others in this chapter are my own.

and recompense is due to those who suffered under this symbol of resistance (Traube 2007, pp. 21–22).⁹ This perspective is not solely passed down by the state but it is received, negotiated, and re-produced at a grassroots level, as one East Timorese man summarised: '[the national flag] is a symbol of us, our country, our identity, *many people died for this flag*, it is the colour of our spirit' (personal interview 2012; emphasis added). The association is universally made between suffering, sacrifice for the struggle, and the national flag of Timor-Leste, which clearly demonstrates how the symbolism of the national flag has changed since its creation.

It is interesting to note that despite societal divisions that have emerged since self-determination (Kingsbury 2010), the national flag seems to be a common emblem of respect even if its specific symbolism is not known. Inside almost every home there is a national flag on display, in various sizes. Those with some formal education are generally more aware of the symbology of the national flag due to the fact that it is now taught as part of the curriculum in primary schools throughout Timor-Leste.¹⁰ Article 29 of the 2007 *Law on National Symbols* stipulates that instruction in the meanings of the national flags, emblem, and anthem is compulsory (Leach 2017, p. 140). While completion rates for formal education are increasing, in 2009 approximately 18% of children of primary school age were not attending, and 23% of secondary levels students were out of school (EPDC 2014). Such statistics would suggest that, during the first decade of independence, a significant proportion of the population perhaps did not have full knowledge of the official symbolism of the 1975 national flag. These circumstances place greater importance on the processes of imagination and individual meaning-making in terms of identification at a popular level.

Despite the fact that many do not know the specific meanings behind the colours and symbols of the national flag, personal interpretations of

⁹There is an understanding in Timor-Leste that respect and honour is due to those who sacrificed and that those who suffered during the resistance should be recompensed (Traube 2007, pp. 21–22). The many East Timorese who died by the national flag under the Indonesian occupation are considered to be martyrs to the cause of national liberation and, in popular imaginings, are consequently attributed high prestige and respect.

¹⁰During my fieldtrip to Timor-Leste, I was able to see some of the textbooks used in primary schools that teach the symbolism of the national flag (for an example, see Pereira et al. 2009).

its symbolism are broadly in line with formal education and state discourses of the national liberation struggle. The following examples are taken from field research that I conducted in Timor-Leste after a full decade of nation-building. An alternative meaning was given to the black segment of the national flag by one man who stated: ‘*cor metan signifika precisa luta makaas hodi bele betan independencia*’ (personal interview 2012).¹¹ This interpretation was articulated in conjunction with accurate knowledge of the official symbolisms of the other colours, indicating that if some meanings aren’t known precisely, then similar ideas related to the liberation struggle are made. Another East Timorese woman stated that for her, the white star represented a light to show the nation the way: ‘*naroman atu hatudu dalan*’ (personal interview 2012). This path (*dalan*) could plausibly be imagined as one towards peace, however, this was not explicitly stated, suggesting a divergence with the official symbolism specified by the state and the Constitution. Regardless of how closely popular imaginings are aligned with state symbolisms, or how diverse these meanings are, there is an evident association of the flag with the recent struggle for independence that fosters a sense of national unity. In the words of another East Timorese man, who openly conceded that he did not know its official meaning:

Hau komprende, maibe ituan deit. [...] Bandeira nasional signifika boot. Nee signifika kona ba ema Timor hotu, ema mate, ema nebee mak moris, no ema nebee mak la hatene koaliala, ema nebee mak alizadu. Sira hotu iha laran. Bandeira nee ema hotu nian. (personal interview 24/07/2012)¹²

At the same time as articulating his own imaginings of its symbolism, he emphasised that the flag meant a lot (*signifika boot*). In this way, the national flag clearly demonstrates the flexible nature of symbols that are continuously reinterpreted by the national community as circumstances and contexts change.

¹¹‘The colour black symbolises the need to fight with strength to be able to gain independence’.

¹²‘I understand [the meaning of the colours] but only a little. [...] The national flag means a lot. Its meaning is about all Timorese people, people who died, people who are alive, people who don’t know how to speak, people who are isolated. They are all in it. The flag is everyone’s’.

On 20 May 2012, Timor-Leste celebrated the tenth anniversary of the restoration of its independence and the national flag was central to the celebrations. By commemorating the event that was explicitly referred to as the *restoration* of independence, the new East Timorese state reaffirmed the legitimacy of the 1975 declaration by the first Fretilin government, despite the fact that it was not initially recognised by the international community.¹³ The ‘National Flag Raising Ceremony’ lasted almost an entire day, before the official ‘National Flag Lowering Ceremony (RDTL 2012a)’. The day’s celebrations also included a minute’s silence in honour of the ‘fallen heroes’ of Timor-Leste, once again reiterating the association of the flag with the sacrifices made for the liberation of the nation (RDTL 2012a). At a local level, the national flag was visible on buildings, homes, and shops across Dili following a request by the Prime Minister for all East Timorese citizens to publicly display it the flag to mark the occasion (RDTL 2012b). While the request was made by the state, the act of flying the national flag is a regular occurrence and its colours have appeared on houses, shops, cars and motorbikes in various forms such as bunting, stickers, and more traditional flags (Figs. 2.3 and 2.4). The number of flags that remained on display in the months after the anniversary is testament to the widespread positive identification with and sense of ownership of the national flag.

East Timorese citizens from all backgrounds visibly celebrated independence through the display of the national flag, and the political elite from across the spectrum had shown similar fervour even before the restoration celebrations in 2012. Upon their establishment, all political parties in Timor-Leste fly the national flag at their headquarters, above or alongside their own flag (for example, see Figs. 2.5 and 2.6). An explanation for this was offered by a member of the *Partido Democrático*, who stated that flying the national flag at party headquarters is quite simply ‘a question of respect’ for all that it represents (personal interview 2012). In a diverse and pluralist democracy that includes over twenty political parties, the national flag is a common symbol to all, suggesting a universal affiliation with its contemporary popular meanings. Indeed, it is only after self-determination was won that so many political parties

¹³The organisation, CPD-RDTL, argued at the time that this restoration did not go far enough and that the ‘RDTL 1’ should be fully restored in all its glory (Leach 2017, p. 142).

Fig. 2.3 Shop fronts in Dili displaying the national flag and bunting

could exist, and thus democratic rule is linked to independence. Under the Suharto regime, repression was felt in all of Indonesia's territories and political association was strictly banned. As one East Timorese man summarised,

[There are] Many parties because Timor is independent, Timor is self-governing. [...] The people, because they are independent, the people come from a situation of oppression, when the Portuguese ruled, then after came Indonesian rule, then in 1999 Timor was independent. Everybody felt free, free to talk, free to have an opinion, free to form organizations, free to create associations. So, with the desire, the free will, the people created many, many parties. (personal interview, June 2012)

As a result, respect is shown for the flag that symbolises the sacrifices made for free and fair political association as well as independence. Crucially, it suggests that for many the partisan ties to Fretilin are not

Fig. 2.4 Bunting of the national flag of Timor-Leste hanging from shops in Dili

problematic or even known, and that the national flag can and is used by all parties in the post-independence state.

REPRESENTING FROM 1975 TO THE PRESENT: REINSTATING THE ORIGINAL NATIONAL FLAG OF TIMOR-LESTE

It is precisely because of this shared history with the Fretilin party flag, the associations with suffering and sacrifice in the struggle for independence, that the party continues to be respected today and the 1975 national flag that it created continues to be endorsed. However, the decision to adopt the original national flag of the RDTL was not taken without some dissent. Some small groups suggested changes to the national flag and proposed alternatives in the initial years of nation-building, though there was not enough popular support to officially alter it. Indeed, the only time a formal debate over the national flag of an independent Timor-Leste has

Fig. 2.5 The party headquarters of the *Partido Democrático* (PD)

taken place was in 2001 when the flag of the overall resistance movement, the *Conselho Nacional de Resistência Timorense* (CNRT), was considered as an alternative to the 1975 RDTL flag for the new state.¹⁴

Under the auspices of the United Nations Transitional Administration of East Timor (UNTAET) mission, there was a public debate in the Constitutional Commissions hearing as to whether the original 1975 national flag would continue to be endorsed in the post-independence state (Wallis 2016, pp. 117–118), or be replaced by the flag of the umbrella resistance movement, created in 1998.¹⁵ In addition to these

¹⁴The resistance movement acronym should not be confused with the post-independence political party, the *Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor-Leste*, which was created in 2007. The party has deliberately used the same acronym to draw on the symbolic capital of the resistance era, furthered by its leadership by Xanana Gusmão.

¹⁵Throughout the 1980s, the resistance movement (which included the armed, clandestine, diplomatic, and political wings of the movement) underwent numerous reforms. The numerous reforms resulted in the formation of the non-partisan umbrella group *Conselho*

Fig. 2.6 The national flag flying alongside the PD party flag at its headquarters

two options, other alternatives were proposed by minority groups that included flags containing other symbols that invoked an identity that was more focused on local tradition and custom. These suggested flags

Nacional de Resistência Maubere (CNRM) in 1987. The final reform was in 1998 when the CNRT name was decided, and which was the official and final name of the resistance movement until independence was officially regained in 2002 (Niner 2001, pp. 21–22).

incorporated such symbols as the traditional house (*Uma Lulik*), the crocodile (a symbol from popular mythology), and the dove (symbolic of the peace that was ultimately achieved) (Wallis 2016, p. 119). However, these suggestions never came to fruition and the debate revolved solely around the 1975 national flag and the CNRT flag of the resistance movement.

The CNRT resistance movement was the result of a series of reforms throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s to create a more inclusive movement, and to remove any partisan conflicts that may have existed beforehand. The official CNRT flag of the reformed resistance was aesthetically modelled on the Falintil flag and was therefore more visually aligned with the universally revered armed forces than with any one political party. It was for this reason that the CNRT flag was provisionally adopted by the UNTAET mission as a ‘temporary flag’ of Timor-Leste, and considered by some to be a more diplomatic option for the national flag in the newly independent, pluralist, democratic nation-state (Leach 2017, p. 161).

The 2001 flags debate focused on two main arguments as summarised by the Constitutional Affairs Branch of the UNTAET mission at the time: ‘the [1975] RDTL flag marked the birth of a sovereign state on 28 November 1975, whereas the CNRT flag [was] seen as symbolic of national unity and that used on 30 September 1999 [ballot]’ (UNTAET Constitutional Affairs Branch 2001).¹⁶ By the end of the Indonesian occupation, both flags had acquired significant symbolic capital as markers of an emerging national identity (Leach 2017, p. 161). UN observers at the time affirmed that ‘there was equal and strong support for both the RDTL and CNRT flags, both having been used in the struggle for independence’ (UNTAET Constitutional Affairs Branch 2001). While the original 1975 national flag had been consistently used throughout the occupation to represent the East Timorese national community in resistance, the image of the CNRT flag had been used on the ballot papers of the 1999 independence referendum to signify the option of self-determination—a powerful symbolic meaning to be attributed to this flag at a crucial moment in the history of the liberation struggle (Tanter et al. 2001, p. 245). Thus, while the CNRT flag was a very

¹⁶It is important to note that this debate over the national flag took place and was formerly considered by the UNTAET Constitutional Affairs Branch after public consultation. Popular opinion over the flag debate was divided, along lines of region and political opinion on other aspects of nation-building, including the decisions about national holidays and the official languages for the new state.

recent creation at the time of the independence referendum, it was the sole visual symbol on the ballot paper that had been used in a very powerful way to represent national liberation in a different visual way (Wallis 2016, p. 88).

The outcome of the 2001 flags debate is telling of the symbolic power that the original national flag had acquired throughout the Indonesian occupation and how its symbolism in the national imaginary had changed. The 1975 national flag had a sense of longevity that the CNRT flag did not; it symbolised the independence that was taken away and this association was carried throughout the entire twenty-four years, whereas the CNRT alternative was only created in the final year of the occupation. The adoption of the 1975 national flag was protected by the Constitution under Article 156, which stipulated that this decision was 'incapable of future revision' (cited in Leach 2017, p. 139). Despite some criticisms from opponents to the decision, there was widespread support for the choice of flag (Wallis 2016, pp. 117–118). The support for a Fretilin-authored flag is clear when the context of the 2001 debate is considered; on the brink of self-determination and mere months after the Indonesian military had left the territory devastated, any partisan conflicts that have since arisen in the post-independence state were not seen to be an issue at the time. One East Timorese official, who was *not* a supporter of Fretilin, used emotive language to attest that the choice was important because the 1975 national flag represented 'the blood and bone of all those who fought and died for this country' (cited in Wallis 2016, p. 118; see also Silva-Carneiro de Sousa 2001, p. 309). The connections between this national symbol and the core tenets of East Timorese nationalism—struggle and suffering—are clear, and it is understood that by honouring the flag, the dead are also honoured and respected. The UNTAET public consultations found significant popular support for the Fretilin-authored symbols and nationalism and this became more pronounced with the dissolution of the CNRT in 2001 (Leach 2017, p. 142).

VIVA FRENTE! POST-INDEPENDENCE PERSPECTIVES ON THE FRETELIN PARTY FLAG

As a means of affirming and retaining its former legitimacy, Fretilin has also made post-independence connections between its party symbols and national narratives of *funu* and *terus*. Since independence was regained, the strategy of employing a powerful discourse of sacrifice for the struggle

has been invoked by Fretilin with great success because of its history. In the early years of self-determination, Fretilin was not seen by the electorate as a political party as much as the political front of the resistance movement, deserving of respect for its leadership. In the early years of independence, to associate oneself with Fretilin through the vote was to affirm one's own experiences and memories of the occupation (Hohe 2002, p. 77). By recalling the recent past, the party has retained a degree of authority and respect in the ongoing struggle for symbolic power. Bourdieu states that 'in the symbolic struggle [...] for the monopoly over legitimate naming, agents put into action the symbolic capital that they have acquired in previous struggles and which may be juridically guaranteed' (1989, p. 21).

This has been Fretilin's strategy and the party has consequently been able to remain a key political player as a result. Ideas of self-sacrifice during the resistance are also invoked by other political parties in election campaigns, such as the CNRT and UNDERTIM, as a means of rallying electoral support by flying the flag of Falintil, for example. This strategy has been exploited by the generation of resistance leaders who have led party politics since independence was regained, and invoked by the 'younger' political parties in an attempt to compete with the symbolic capital that the resistance, its symbols and leaders still retain.¹⁷ It has proven to be very powerful in terms of garnering popular support and securing votes in a nation-state where electoral success relies heavily on personality politics and heroes. In the first decade of independence, to demonstrate support or respect for Fretilin has almost been an obligation for many because honour is believed to be due to this leading faction of the resistance movement. Fretilin has not changed its flag or symbols and continues to invoke the past struggle because it legitimises its symbolic capital, the authority it affords the party, and its consequent leading position in national politics.

Though Fretilin is no longer the only dominant party in East Timorese politics, there is still reverence shown to the party for its role in the resistance, which has been demonstrated in several ways. The unilateral respect felt towards Fretilin was expounded in 2007 when the desecration of Fretilin flags by Australian soldiers led to public outcry. Troops from the International Stabilisation Force in Timor-Leste had stolen three flags from two villages, amid protests from Fretilin supporters against the new

¹⁷The strategy of symbolic appropriation of the resistance era by post-independence political parties will be explored in more detail in Chapter 6.

government led by Xanana Gusmão.¹⁸ The soldiers had taken the Fretilin flags, torn them up, and made obscene gestures with the rags before taking them away (Murdoch 2007). Not only did the acts of desecration by the soldiers instigate accusations of hostility from the Howard administration towards the Fretilin government, but they underlined the strength of feeling towards Fretilin and its flag by the East Timorese people.

The defilement and destruction of the flags was condemned by both East Timorese and Australian governments as 'culturally insensitive', which was a gross understatement given that cosmologically flags are sacred objects and symbols of political authority in Timor-Leste. When the East Timorese people spoke about their outrage, however, the predominant cause of anger was directly connected to the concept of *mate-bandeira hun* and the role of the Fretilin flag in the recent past. This was articulated by an observing journalist at the time which echoed the sentiment: 'tens of thousands of Timorese died fighting under that flag during a bloody 30-year struggle for independence and the events [...] undermine their sacrifice and offend their memory' (Murdoch 2007). The popular associations of the Fretilin flag with the struggle for independence are clear and emotive and the sacrifices that were made under this symbol of the resistance movement are retained in the memories of many.

The public outcry and national media attention caused by the incident attests to the cultural importance of flags as symbols in Timor-Leste, as well as the respect that is still felt for Fretilin. It is worth noting that this incident took place in 2007, the same year of the parliamentary elections in which there was a significant drop in the number of votes won by Fretilin: its lowest result since self-determination. Moreover, this scandal took place shortly after the 2006 Crisis had begun, during which the Fretilin government had clashed with then-President Xanana Gusmão. The public disagreements between the government and the head of state contributed to popular disillusionment with the party and state leadership in general, and the disputes culminated in Fretilin Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri being forced to resign. Despite this unfavourable political context for Fretilin, the desecration of the party's flags and the outcry that it roused reaffirmed that a lack of electoral success did not necessarily equate a lack of respect. There may be

¹⁸Fretilin supporters protested because they believed that the new government had been formed illegally, that Fretilin had received more votes in the election than any other party and claimed that Gusmão's new government had unlawfully usurped the democratically elected government (Murdoch 2007).

Fig. 2.7 Supporters of the *Associação Social Democrata Timorense* (ASDT) party cheering on a Fretilin rally as it passes

many East Timorese who do not wish to be ruled by a Fretilin government but that does not mean that the appreciation felt for the political wing of the resistance movement has diminished.

Prior to the 2012 parliamentary elections, support for Fretilin was also publicly demonstrated at rallies and in the streets of the capital. The campaigning period was characterised by rallies and events across Dili for all parties, and flags, T-shirts, and posters from every political faction gave the city a vibrant, festive atmosphere. Notably, a rally for the *Associação Social Democrata Timorense* (ASDT) party was interrupted one afternoon when a group of Fretilin members and supporters passed by. Crowds stopped in the middle of the ASDT event to leave and cheer on the Fretilin supporters who were passing by in trucks and on motorbikes, flying the Fretilin party flag. Cries of ‘*viva Fretilin!*’ and ‘*viva Frente!*’ and the raised fist salute of Fretilin came from East Timorese who had previously been flying the flag of the ASDT party and wearing its colours the same afternoon (Fig. 2.7).¹⁹

¹⁹The modern ASDT party has historic connections to Fretilin: the original party was formed in 1974 but later transformed into Fretilin as it stands today. In 2000, Xavier do Amaral ‘resurrected’ the original ASDT that now co-exists alongside Fretilin (Shoesmith 2011, pp. 18–20). The symbol of the raised fist is predominantly associated with Fretilin in Timor-Leste and is the central image in the party’s emblem. This originates from Fretilin’s former revolutionary ideology.

Thus even if a significant number of East Timorese people now support other political parties, demonstrated through their attendance at rallies and on their ballot papers, there is still an element of respect shown for Fretilin. With or without significant electoral support, Fretilin continues to be seen as an integral actor in the fight for self-determination that must be recognised as such by 'true' East Timorese citizens. Even if an individual does not vote for Fretilin in an election, it is expected that they demonstrate some level of respect for the party in public.

In a state where national identity and unity are still in the process of consolidation, any unity that was achieved under the resistance movement is an evident starting point for the political elite. It is the memories of Fretilin's leading role in the resistance that preserve its prestige and present it as an organization that is still one worthy of respect. As McWilliam and Bexley affirm, 'The Fretilin name retains a deep legitimacy [...] For the many who endured the long years of the resistance struggle, Fretilin stands as a symbol of their shared suffering and eventual victory' (2008, p. 76). Regardless of electoral results in recent years, the origins of national identity and unity that are founded in the years of the Indonesian occupation are intertwined with Fretilin's roots and its contribution to the resistance. It is for this reason that respect is still felt for the party and the flags that it authored continue to be valued as representations of core aspects of 'true' East Timorese-ness.

CONCLUSION

As national symbols, flags have the ability to unite a potentially diverse national community and to emphasise what Leib and Webster term 'the centripetal forces of cohesion' through collective identification (2007, p. 31). For most national communities, these forces of cohesion are emotive aspects of the national past that are commemorated in such a way as to unite a diverse population under one, collective identity. In Timor-Leste, the centripetal forces of *fumu* and *terus* unite the population through symbolic commemorations of their past characterised by foreign rule, particularly the most recent Indonesian occupation that is still remembered by many. Expounded by the cultural and cosmological significance of flags as symbols of political and juridical authority, the importance of the historical flags of Timor-Leste has been consolidated within the nation-building project. For the East Timorese resistance movement, the national flag was a symbol of independence to be regained and a marker of a national identity

that was distinct from the foreign occupiers. Following self-determination, retrospective imaginings have added meanings of the suffering and sacrifices made for independence. Official state narratives of the recent past have encouraged and reinforced this association to legitimise the decision to readopt the 1975 flag, and in an attempt to strengthen national unity and identification, as part of the nation-building project.

The similar role of the Fretilin party flag as a representative symbol of the resistance movement has also attributed it connotations of suffering in the fight for self-determination, gaining the party significant authority and widespread reverence. In the newly democratic state, questions over the legitimacy of a Fretilin-authored national flag have been raised because national flags should be representative of the whole nation, diverse as it may be, and not have visible partisan ties. However, due to the change in symbolic meanings of both flags and the subsequent respect that is felt towards Fretilin, the party's authorship of the national flag in 1975 has not been so problematic as to change it. Moreover, the Fretilin party flag is itself a symbol of the former resistance and retains significant symbolic capital. By taking the lead in the initial years of nation-building, Fretilin was also able to establish the discourses, symbols, and instigate the nationalist ideology that would ensure continued reverence of the resistance era and thus continued legitimization of its leading role in state politics.

The reinstatement of the 1975 national flag commemorates both the initial declaration of independence as a legitimate act of autonomy by the nation, and the suffering that followed under the flag during the occupation. Consequently, although the official symbolisms do not enshrine contemporary discourses that are centred on the struggle from Indonesian rule, they are *believed* to encompass them by the members of the imagined national community. This belief renders the 1975 national flag a fundamental symbol of national identification for the imagined community and facilitates the nation-building project through the commemoration of this part of a common heritage based on the recent past.

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Monuments and Memorials: *Funu*, *Terus*, and Constructing an East Timorese National Identity

If imagined national communities exist through a common belief in a shared cultural and historical heritage, then remembrance and commemorative symbols are the tools that aid the imagination process. Within a context of nation-building, a process of ‘ideological colonization’ of the landscape with monuments and symbols takes place, in order to sustain imaginings of continuity between the nation’s past and its present (Gropas 2007, p. 536; see also Sharp 2009). As articulated by one East Timorese individual, monuments are important ‘[so that] we might know the history of our old generation [sic], before our present time’ (personal interview 2013).¹ It is ideological precisely because a national narrative is deliberately constructed with the agenda of fostering national unity in mind (Said 2000, pp. 176–177). They are given meaning by the state narratives that outline identity, and they simultaneously reinforce these narratives by their presence and visibility in the everyday life of the national community. In doing so, this ideological colonisation of the landscape can foster common imaginings and create the foundations of unity that are desired in young nation-states.

One of the most enduring and effective ways to symbolically incorporate official narratives of identity and heritage into the fibres of the ‘nation’ is by constructing monuments of key figures and events of the

¹Interview and transcript in English.

national past. This is critical to ‘nation making’ as it creates a visible, collective point of reference, reminding those who pass it that they share a common past that shapes community life in the present (Sandercock 1998, p. 207). A primary function of monuments is to commemorate a collective’s past and heritage; the word monument derives its meaning from the Latin *monumentum* and *monere*, meaning to remind or commemorate (Chastel-Rousseau 2011, p. 11). With the passing of time, however, monuments can become so familiar and embedded in the landscape that they are then unnoticed, forgotten, and simply blend into the background. Yet it is this subsumption into the national scenery and the continuous presence of monuments in the daily life of the national community that renders them powerful symbols of everyday nationalism. It is precisely because these symbols are able to blend into the landscape that they are powerful. Even if these symbols are not mindfully registered, the fact that they have been incorporated into the everyday landscape enables them to interact and intersect with the life of the nation as an accepted feature (Fox 2008, p. 549). Monuments have a sense of permanency: aged and weather-worn, it is almost as if they have always been there in the background of the nation. They are physically and visibly connected to the homeland of the nation. As integral parts of the ordinary landscape and daily life, monuments are symbolically powerful and have a key role in imagining, either on a conscious or subconscious level.

As key parts of the foundations of symbolic nation-building, this chapter examines three different categories of monuments in post-independence Timor-Leste. By analysing military, religious, and civilian monuments as symbolic markers of identity, we can see clear intersections of the core components of an emerging East Timorese national identity: *funu* (struggle) and *terus* (suffering). The connection between the military monuments and the notion of *funu* is clear and the military monuments symbolically represent the armed nature of national liberation struggle, through the centuries of Portuguese colonialism to the Indonesian occupation. Religious monuments and statues erected across Timor-Leste often consist of various figures of Christianity, such as Jesus Christ and Pope John Paul II. These religious symbols evoke the role of the Catholic Church in the resistance to the Indonesian occupation, its consequent associations with both struggle and suffering in the post-independence state, and its incorporation into imaginings of national identity. Finally, the chapter focuses on monuments and memorials that commemorate civilian contributions to the liberation struggle.

These monuments have become sites of symbolic conflicts over legitimacy and narratives of suffering and sacrifice in the liberation struggle. An analysis of civilian monuments and memorials will thus explore the issue of recognition and victimhood in a society that has thus far primarily valorised the armed resistance and its leadership.

Within an East Timorese cultural context, monuments that are physically connected to the landscape take on an elevated role because of popular beliefs in *lulik* (literally potency, taboo, holy or sacred), land and ancestral spirits. *Lulik* is defined by East Timorese scholar Josh Trindade as ‘the spiritual cosmos that contains the divine creator, the spirits of the ancestors, and the spiritual root of life including sacred rules and regulations that dictate relationships between people and people and nature’ (2011, p. 16). As extensively documented by Elizabeth Traube (1977, 1986, 1995, 2007, 2011), Judith Bovensiepen (2009, 2011, 2014a, b, 2015, 2016), Josh Trindade (2011, 2014, 2015), Dionísio Babo-Soares (2003, 2004), and James Fox (2000, 2013), it is widely believed that the land is *lulik* and endowed with a life-giving and spiritual potency and, in return, requires ritual, reverence, and recompense from the people. Judith Bovensiepen summarises:

The spiritual landscape is thought to be animated by the agency of the ancestors and the potential actions and intentions of other spiritual entities, such as land spirits and *lulik* potency. Although all such entities can pose dangers to humans, they can also be appropriated for more beneficial purposes. [...] The landscape is not just a passive background to which meaning is attached; the spiritual landscape is itself an active and at times creative and productive resource. The landscape has desires and preferences and it needs to be looked after and cared for. (2009, pp. 327–328)

In Timor-Leste there is a widespread consciousness of the *rai lulik* (the sacred land) as a repository for spiritual forces and a medium for interaction and communication with ancestral spirits and the dead. There is an active relationship between the people and the land that is characterised by ritual and exchange, a relationship that has defined social relations and the order of the cosmos for centuries (Stead 2012, p. 243).

Considering this, the spiritual significance of the land and the respect it commands must be considered when permanent or significant changes are made to the landscape, such as the building of a monument or memorial. Popular consensus on the reverence that is due to the armed

struggle for independence and the spirituality attributed to religious icons arguably makes the abstractions of *funu* and *terus* worthy subjects to be physically connected to the *rai lulik* (sacred land). Perhaps the clearest symbolic connections made with these tenets of an identity rooted in the struggle for independence, as defined by contemporary nation-building practices, are military monuments.

MILITARY MONUMENTS: COMMEMORATING THE STRUGGLE

In post-independent Timor-Leste, as in many post-colonial states, the concept of national liberation and the valorisation of armed anti-colonial resistance are commemorated and expressed through depictions of national heroes, particularly in monuments (Whelan 2002, p. 510; Leach 2002, p. 43). The construction of monuments to is a potent way to foster national unity through collective identification with figures elevated in narratives of the national past. Within the narratives of the 500 year *funu* and armed struggle, the figures of resistance that are most widely commemorated in monuments are the traditional *aswain* (warrior)² and the Falintil guerrillas.

The Aswain—Traditional Warrior

There are monuments throughout Timor-Leste that represent a traditional *aswain* (warrior) as a key military symbol of identity. The warrior is armed with an unsheathed sword, wearing traditional *kaibauk* (traditional headdress, consisting of a gold arc or crescent worn on the forehead; Siapno 2012, p. 435; Kingsbury 2010, p. 136) and a *belak* (metallic pectoral disc) around his neck that is typical of military adornments worn by the traditional *aswain* dating back to pre-colonial Timor (Richter and Carpenter 2011, pp. 92–93). He also has shackles and broken chains around his wrists, symbolising his breaking free from the chains of colonialism (Leach 2017, p. 169). These visual aspects of weaponry, militancy, and violence are vividly depicted in the monument, and have clear connotations of strength and masculinity within an East Timorese cultural context (Myrntinen 2009, p. 16).

²The role of a nameless figure that is simultaneously representative of everyone and no one has great significance in the imagination of the ‘nation,’ as discussed by Anderson with regards the Unknown Soldier (Anderson 2006, pp. 9–10).

Fig. 3.1 The *aswain* statue in the central park of Dili, Timor-Leste

Many major towns in Timor-Leste have such *aswain* statues. It is important to note that several of these monuments were integrationist ‘gifts’ from the Indonesian state following the 1975 invasion. The construction of the integrationist monuments constitute acts of symbolic violence in the 24-year campaign of state terror; as George J. Aditjondro asserts, ‘[a] form of symbolic violence is the building of monuments to glorify East Timor’s “integration” into Indonesia, to remind the population of the strength of the Indonesian armed forces’ (2000, p. 179). Indeed, by making its mark on the landscape of Timor-Leste, Indonesia was able to symbolically and visibly reflect its power over the territory through physical markers, a trope common in colonial architecture (Sharp 2009, p. 59).

The central location of the following example of an *aswain* integrationist monument in Dili is typical of this form of violence, but also of the ways in which visual symbols can be appropriated and their meanings altered with changing political contexts (Fig. 3.1). In the post-independence state, this monument provides a symbolic representation of *funu* as an integral part of ‘East Timorese-ness,’ yet its original symbolism signified quite the opposite. The preservation of this particular symbol through changing circumstances and meanings, from occupation to independence, renders it a more complex and potent symbol than it initially appears.

The integrationist monument in Dili was built in 1978, and was intended to commemorate the emancipation of the East Timorese people from Portuguese colonialism (Gunn 2000, p. 232; Leach 2009, p. 147 and 2017, pp. 168–169). The symbolism of the monument represented Jakarta's official position at the time: that the incorporation of Timor-Leste into Indonesia was a natural step to follow decolonization, and that the 1975 invasion was not a hostile act. Relating the East Timorese experience of Portuguese colonialism with its own Dutch colonial past (Hull 1999, p. 62), official discourse from Jakarta implied the annexation of the half-island simply constituted the reunification of their “brothers” in Timor-Leste, who had been separated by centuries of European colonialism (Robinson 2009, p. 46; see also Gunn 2001).

While the terrible irony of the construction of this monument is now evident, the original decision to represent the *aswain* warrior is important to note. Whether or not the Indonesian government genuinely believed the statues would be welcomed by the East Timorese people, the choice of the cultural icon is significant. Simon Harrison's concept of proprietary contests is useful here as, applied to the symbolic capital of the figure of the traditional warrior, it holds that there was ‘a consensus among the rivals as to the prestige value of the symbolic property for which they are competing’ (Harrison 1995, p. 258). The donors in Jakarta undoubtedly understood that the *aswain* figure was widely recognised by the East Timorese people as a potent symbol, and they utilised the icon of the national struggle, albeit in relation to Portuguese colonialism. The value of the symbol was not contested but appropriated by the Indonesian government, to coincide with its integrationist agenda. Through the appropriation of the *aswain* image, its symbolic power and capital were consolidated.

By building these traditional warrior monuments, the Suharto regime appropriated a primary image of an East Timorese nationalism that was fervently emerging in the 1970s and early 1980s (Leach 2017, p. 169). At the time of the *aswain* statue's construction, East Timorese nationalism had begun to take form and the concept of fighting for self-determination was not only a fact of everyday life, but the common cause which united the people in resistance to the Indonesian occupation. Falintil, the armed wing of the resistance, was at the core of the nascent collective identity and so a militant symbol from an East Timorese ethno-cultural heritage was highly potent in this context. It is highly plausible that this act of symbolic violence was simultaneously a visual reminder of

the national character, as one that fights foreign occupation, underlining the ambiguous nature of symbols as the *aswain* meant one thing to Indonesia, and quite another to the East Timorese people.

In the post-independence years, the integrationist monuments have not been destroyed. Instead, they have been conserved and are now understood by the East Timorese people to have acquired a new symbolic meaning. One East Timorese woman outlined the importance of these statues as symbols: '*símbolu sira nee mak halo ami Timor oan fiar metin no luta to'o Timor ukun an, tamba ne mak símbolu sira ne'e importante liu ba ami*' (personal interview 2014).³ The fact that they continue to be preserved perhaps indicates an East Timorese 'victory' in the symbolic proprietary contest. The popular notion of *funu* is primarily associated with the recent struggle for independence from Indonesia in the national imaginary. Accordingly, the warrior of the integrationist monuments has been re-appropriated upon independence. It is now attributed the meaning of struggle that encompasses the *whole* history of foreign occupation—from Portugal to Indonesia. This re-claiming of symbolic ownership of the *aswain* thus re-presents it as a symbol of *funu* and East Timorese nationalism. The different symbolic meanings that the monuments have had attest to the polyvalent nature of symbols and their flexibility in processes of identification, a characteristic that is also reflected in the flags of the former resistance movement. There 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.

The Heroes Monument in Metinaro

The brutal experiences of the Indonesian occupation are still part of living memory for many East Timorese people and as a result, the concept of *funu* is more consciously associated with the most recent foreign occupation. Since the restoration of independence, the East Timorese government has prioritised the commemoration of the struggle through monuments in terms of heritage as part of nation-building.

³'It is these symbols that make us Timorese people firmly believe and fight until Timor governs itself. Because of this, these symbols are very important for us'. This translation and all others in this chapter are my own.

Almost all of the heritage sites that have been created by the state since 2002 are directly connected to the armed resistance to Indonesia, affirming its place at the heart of an emerging East Timorese national identity and official historical narratives. Commemorative practices have presented the struggle as a glorious and heroic victory, and within state narratives none are so highly revered as the Falintil (Kent 2011, p. 440). The Falintil guerrillas are imagined as the modern-day *aswain* warriors and as such they are thought of as the embodiment of *funu* in the present. The Garden of Heroes Monument demonstrates the importance of the role of the Falintil *aswain* in the national past and is physical evidence of the privilege now afforded to the veterans of the armed struggle by the state.

The Heroes Monument is dedicated to the fallen Falintil guerrillas and signifies a sacralised, ‘national memorial and place of reflection’ (RDTL 2010). The monument consists of an open platform intended for hosting official ceremonies, three flagpoles, a national memorial garden, a Chapel and two ossuary houses containing the remains of hundreds of Falintil fighters, all of which are under permanent guard (Leach 2009, p. 153).⁴ The sacralised nature of the monument stems from the fact that it contains the relics of national heroes and the potent connection between *lulik* land and spirits of the dead in Timor-Leste is pervasive (Bovensiepen 2009, p. 334). As such the site assigned to the Falintil guerrillas is seen as both spiritually and politically significant.

In an official online statement regarding the construction of the Garden of Heroes Monument in Metinaro, dedicated to the Falintil guerrillas, the Government of Timor-Leste asserted that

if we neglect our cultural and historic roots [...], we will be overwhelmed by the forces of globalisation and risk losing our unique cultural identity – the very thing we fought so long and hard to preserve. Since independence in 2002, we have taken steps to encourage and preserve the cultural heritage of Timor-Leste. (RDTL 2010)

The monument was built as part of the Recovery, Employment and Stability Program for Ex-Combatants (RESPECT) in 2005 (Leach 2017, p. 171),

⁴ As Chapter 2 has demonstrated, flags are powerful symbols of political power in an East Timorese cultural context, and the presence of flags at the Heroes Monument further an understanding of the site as one of authority and reverence.

as part of then-President Xanana Gusmão's policy of supporting veterans of the resistance, arguably one of the defining legacies of his tenure (Feijo 2015, p. 373). The project was not without critics, which revealed significant symbolic conflict of ownership of legitimacy and the nation-building process. The prominent veterans' group, the *Conselho Popular Demokrátiku* (CPD)-RDTL, disagreed with the government's choice of location for the memorial, arguing that the remains of the heroes should be returned to their home districts. Other groups petitioned for better representation of all factions of the resistance movement, to include the clandestine and students' movements rather than an exclusive commemoration of the Falintil, a common criticism of the nation-building project (Leach 2017, p. 171). As Judith Bovensiepen notes, they believed that 'the Hero Cemetery is a place for those who openly resisted the occupation – not for those with a more ambiguous role' (2015, p. 24). In this way, the Heroes Garden shows how monuments as identity markers can become sites of political and symbolic contestation and conflict, in the context of nation-building monopolised by an élite of former resistance leaders.

However, the fact that lobbyists did not disagree with the creation of the memorial itself in principle is important. They wanted to memorialise their fallen heroes and symbolically acknowledge their contribution to the struggle, but equally wanted to claim some ownership in that process. The strength of feeling demonstrated is testament to the power that identity narratives and notions of nationhood have had to date, and just how central the concepts of sacrifice and struggle are to the national imaginary. The issue was not with the memorial or the nationalism it represents; the lobbyists sought to broaden the state's methods of valorisation and commemoration to be more inclusive of both local commemorations and of other factions of the resistance movement. This was evidenced by the more personal memorials that were built at a local level by families, after the government conceded that such memorials should also be given state funds and support. It is noteworthy that mixed messages can be taken from these local memorials, with differing representations of identity, some including Fretilin symbols (Leach 2017, p. 171). Even though they differed aesthetically from the style of the Heroes Garden, by including political party symbols, such as the Fretilin flag, they participated in and reinforced the narratives created by the same political leadership that they critiqued (Leach 2017, p. 171). This attests to the widespread appeal of the concept of *funu*, the resistance, and the strength of feeling towards its symbols, affirming their centrality in popular imaginings of national identity.

SPIRITUALITY AND SUFFERING: RELIGIOUS MONUMENTS IN TIMOR-LESTE

The violence and brutality perpetrated throughout the Indonesian occupation has meant that commemorations of the past have inevitably acknowledged the mass suffering and colossal loss of life that took place. The suffering endured by the East Timorese at the hands of the Indonesian military brought about a sense of solidarity and unity. Consequently, the concept of *terus* has become inextricably tied to popular ideas of ‘true’ East Timorese-ness (Arthur 2016, p. 178; Bexley 2007, p. 86). Contemporary imaginings of suffering are closely connected with spirituality due to the role of the Catholic Church in the resistance. In the post-independence state, religious monuments that represent Catholicism as an integral aspect of ‘East Timorese-ness’ are therefore important markers of identity in the symbolic landscape and loci of the intersections between struggle and suffering.⁵

Roman Catholicism was introduced to Timor-Leste from the early sixteenth century by predominantly Dominican missionaries from Portugal, and evangelisation became increasingly active during the eighteenth century (Carneiro de Sousa 2001, p. 184). Initially, the faith was directly associated with the colonial powers but after centuries of the Church’s presence in Timor-Leste and its coexistence with the indigenous cosmology, a unique East Timorese form of the faith has become an integral part of the life of the nation. Symbolic markers of faith and identity in the landscape are common and an ‘alliance’ between Church and *lulik* that is believed to exist (Bovensiepen 2009, p. 331). As such, Catholic signs, symbols, and monuments are particularly potent: the physical presence of a monument in the *rai lulik* (sacred land) connects it to the realm of spirits and ancestors, and symbolic representations of sacralised religious figures attribute the monument further reverence as *lulik*.

The change in association of the Catholic Church from a foreign colonial influence to a core part of East Timorese society is recent and directly linked to the struggle for independence. Since the 1970s, particularly following the 1975 invasion, the Church transformed its mission and purpose to become an institution that could relate to the East

⁵In my field research in Timor-Leste, when monuments were raised in a discussion of identity symbols, the statues of Pope John Paul II and Cristo Rei were two examples that were frequently cited.

Timorese people, listen to their needs, and stand up for their interests (Carey 1999, p. 77). This change was reflected in the numbers of Church followers; prior to the 1970s, less than a third of the population practised the faith due to negative associations with the colonial administration (Kohen 2001, p. 46). After the 1975 invasion, the number of practising Catholics dramatically increased from only 27.8% in 1973 to some 90% in 1999 (Simonsen 2006, p. 577). In the post-independence years, there continue to be extremely high numbers of practising Catholics; the 2015 national census in Timor-Leste found that 97.6% of the population identified as Roman Catholic (General Directorate of Statistics 2015).

Initially, the high conversion rate was perhaps due to the Suharto regime's policy of *Pancasila* enforced in all its territories, including Timor-Leste, which required all citizens to adhere to one of the state-approved monotheistic faiths (Morfit 1981; Weatherbee 1984). Adherence to Catholicism was one strategy employed to differentiate the East Timorese people from Indonesia: it demonstrated a rejection of the predominant religion of the occupier (Islam) and a further identification with their Luso-European heritage. Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo, the head of the Catholic Church in Timor-Leste under the occupation and an outspoken advocate of self-determination, summarised this othering: 'the Catholic faith for the people is a kind of symbol to unite them, it is a way to express the fact that they are Timorese, they don't like any other religion [and] they don't like Indonesia' (cited in Carey 1999, p. 87). However, the continued respect for the Catholic Church in the post-independence years suggests that adherence to the faith has deeper roots and motivations than strategic boundary marking.

Cristo Rei Statue, Dili

Similar to the *aswain* monuments, numerous religious monuments in Timor-Leste were 'gifts' from Jakarta to the East Timorese people. These integrationist religious monuments could also be seen as further acts of 'symbolic violence' and visible aspects of an Indonesian legacy in the landscape. The most famous of these monuments in Timor-Leste is the Cristo Rei (Christ the King) statue, situated in Area Branca, Dili. Today it is presented as a key tourist attraction, yet when it was erected by the Indonesian administration the original integrationist symbolism behind the monument differed significantly from contemporary

Fig. 3.2 The Cristo Rei statue at Area Branca, Dili

imaginings. Like the *aswain* statues, it is the change in meaning attributed to the Cristo Rei statue and the malleability of its symbolism that has ensured its continued preservation.

The Cristo Rei statue is the largest in Timor-Leste and was built in 1996, presented as a gift from Suharto to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of integration into the Indonesian state (Fig. 3.2). The statue was carefully designed to incorporate Indonesian pro-integration symbolism. It is seventeen meters in height to represent ‘integration’ day (17 July) and Indonesia’s Independence Day (17 August), two significant dates of the Indonesian calendar. It stands on a ten-meter globe, raising the height of the statue to 27 meters; this symbolised Timor-Leste, as the twenty-seventh ‘province’ of the Republic of Indonesia (Aditjondro 2000, p. 180). The Cristo Rei statue’s original symbolism was about the conquest of Timor-Leste and its integration, a process which effectively sought to eradicate the distinct East Timorese identity. The fact that this statue was built without the consultation or consideration of either the East Timorese clergy or the people only underlined this symbolism further. Indeed, Bishop Belo questioned the building of the statue within a particularly Christian paradigm: ‘what’s the point of building a statue of Jesus if people are not going to be treated according to the Gospel? It would be better to improve the situation rather than build statues’

(cited in Gunn 2000, p. 233). Considering this initial rejection by the Church, Cristo Rei's continued presence in Dili today suggests that significant changes in meaning have taken place. As with the *aswain* statues, by detailing the context in which the national community identified with this symbol, we can better understand this process.

The Cristo Rei monument was built, only five years after the Santa Cruz massacre had taken place and the international media had leaked footage of the human rights abuses and genocide outside of the territory for the first time in the occupation. At this point in time, the international community was finally aware of the brutality suffered by the East Timorese people and Jakarta was under increasing pressure to resolve the 'Timor question'. Within this context of mounting media attention and political pressure from across the world, it is unlikely that the Suharto regime intended for the explicit colonial symbolism of this new public monument to be made known. The imagery presented by the statue was key to the message Indonesia wanted to send out to the world; Cristo Rei was intended to present 'generosity' of the Indonesian state and its love for the East Timorese people. The figure of Jesus Christ was an acknowledgement of the faith of the majority of the population (distinct to Islam, as the predominant religion practised in Indonesia) and a seemingly positive message from the state to the East Timorese people. In the political context of the time, it is highly plausible that this concrete, demonstrable 'gift' to counter accusations of repression and violence, the statue could have been seen by the international community as a gesture (or even proof) of the accepting and inclusive nature of the regime.

In light of the original intentions behind the statue, it is difficult to conceive of Cristo Rei as a 'national' monument of Timor-Leste today. The original, integrationist symbolism of the monument is not one of East Timorese nationalism but seemingly denies it, reflecting that of the former occupier instead. Even the superficial appeals to Catholicism and recognition of the East Timorese people's religious affiliations ring hollow since the Church in Timor-Leste was not consulted and did not even endorse it at the time. Moreover, if the target audience for this presentation of the state was not solely the East Timorese people anyway, but the international community, then how could it become a marker of national identity? Indeed, it has even been asserted that Cristo Rei, 'erected by Indonesia during its bloody occupation here, doesn't face its devoutly Roman Catholic country. With embracing arms, Jesus instead looks west—toward Jakarta' (Cox 2004). Yet strangely, the Cristo Rei has not

been destroyed with the return to independence, and has instead been preserved and re-presented as an East Timorese tourist attraction.

The preservation of *Cristo Rei* can be attributed to the role of the Catholic Church in the resistance movement and the influence its teachings had on the outlook of the population. By the 1980s, Catholicism had become an integral aspect of an emerging nationalism: cultural resistance to Indonesia was aided by the Catholic Church through the promotion of the indigenous language Tetun which was officially endorsed as the primary liturgical language. Further, the Church offered practical help to the Falintil guerrillas and civilians, by supplying food, shelter and medicine (Hodge 2013, pp. 151–157). A further way in which the Church aided the resistance was by providing spiritual guidance and a moral compass to the East Timorese people (Hodge 2013, pp. 151–157; see also da Silva 2008, pp. 213–235). The Church was able to give a degree of comfort and meaning to the suffering of the people through its teachings on the sufferings of Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church teaches that Christ as saviour ultimately overcame death and despair, which was a daily reality for the East Timorese people under the Indonesian military. Peter Carey argues that the spiritual guidance of the Church at this time inspired a

commitment [which] fused an intense sense of East Timorese nationalism [...] and a belief in the redeeming power of the Cross – East Timor’s own “dark night of the soul” being equated with the sufferings of Christ at Gethsemane and Golgotha. In much the same way as in the nineteenth-century Ireland or Poland, the individual experience of suffering and oppression in East Timor shaped a deep personal faith, a faith in which redemption and transcendence had both a personal and a national dimension. (1999, p. 86)

The meaning given to collective suffering through the Church’s teachings rendered Catholicism a core source of support to the resistance movement and consequently, the figure of Christ was central to popular imaginings.

Joel Hodge has argued that the Catholic Church taught the East Timorese people how to bear their suffering like the figure of Christ, and that from its teachings, the ‘Timorese people seemed to receive a framework of meaning that related to their experience, particularly because of the example of Jesus’ (2013, p. 159). While this is partly true, it is

important to note that Christian principles of salvation through suffering were understood within the cosmological context of Timor-Leste, and coexisted with an existing belief system that also gave meaning to death. The indigenous cosmology that predates colonialism are founded on an understanding that life and death are part of a cycle of reciprocity and renewal that structures and characterises society and the cosmos (Traube 1986, p. 11). The co-existence of indigenous beliefs with Catholicism has not proven problematic in Timor-Leste and not only are they ‘not understood to be in any way in conflict with Catholicism’ (Bovensiepen 2009, p. 331), but rather the parallels between certain principles made it possible for Catholicism to take root. Indeed, the notion that ‘death is an inescapable sacrifice, made so that others may live’ (Traube 1986, p. 242) and Catholic teachings of Christ’s crucifixion and martyrdom share much meaning. Both understand death and suffering in a positive way, as an act of sacrifice for the sake of others, and in this way, both belief systems respectively gave meaning and a sense of purpose to this reality of the struggle. However, it was the brutality of Christ’s crucifixion and suffering that paralleled the violence that was suffered by the East Timorese at the hands of the Indonesian military, causing the Church’s teachings to come to the fore of the national imaginary and resonate so profoundly with the people.⁶

The Catholic faith teaches that Jesus Christ suffered and died, sacrificing Himself for the salvation of mankind from sin, and that freedom and redemption are the positive consequences of suffering and sacrifice. Parallels can be drawn with the East Timorese understanding of the nation: the suffering and sacrifice of the people ultimately led to their liberation from oppression and occupation (see Traube 2007, pp. 10–11). Following the return to independence, the statue of Cristo Rei has been seen as a physical symbol of the figure of Christ, of suffering, and of the Catholic faith that is now part of ‘East Timorese-ness.’ The potency of the concept of *terus*, connected to the figure of Christ

⁶Elizabeth Traube affirms that the specific understanding of suffering in Timor-Leste in relation to national identity is connected to Catholic principles of sacrifice and salvation: ‘the nation was won through suffering and sacrifice; it was “purchased”, the saying goes, “not with silver or gold, but with the blood of the people” (*ba los nor os-butin nor os-meran fê al, mas nor povu ni laran*). Suffering is often associated with nationhood in official nationalist discourses, while the notion of its “purchasing” power resonates with the Christian economy of salvation’ (2007, p. 10).

and the Church, overcame the integrationist symbolism of the statue as originally intended by Jakarta and ensured its preservation following self-determination.

Like the *aswain* integrationist monuments, the symbol of Cristo Rei was re-appropriated by the population who have attached specific nationalist meanings to the figure of Jesus, attesting to the influence of changing contexts on the meanings given to and by symbols. In the context of a nation-building project focused largely on commemorating the resistance, the figure of Christ in popular imaginings of the national past is profound.

The Statue of Pope John Paul II at Tasi Tolu

To foreign visitors in Dili, Timor-Leste's identification with the Catholic Church is evident as both ends of the seafront are marked with religious monuments. To the West of Dili, at Tasi Tolu, a statue of Pope John Paul II marks the landscape with another religious symbol connected to the recent past. Unlike Cristo Rei, the statue of the late pope was not erected by the Suharto regime but by the East Timorese government, and was constructed in 2008 after independence was regained.

By commissioning a statue dedicated to the late Pope John Paul II, the East Timorese government affirmed the pivotal position of Catholicism within an evolving nationalism by commemorating its role in the recent past. The state's decision to commission this particular statue is perhaps reflective of a change in focus of commemorative practices that became more inclusive towards the end of the first decade of independence. A desire to move away from the contentious Fretilin-dominated heritage practices was part of José Ramos-Horta's agenda as the newly-elected President of Timor-Leste in 2007. A more inclusive commemoration of the national past would include special tribute paid to the Catholic Church, which had previously been somewhat overlooked by the Fretilin government and a largely secular leadership since the return to independence (Leach 2017, p. 191).

The statue was built on the site that Pope John Paul II celebrated Mass in October 1989, an event that was crucial to the later years of the resistance movement and ultimately to attaining independence (Leach 2017, p. 93). The significance of the location of this monument is two-fold: not only was Tasi Tolu the place consecrated by the pope, but it is also associated with the atrocities committed by the Indonesian military.

Tasi Tolu was a notorious execution site from which the bodies of countless murdered East Timorese were thrown into the sea (Robins 2010, p. 51). The celebration of Mass and the symbolic marking of a massacre site with a religious symbol sustain the connection between the Church and national identity through suffering. The reputation of the Indonesian military's heinous acts at Tasi Tolu was known to many East Timorese, and the connection was made between the site of suffering and the celebration of the Mass. As Robert Archer asserts, 'suffering, for the people of East Timor, is not distinct from their vision of God. It is, in fact, integral to their identity as Timorese' (1995, p. 120).

Pope John Paul II is remembered as an important of support for the liberation struggle because of his visit to occupied Timor-Leste and its political context. Prior to 1988, Jakarta had effectively 'closed' Timor-Leste to the outside world and allowed no foreign visitors, organizations or media to enter the territory (Carey 1999, p. 85). After the 1975 invasion, the Vatican had taken a cautious stance of official neutrality in relation to the occupation.⁷ Consequently, when the Papal visit was arranged it was a major event for the East Timorese people who had found a deep connection with the Catholic faith and its significance was twofold. First, the Pope represented the 'special relationship' that had developed between the Church in Timor-Leste and Rome from the early 1980s (Carey 1999, p. 85).⁸ The special nature of the relationship was consolidated by the Vatican's decision to administer the diocese of Timor-Leste directly, rather than through the Church in Indonesia or Portugal.⁹ This was seen as a subtle act of recognition of the right to self-determination, without explicitly referring to the political situation.

⁷As they were faced with an increasingly dire situation, the East Timorese clergy became more outspoken in their criticisms of the Vatican's neutrality, particularly under the leadership of Monsignor Martinho da Costa Lopes and Bishop Belo, the first two indigenous East Timorese Bishops of Dili (Pascoe 2006, pp. 124–130). These criticisms culminated in Pope John Paul II's visit (Leach 2017, p. 92).

⁸It should be noted that for years the Vatican was known for its caution in dealing with matters concerning Timor-Leste, due to the delicate position of the large Catholic population in Indonesia (Kohen 2001, p. 50).

⁹In 1984, the Pope insisted to the Indonesian ambassador to the Vatican that there should be regard given 'in every circumstance to the ethnic, political and cultural identity of the [East Timorese] people' (Taylor 1999, p. 154). However, the reference to the 'political' identity was omitted shortly after for diplomatic reasons (Leach 2017, p. 92; Pascoe 2006; Crowe 1997).

Popular interpretations of the visit consequently associated the Pope with the concept of struggle.¹⁰ Secondly, the visit was of critical importance for the resistance movement because it was the first time in over a decade that foreign media would be allowed to enter the territory. Pope John Paul II was the only head of state to visit the occupied territory and the high profile visit ensured that the world's media would be focused on Dili, providing the movement with an opportunity to remind the international community of the continued need for assistance. The opportunity was not wasted and a pro-independence youth demonstration constituted the first major public march to have taken place since 1975.

The peaceful protest took place on 12 October 1989 after Pope John Paul II had celebrated Mass. Many young people unfurled and waved banners, shouted slogans, and made their presence as anti-integrationists felt. Following the protest, the Indonesian military rounded up participants, many of whom were arrested and tortured. Those who fled took refuge with the Church in Bishop Belo's official residence (Kohen 2001, p. 49). Tasi Tolu was already notorious as a site of extreme violence, and such reprisals furthered the connection between this place and the concept of *terus*. After the visit, communications continued between the Church in Timor-Leste and the Vatican that ensured the dissemination of reports of the violence and human rights abuses under the leadership of John Paul II. The reports hardened the Vatican's stance to Indonesia and a series of strong statements were made in final stages of the struggle for independence, which helped to consolidate international public opinion (Kohen 2001, p. 50). As a result of this turning point in the struggle, headed by the late pope, he has been described by José Ramos-Horta as 'a figure who inspired peace and justice in the world. He also fought for the right of Timorese people to be recognized by the world and in its fight toward self-determination' (Ramos-Horta cited in ETAN 2008).

In Timor-Leste, John Paul II is widely remembered by many as supporting the cause of self-determination and aiding in international lobbying. Speaking about the significance of the statue, one East Timorese woman stated: '*wainhira Papa [João Paulo II] visita Timor iba 1989*

¹⁰Indeed, while the Pope stated that the visit was 'pastoral and had no political significance', his actions there—including refusing to kiss the ground upon arrival at the airport, a traditional sign of respect for the host country on state visits—implied that he and the Church did not recognise the annexation by Indonesia (Haberman 1989).

iha Tasi Tolu nee hanesan momento unico e hanesan ajuda boot ba independencia' (personal interview 2014).¹¹ Thus, in building a nation that esteems key figures in the struggle for independence, the proposal to construct a statue of Pope John Paul II was inevitable. It was built with the intention of providing the population with 'a symbol of the freedom struggle' (Murdoch 2008), 'a symbol of renewed hope', and 'to remind people of a figure identified with human rights and justice' (ETAN 2008). The statue symbolises his (and the Church's) contribution to the struggle and its location at an infamous massacre site brings it together with imaginings of suffering. While it has been argued that the Vatican was late in its condemnation of Indonesia, for many East Timorese the Papal visit was an explicit act of solidarity at a crucial stage in struggle. The statue commemorates this act and marks the symbolic connection between the Church, *funu* and *terus* in the landscape. If suffering forges lasting bonds within a nation (Lowenthal 1998, pp. 59–74), the lasting bonds that unite the East Timorese people also link them to the Catholic Church through shared suffering.

COMMEMORATING CIVILIAN CONTRIBUTIONS? MEMORIALS, SYMBOLS, AND VICTIMHOOD

Official state nationalism has commemorated elevated the contributions of the Falintil and military heroes of the resistance, and more recently the Catholic Church, establishing a hierarchy of recognition, legitimacy and belonging to the national community. Claims to 'true East Timorese-ness' are rooted in notions of *funu* and *terus*, and the top-down approach to nation-building that has been adopted thus far has neglected to fully recognise the magnitude of sacrifice made by the younger civilian population (Arthur 2016). This section explores how civilian memorials have become a site of tension between the local and the national, between a state dominated by resistance leaders and the civilian population. At the heart of the symbolic conflict is the notion of victimhood and its place in the hierarchy of contributions made to the national liberation struggle. There has been reluctance from the state to acknowledge victimhood as integral to East Timorese-ness because it

¹¹'When Pope [John Paul II] visited Timor in 1989 at Tasi Tolu is was a unique moment and a big help towards independence'.

would be costly (in terms of financial recompense); such claims unveil a multitude of victims that seek recompense, in contrast to a select few veterans (who were given state pensions). Further, it would undermine the victorious narratives established that legitimise the continued leadership of a select few.

Since 2002, a discourse of victimhood and human rights has been employed to gain state recognition for the *povu ki'ik* (the small people) who are believed to have suffered greatly and still need compensation (see Traube 2007). Defining victimhood is critical in this context; Joel Hodge highlights that those identifying as victims see themselves '*as self-giving victims*, not as guilty criminals or enemies (which the regime accused them of being), or *even as people to be avenged*' (2013, p. 167, emphasis added). This conceptualisation of victimhood is critical to understanding how and why people identify in this way, post-occupation. Victims are not merely the passive objects of brutality at the hands of the Indonesian military, but instead the active subjects of narratives of suffering and sacrifice. There is no need for vengeance since their contribution to the struggle was an unquestionable act, willingly done by true East Timorese citizens.

In the post-independence state, there are perhaps two reasons for identifying with victimhood in this way. First, the ability to claim victims' rights is key to understanding the phenomenon. In the post-independence years, socio-economic challenges (including the high unemployment levels that primarily affect the younger generation of East Timorese), have rendered the financial remuneration from the state more appealing. Secondly, by identifying as victims of the violence, members of the national community can make a symbolic claim to suffering and sacrifice for the struggle. Such contestation seeks to renegotiate definitions of heroism and so complete narratives of the national past but including its other civilian heroes in commemorations of the struggle. Victimhood is understood as a key component of East Timorese nationalism alongside the concept of the struggle precisely because the two are connected: in the words of Qian Fengqui, 'heroism and victimisation are inseparable antipodes complementing a collective identity' (2008, p. 21).

Claims to victimhood disrupt and challenge state narratives of the exclusive heroism of the Falintil and a glorious struggle, by suggesting that the wider national community also sacrificed and can thus claim ownership to the national past. Civilian memorials visually represent this disruption and, as this section discusses, the construction of local

memorials and particularly the Santa Cruz memorial provides a clear example of how the state is beginning to recognise the popular desire to identify in this way. This recognition of the suffering and victimhood of the *povu ki'ik* (the small people) is indicative of a significant change in official attitudes not only to the commemoration of the past, but to national historical narratives and thus the construction of national identity.

Memorials and Commemorating the Dead in Timor-Leste

As is the case with many post-conflict nation-states, the landscape throughout Timor-Leste is marked with memorials to the dead. Within the context of a national identity founded on *funu* and *terus*, and a long tradition of custom and ritual surrounding death, memorials are potent examples of commemorative sites and symbols. They are spaces that encompass aspects of pilgrimage, performance, spirituality and culture, and constitute a place at which individuals and communities can attempt to comprehend grief, loss, and death (Grider 2001). Memorials can also function as a political tool for memory construction, social protest and contestation (Margry and Sánchez-Carretero 2011, pp. 1–2).

This form of commemoration has been further expounded by traditions and particular cultural customs of commemorating the dead that are central to an East Timorese cosmology. The commemoration of the dead is of great import to social life, as part of a system of *lisan* (traditional customs), and prevalent beliefs in the spiritual power of *lulik* and ancestors. Through acts of commemoration, death intermingles with life and a connection between the realms of the living and the spirit world is established (Grenfell 2012, p. 86). The dead are part of the on-going life cycle, returned to the earth from whence they came and constitute food or repayment to Mother Earth for the life that has been given (Traube 2007, p. 15). The importance of ritual cannot be understated as failing to adhere to the correct customs owed to the spiritual world is believed to lead to real negative consequences in the material realm, such as illness, famine and natural disasters, as a result of imbalance (Babo-Soares 2004, p. 22).

In light of the centrality of custom to social order, burial rituals and sites are of critical importance. Following the death and burial of the individual, it is customary for family to periodically visit the grave to honour the dead, often by leaving flower petals and votive candles which give sustenance to the spirit in the form of food and light

(Grenfell 2012, pp. 92–93). Location is significant here as it provides a space for relatives to grieve and interact with the spiritual realm into which the dead have entered. However, the mass-killings and indiscriminate violence that characterised the Indonesian occupation meant that the remains of many East Timorese are still missing and cannot be buried in accordance with custom. In these circumstances, the sites of the violence often become commemorative sites of memory themselves and commemoration of the dead takes place there until the remains are found and the spirits are finally at rest (Kent and Kinsella 2015).

Considering the significance of burial customs and the centrality of the liberation struggle to the history of Timor-Leste, the commemoration of those who died in resistance is a matter of great significance and obligation as part of nation-building. Whether it is for Falintil guerrillas or civilians, the memorialization of fallen East Timorese unites the national community in custom and respect. Building memorials to honour them has two main functions: first, social order and customs are upheld that maintain the balance between the living and the spirits of the dead (Grenfell 2012, p. 88). Second, the memorials perform the function of social protest and allow for criticisms of the administration of justice since independence was regained. The construction of local memorials and shrines demonstrates the meeting of obligations to ancestors but also a physical sign of the ‘unfinished business’ that the judicial system in Timor-Leste has yet to settle, of recognising the many civilians who suffered but who have been left in the shadow of war heroes and veterans (Kent 2011, p. 436).

In performing these functions, memorials enable ‘embodied simultaneity’ and collective identification (Grenfell 2015, pp. 20–21) across the country, regardless of position on the hierarchy of legitimacy. They signify a sharing in an indigenous ethno-cultural heritage and cosmology, and evoke with concepts of *funu*, *terus*, and heroic victimhood. The number of memorials, as symbolic representations of victimhood, suggests a popular desire to include this aspect in national identity narratives in order to render them more inclusive of all who sacrificed, in combination with the established tenets of the struggle and suffering.

Local Civilian Memorials

Since the UN-sponsored independence ballot of 1999, which signalled the beginning of the end of the occupation, local civilian memorials

have been constructed throughout the country. These unofficial commemorative symbols are generally small in size but highly significant in remembrance of the recent past. In the district of Liquica, a memorial has been built to the massacre that took place there in April 1999. Members of the local community have built a small angel monument at the church where sixty people were killed by the *Besi Merah Putih* militias while sheltering inside the building (Kent 2010, p. 191). The monument is in stark contrast to the large, grandiose style of the state military monuments; the Liquica memorial suggests vulnerability and humanity, where the military monuments allude to heroism and glorious martyrdom (Kent 2011, p. 441). The aesthetics of the Liquica memorial are reflective of this renegotiation of what heroism looks like in the post-independence state. Heroism, achieved through sacrifice, is not solely for those guns and guerrilla fatigues but for any East Timorese who died. The monument is particularly potent because it was funded and built by survivors and families of those killed. It is a place of ritual as an anniversary Mass is celebrated to honour the memory of the dead (Kent 2011, pp. 434–435). Poignantly, as the remains of the dead have not yet been recovered, it provides a locus for relatives to mourn and express their loss, as well as visibly mark the land on which their loved ones made the ultimate contribution to the struggle.

The number of unofficial memorials across Timor-Leste is testament to the scale of the violence perpetrated by the Indonesian security forces; a further example is the massacre memorial in the village of Suai, where 200 unarmed civilians were killed in September 1999 by militias following the independence referendum. There are two memorials in Suai: one formal memorial to mark the location of the massacre, and another at the site where the mutilated corpses of those killed had been burned (Kent 2011, p. 441). The more formal monument of the two displays the names of those killed in the massacre and was funded by the UN Serious Crimes Unit and the governments of the UK and Ireland (Kent 2011, p. 441). Indeed, it is noteworthy that the victimhood with which many East Timorese identify was acknowledged and supported by international actors through the building of this monument before any such recognition was officially given by the state. It is accompanied by a circle of stones left by relatives of the dead, each inscribed with the name of a victim in an informal but personal commemoration. This mark on the landscape is powerful: those East Timorese that were meant to be unidentifiable have now been named and each victim is now memorialised

in the land with stone. The informal circle of stones is participative and accessible to all, perhaps reflecting the more inclusive imaginings of the nation, and stands in contrast to the formal monument beside it, which is surrounded by rope to be observed from a distance (Kent 2011, p. 441). While the ropes around the formal monument are undoubtedly in place to ensure its preservation, they also reflect the elevated status of official forms of memorialisation and their symbolic distance from the local level.

The 12 November/Santa Cruz Massacre Monument

Testament to the strength of feeling on the issue of a less exclusive commemoration of the struggle is the number of victims' organizations that have been created since independence was regained, such as the Association of Ex-Political Prisoners (ASSEPOL) and widow's groups including *Mate Restu* (Remains of the Dead), *Rate Laek* (Without Graves) and *Novi Novi* (Ninety Nine) seeking recognition and recompense (Kent 2011, pp. 445–446).¹² Through lobbying, the victims' organizations have demonstrated a desire to challenge the exclusivity of nation-building so far. The 12 November Committee provides an example of a particularly successful movement of lobbying to further the interests of families of victims killed in the 1991 Santa Cruz Massacre.

The 12 November Committee was established in 2008 and its members are predominantly survivors or relatives of victims of the Santa Cruz massacre, perpetrated by the Indonesian security forces. The massacre resulted from a peaceful protest that was primarily led by youth resistance organisations, following a memorial Mass for a student activist on 12 November 1991. The protest took place en route to the cemetery where he was buried and once inside the cemetery, Indonesian soldiers opened fire on the civilians trapped inside the high walls, killing nineteen and wounding countless others.¹³ The presence of foreign journalists

¹² *Mate Restu* is situated in Covalima, *Rate Laek* in Liquica and *Novi Novi* in Maliana. These groups are supported and endorsed by national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), without which they would be unlikely to have much impact.

¹³ Estimates for the number of East Timorese killed range from 54 by the Indonesia authorities to over 200 by East Timorese eyewitnesses. The number of disappeared is also estimated to be over 200 (see Blau and Fondebrider 2010, pp. 1–26).

at the protest proved to be a turning point in the occupation, however, as video recordings of the atrocity were smuggled out of Timor-Leste and broadcast across the world. This massacre was the international community's first real glimpse of the scale of the violence perpetrated by Indonesia and the point at which the cause for East Timorese self-determination was finally recognised.

In the immediate years following the massacre, the site was informally commemorated by votive candles at the gates of the cemetery (Leach 2009, p. 156). However, the significance of the massacre as a turning point in the struggle was such that spontaneous and temporary shrines were insufficient to memorialise it. Since its inception, the 12 November Committee petitioned for the creation of a register of the disappeared, the compilation of an archive to preserve documents and accounts of the massacre, and the construction of a national monument to commemorate the dead (Blau and Fondebrider 2010). The group's objective of building a national monument has since been achieved and it is popularly referred to as the 12 November Monument, after the group. The visual and symbolic construction of the monument reflects its grassroots origins; it portrays two wounded East Timorese men, making a visual link between the two collective identities of victimhood and suffering in a physical symbol. There are no flags or ornate national symbols that are found on other state-sanctioned monuments, and the focus is centrally on the individuals. By depicting the suffering *povu ki'ik*, the monument invokes a narrative that commemorates the role of the young East Timorese and student movements as victims, suffering and sacrificing for the struggle, to accompany the formerly exclusive official celebrations of heroism.

At the heart of the challenge made to state commemorations of the Santa Cruz massacre is the generational divide that has emerged since the return to independence. In the established paradigm of legitimacy gained through contribution to the liberation struggle, the older generation of resistance leaders have been celebrated as those who struggled and suffered most for self-determination (Arthur 2015, pp. 8–9). The elevation of the older generation has displaced the students and youth factions of the resistance movement, overlooking their significant contributions. Despite the sacrifices that were made at Santa Cruz, this contribution made by the youth and student resistance was not initially recognised by the state following independence

(Arthur 2016, pp. 178–179). Indeed, it was the subject of debate: when activists applied for compensation for their contribution, the Secretary of State for Veterans' Affairs stated that the organisers of the 1991 protest could only count their contribution as one day of service, overlooking the years of preparation that had gone into it and the youth resistance movement (ICG 2011, p. 8). Disputes over youth contributions to the struggle continued throughout the first decade of independence, delaying any official commemorations of Santa Cruz and further alienating the younger generation.

The 12 November monument was finally unveiled in 2012, after numerous delays on the part of the East Timorese government that gave an impression of general reluctance to complete the project (which in itself suggests that this particular symbolic conflict was perhaps being lost). A further criticism of the monument was that it was not located at the site of the massacre, and that the names of the nearly 300 victims were not listed (Leach 2017, p. 222). Yet the construction of this symbol provides crucial insight into the conflicting narratives of the state and the people, the challenges they pose to the nation-building project, and the attempts to overcome them. The very building of the Santa Cruz memorial demonstrates a concession on the part of the state leadership that acknowledges youth contributions to the struggle and formally commemorates those who also sacrificed, just as the older generation had. By physically marking the landscape with a symbol of the victims of the massacre, associated primarily with youth resistance factions, the state demonstrated a broadening of official representations of national identity and heroism that now include victims' organizations and a previously marginalised younger generation.

This recognition of youth participation in the liberation of the nation is reflected in the Santa Cruz memorial but also in the creation of the National Youth Day holiday. Celebrated for the first time on 12 November 2012 (the same year as the monument was unveiled and a decade after independence was regained), this official public holiday takes place on the anniversary of the massacre each year to commemorate those who died and celebrate the future of young East Timorese. This acknowledgement, however reluctantly or lately given by the state, represents a symbolic victory for the youth and victims' groups in the conflict for some shared ownership of the narratives of nationalism and the legitimacy that they bestow. Thus within the first decade of self-determination, the nation-building process and its commemorative

practices have been challenged and changed to be more inclusive, though the identity narratives and tenets of nationalism remain uncontested. The former youth resistance movements and victims groups' participate in the narratives that are the source of social, cultural and political capital and legitimacy. In doing so, and with the support of the state (through official recognition), they are able to claim ownership of this capital.

The broadening in definitions of 'true' East Timorese-ness and the increased inclusivity in ownership of the nation-building project is further demonstrated by the origins of the monument. While the 12 November Committee lobbied for its construction, the design for the monument was the result of a competition run by the government that was open to young East Timorese people (RDTL October 2012). The intention was to build a monument that would evoke the loss of life in the struggle; following its completion, in a change in discourse from the state to recognise the youth involvement, it was to 'reflect the heroic, patriotic nationalist spirit of the youth at that time' (RDTL October 2012). Thus, discursively and symbolically, the youth and victims' groups successfully gained recognition, and renegotiated and redefined heroism to include notions of victimhood and civilian suffering for the cause of self-determination.

CONCLUSION

Monuments are highly significant symbols that represent a collective identity because they endure; they present a sense of continuity, a symbolic point of reference and identification in the on-going trajectory of the national community. To an extent the land becomes a canvas for the portrayal of a national identity, representing a shared past, and that continues to provide points of collective identification in the future. Like other symbols, the meaning behind monuments is also flexible because the passing of time and changing circumstances inevitably influence and alter the way in which these symbols are perceived.

As part of the on-going nation-building project, monuments continue to be constructed to commemorate and consolidate existing notions of an East Timorese national identity. The monuments that have been created and conserved since 2002 attest to the argument that it is the core aspects of any national identity are enshrined in these landscape markers. The notion of *funu*, *terus*, faith, and now an heroic victimhood are

represented in monuments across the country, suggesting their indisputable role in East Timorese nationhood. Further, these physical symbols are understood to be more potent in light of the cultural context and indigenous cosmology. The *rai lulik* is believed to be the realm of ancestors and land spirits that are very much a part of social life for the living. The reverence shown to the struggle for independence and the Catholic Church, as well as commemoration of the dead, indicates that these are evidently worthy concepts to be incorporated into the landscape.

Throughout the first decade of self-determination, there has been an evident change in the commemorative practices and patterns of the nation-building project. The post-independence state began by almost exclusively memorialising the resistance leadership, Fretilin and the Falintil. As the years passed, state commemorations became broader to recognise the Catholic Church's role in the resistance to Indonesia, and to improve contemporary relations between Church and state. Most recently, and following much lobbying and debates, the East Timorese government has conceded that official recognition is also due to the youth and civilian contributions to the liberation struggle. This is potentially problematic: civilian claims to victimhood and contributions to the resistance could be made by the majority of the population and it would not be feasible to recognise and recompense to them all (as it was with the pensions scheme for a select few veterans). It is perhaps for this reason that symbolic recognition has been the first step taken by the state in addressing this issue. Typified by the Santa Cruz monument, the state has broadened narratives of the past and its definition of heroism to include youth and civilian members of the national community. By funding a national monument and creating National Youth Day on the anniversary of the massacre, the government has symbolically recognised their contributions. Considering the significant power that identity narratives and symbols have in unifying the national community, this symbolic recognition could be one step towards strengthening the national unity it seeks to foster. The East Timorese state's actions attest to the power of symbols in nation-building, and their central role in fostering national unity and overcoming contemporary social divisions, such as the generation gap.

Crucially, it is not the core nationalist concepts that are questioned—the struggle is revered above all. It is the state's definitions of the struggle, reflective of exclusive state ownership of its symbols and narratives,

which have been challenged. After a decade of self-determination, the numerous symbolic conflicts that have taken place only attest to the centrality of an identity rooted in struggle and suffering in the national imaginary. The power of the East Timorese *funu* is further demonstrated when we consider the role of national heroes in fostering unity and collective identification. We now turn to Dom Boaventura, the father of *funu*, to explore how this hero figure has had a profound impact on these processes.

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PART II

National Heroes

CHAPTER 4

The Spirit of Rebellion: National Heroes, Dom Boaventura, and Personifying National Identity

Commemorative symbols are but one type of symbolic forms that help the creation and representation of an East Timorese national identity. A diverse national community is unified by a common belief in a shared past and heritage, and by the symbols that represent this foundation of identity. Yet, it also requires strong leadership as representative figures can provide a unifying force and publicly articulate and embody the identity, values, and aspirations of the group on its behalf. Samuel Brunk and Ben Fallaw argue that these hero figures necessarily provide a unifying force as ‘both in life and as the sacred, charismatic dead, heroes serve as a kind of cultural glue that helps hold together many kinds of communities – tribal, local, regional, national, international, religious and ethnic’ (2006, p. 3). In creating a national identity and heritage, exemplary leaders and heroic figures are of great importance to fostering unit, providing inspiration, and assisting in mobilising and constructing group identity and interests (see Phadnis and Ganguly 2001, p. 7). They form an integral part of this aspect of nation-building, and national heroes provide nationalism with a human face that facilitates processes of representation and collective identification (Eriksonas 2004, p. 15).

This chapter analyses national heroes, explores how they are (re)presented as the embodiment of the national character, and demonstrates how they perform a similar representative function to national symbols in the process of national identification. National heroes, like symbols, retain great symbolic power which is, as Bourdieu defines, ‘the power

granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition' (1989, p. 23). In the East Timorese context, significant symbolic power is acquired by those who contributed to the liberation struggle. Their reputations as heroes of the nation are legitimated and expounded by state narratives of *funu* and *terus*, affording them significant symbolic capital and rendering them esteemed figures within the national imaginary. Dom Boaventura provides an exemplar of an historic leader who has gained hero status because he has been presented in national narratives as the instigator of the national struggle. As the previous chapter has demonstrated, Dom Boaventura is commemorated as a proto-nationalist hero by statues across Timor-Leste, and the leader of a rebellion which is presented and widely believed to be the first stirring of modern-day East Timorese nationalism (Leach 2017, p. 207). He is consistently depicted as a traditional warrior-king, and his image is immortalised in the many statues that were built upon the centenary anniversary of his 1912 revolt, and the Order of Dom Boaventura medals (the highest honour for an East Timorese citizen to be awarded). This chapter explores the function of national heroes in the construction of a national identity, the reasons why Dom Boaventura is celebrated as a national hero, and what his symbolic function evokes in terms of national identity. The symbolic power and constructed heroism of Dom Boaventura is pervasive in the post-independence state. Steven Sengstock outlines that

his tenacious spirit still lives on. He is the man many see as the father of East Timorese nationalism. In Timor there is an almost Arthurian sense of legend and mythology attached to his name. He is remembered as the archetypal Timorese warrior king in a country where archetypes rarely emerge from a complex cultural and ethno-linguistic puzzle. (2008)

Not only does he evoke and represent an official nationalism but he also provides a unifying force in the process of nation-building that has faced numerous challenges since 2002.

Dom Boaventura has become a primary representation of 'East Timorese-ness' because he is believed to embody the core concept of *funu* (struggle), an indigenous ethno-cultural heritage, and a figure of power and strength therein. An analysis of the symbolic (re)construction of Dom Boaventura elucidates the power of national heroes and the similar function that they share with symbols of identity. Moreover, the

specific East Timorese cultural context expounds the role of heroes from the past, as the presence of the dead is keenly felt. Within East Timorese cosmology, the spirits of ancestors and the dead are believed to have an active and real role in social life (Bovensiepen 2009, 2011). Despite the fact that national heroes are central components of any national identity, as this chapter asserts, the subject of national heroes in Timor-Leste is an area of research yet to be explored. Scholars such as Frédéric Durand (2006), Fernando Augusto Figueiredo (2011), Steve Farram (1999), Michael Leach (2017), and Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo (2012), amongst others, have documented historical accounts of the colonial era and biographies of the life of Dom Boaventura; however, this iconic East Timorese leader has thus far not been critically analysed as a national hero. Before turning to two case studies of how such symbolic connections have been made with this hero in the post-independence years, it is important to first outline the role of national heroes in creating nations and how they perform symbolic functions in the processes of identification and national imagining.

THE FACE OF NATIONALISM: NATIONAL HEROES AS SYMBOLS OF IDENTITY

In the study of nations and nationalism, it is almost impossible to avoid the subject of national heroes,¹ and interestingly they provide a point of consensus among the various schools of thought on nations. While Ethnosymbolist thought asserts that national heroes have their origins in the myths and legends of the distant past of the nation (Smith 2009, p. 31), a modernist approach to nationalism argues that they are invented and presented as part of a constructed cultural heritage that unites a national community (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2013, pp. 263–264; Morgan 1992, pp. 81–86). Modernists argue that they become part of the national imaginary and take on the aura of timelessness that they share with the idea of the nation, as a result of nation-building practices (Kasetsiri 2003, p. 22). Regardless of how they are believed to originate, there is a common perception that national heroes are regarded as the ‘flesh and blood’ of nations and national identities (Eriksonas 2004, p. 15),

¹Maria Todorova argues that ‘[it] should be no coincidence that the great interest in heroes as well as the beginning of the study of heroic myth falls on the high age of nationalism’ (2009, p. 185).

and the importance of their function in creating, representing, and maintaining national identity is undisputed. National heroes are the physical embodiment of national identity and a face with which members of the national community can relate and identify.

The heroism attributed to an individual stems from the innate need of the nation for inspiration and an ideal to strive towards, as nationalism tends to romanticise and glorify certain aspects of the national past (Todorova 2009, p. 187). Just as national historical narratives require an inspirational or emotional element to foster national identification and unity (Smith 2013, p. 89), heroes are necessary to embody and personify this emotive part of the national heritage. Samuel Brunk and Ben Fallaw define a national hero as ‘a person to whom remarkable courage, talent, and other noble, even godlike traits are attributed by members of a community and who thus acquires a lasting place of importance in that community’s culture’ (2006, p. 1). This conceptualization draws on Weberian theories of charismatic leadership, which assert that certain individuals are born with special qualities or capabilities that set them apart from others and render them natural leaders (Weber 1968a, p. 246).

Weber argued that such leaders acquire a significant degree of devotion from their followers, who are united through emotional ties to the leader, resulting in unity and *Vergemeinschaftung* (a communal social relationship or community; see Weber 1968b, p. 9). Weber argued that devotion to certain individuals is evoked by ‘the specific sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person, and the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him’ (Weber 1968a, p. 213). This is precisely the way that national heroes are presented in narratives of nationalism, and the inspiring and unifying role that they perform is the same. National heroes set an example by which all members of the national community live, setting a standard both in terms of behaviours and the national character. In other words, by their actions and nature, national heroes are imagined to be so esteemed within the collective that they become inherently bestowed with Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic power (1989, p. 23). In the case of Dom Boaventura, the extraordinary traits attributed to him in nationalist narratives include his leadership in the national struggle for independence, his authority as a *liurai* (traditional king), and his strength in both of these roles.

One of the central characteristics that is commonly attributed to such leaders is, as Robert Rotberg argues, ‘the inspirational component of

the bond between leaders and their political and organizational followers that allows them to act as if they are genuinely inspired to maximize what they presume, or are led to believe, are their own interests' (2012, p. 419). While inspiration is undoubtedly a key component in the relationship between charismatic leaders and their followers, the role of the followers is in fact less passive than is suggested. Rather than simply be seduced by the charismatic personality of their leader or enchanted by myths of great heroism, members of national communities have a positive, active, and influential role in the position of heroes in the national imaginary. Indeed, an heroic individual must be *believed* to be heroic or extraordinary in order for their part in the national past to be incorporated into the imagination process. In this way, national heroes take on similar roles and functions as symbols, and analysing them in the same way offers greater insight into identity representation and a deeper understanding of national identity formation.

In similar processes of meaning-making, the interaction between a national hero and the national community parallels the relationship between symbols and the national community in their imaginings. Meaning must be given to symbols in the form of narratives and this meaning must be recognised in order for it to be reproduced and for positive identification to take place. A similar pattern can be observed with national heroes; heroes must be accepted as such in order for them to be incorporated into the national imaginary as national representatives (Brunk and Fallaw 2006, p. 4). As such, the character of a national hero is necessarily as open to interpretation, adaptation, and affirmation as the meanings of symbols. Through positive identification, the value and meaning of national symbols are recognised; similarly, the active participation of the members of the national community in affirming their national heroes is crucial to their existence and demonstrates a further way in which national identification takes place.

Like symbols, national heroes and popular figures are necessary facilitators of the processes of imagining and collective identification. By constructing and naming heroes and icons, national narratives put a face to abstractions that would otherwise be difficult to visualise and condense. In doing so, the commonality and the belief in a shared identity, history, and heritage is made possible and a sense of national unity is thus fostered (Brunk and Fallaw 2006, p. 3). In sum, symbols objectify the abstractions that are integral to a national identity, and national heroes personify them. With visual symbols and heroic protagonists,

the members of a nation can more easily make sense of their collective historical and cultural heritage and positively identify with it. By recognising and believing that certain individuals are national heroes, members of the collective attribute symbolic capital to them and incorporate them into national imaginings. These ongoing processes ensure the preservation of the heroes' symbolic power, elevated status, and ultimately their role in the life of the nation, long after their own lives have ended.

Within official state narratives, celebrated national heroes constitute an important part of nation-building as the key protagonists of the nation's 'story.' As Martin Strohmeier asserts, 'love of one's own heroes [...] [is] useful not only in generating patriotic fervour, but in portraying the secular variants of the saints, sinners and demons in the dramaturgy of their struggle' (2003, p. 3; see also White 1987, pp. 26–57). As symbols provide a common locus of identification through the generations, the construction of national heroes can also contribute a sense of continuity for the national community as the story of the nation continues to unfold. Regardless of the approach to nationalism adopted, the heroic function of inspiring and leading the nation is essentially the same, and necessary for processes of identification to continue. As Anthony D. Smith posits,

While definitions of grandeur and glory vary, every nationalism requires a touchstone of virtue and heroism, to guide and give meaning to the tasks of regeneration. The future of the ethnic community can only derive meaning and achieve its form from the pristine "golden age" when men were "heroes." Heroes provide models of virtuous conduct, their deeds of valour inspire faith and courage in their oppressed and decadent descendants. (1999, p. 65)

By representing the character and heritage of the nation, celebrated individuals can symbolically connect members from the past with the present and the future, sustaining a belief in the continual trajectory of the nation. The hero may have been an individual from folklore or legend, a historical leader, or a contemporary figure that enjoys great popularity and support; as long as they are believed to be an exemplary or inspirational personality who reflects a national identity, they can be imagined as a national hero. In post-independence Timor-Leste, most national heroic figures are former resistance leader and Falintil ex-combatants—Dom Boaventura however, is an undisputed exception to this rule.

Celebrated as a hero of the early twentieth century, he is believed to embody aspects of East Timorese nationalism which render him an inspirational figure for the national community.

DOM BOAVENTURA: THE GHOST OF EAST TIMORESE NATIONALISM

The legacy of Dom Boaventura in Timor-Leste exemplifies how national heroes are presented as the archetype of national identity, and how national unity can be fostered through identification with a hero. The official depiction of Dom Boaventura in state narratives is one that encapsulates the concept of the national hero, which Anthony D. Smith articulates is the embodiment of

the innate virtue and “true essence” of the nation, and it [...] [is] his or her *exemplum virtutis* that could help restore a sense of dignity to down-trodden peoples and inspire and mobilise them to resist oppression and fight for self-rule. As embodiments of the national spirit and the national Will in action, canons of heroes, heroines and geniuses became the most prized instruments, and possessions, for the forging of nations and their sense of self-worth. (2009, p. 69)

Presented by the state as one of the first to embark upon the struggle for independence, Dom Boaventura embodies the ideal of a people oppressed by colonialism to fight for their liberation. The specific cultural context of Timor-Leste emphasises the symbolic power of Dom Boaventura and his embodiment of the national character, as the presence of the dead continues to be very much felt and recognised as part of social life in the twenty-first century. The three core elements of East Timorese nationalism that are believed to be embodied by Dom Boaventura are the core tenet of *funu*, an indigenous ethno-cultural identity and heritage, and ideas of strength and power within a specifically East Timorese context.

Official state narratives in Timor-Leste, such as those articulated in speeches and documents produced by the government, present Dom Boaventura as a proto-nationalist hero who led an anti-colonial rebellion against the Portuguese in Manufahi in 1912, instigating the long national struggle for independence (Leach 2006, p. 225). The official website for the Government of Timor-Leste and school textbooks are key contemporary examples of the institutionalisation of nationalist narratives,

outlining Dom Boaventura as a hero in this way (see RDTL 2010). Within the ‘occupied-occupier’ paradigm of these narratives, he is portrayed as the original freedom fighter and the embodiment of *funu* as an integral aspect of East Timorese nationalism. However, historians largely agree that the nature of his revolt was not in fact anti-colonial but a feud between *liurais* from neighbouring kingdoms, which ultimately resulted in a defeat for Dom Boaventura (Hull 1999, p. 64; see also Gunn 2001, p. 7). Further details of his life and death remain largely unknown, however, the lack of clarity about the details of his life story does not take away from Dom Boaventura’s hero status. Conversely, the absence of definitive facts presents the *liurai* as a particularly valuable candidate for a national hero as the ambiguity allows for more flexibility in the imagination process. Symbols are powerful because of the fluidity of their meanings and their ability to adapt to changing contexts (Cohen 1985, p. 21). In fact, the less we know about the life of Dom Boaventura, the better a national hero he is, since this flexibility allows for the construction of a protagonist who supports the aims of the nation-building project and meets the current needs of the people. It is this ambiguity that makes Dom Boaventura so suitable as a national hero in that, like symbols, several meanings can be created and attributed to him in the pursuit of building the nation. The role of anti-colonial rebel fits well with nationalist narratives of struggle against foreign occupation and is typical of post-colonial nation-states who glorify the brave ‘last stands’ of national liberation heroes (Gunn 2001, p. 6). This is precisely the case with the re-presentation and reconstruction of Dom Boaventura’s rebellion of 1912; while his revolt ultimately failed, none of the heroism has been lost within national narratives that state he rebelled against the Portuguese colonialists. Rather than highlight the defeat of Dom Boaventura, the narratives suggest that he began the long struggle for self-determination that would be achieved in the twenty-first century.

Contemporary interpretations of the 1912 Manufahi rebellion as the first stage in the national struggle were epitomised in a speech given by the then-President of Timor-Leste, Taur Matan Ruak, who led the celebrations of its centenary anniversary:

We evoke the struggle of *liurai* Dom Boaventura against the colonial power [...] [which] ultimately turned out to be the first step in a long journey. Our society’s aspiration of freedom did not die with Dom Boaventura and it fell to our own generation the sacred duty of finally achieving this ancient dream of ours. (translated by John M. Millar for ETAN 2012)

The portrayal of Dom Boaventura echoed in the President's speech underlines the associations made between the national hero and the concept of *funu* in official narratives. Moreover, it further demonstrates a key function of national heroes to foster national unity through a common identity. Inspired by this one hero-figure, the nation is encouraged to unite in the ongoing struggle. As Brunk and Fallaw assert, heroes are strategically invoked by state leadership with this purpose in mind: 'states presumably benefit from the national identity that heroes can help produce because people who feel themselves to be part of a single community may be less fractious and thus more easily governable than people who do not' (2006, p. 3). The concept of the national struggle is a universally recognised tenet of East Timorese nationalism and a source of great symbolic capital in the post-independence state. As the instigator of the national *funu*, Dom Boaventura is an obvious national hero to commemorate, and celebrating the centenary of his revolt was an important event to take place in the first decade of nation-building that has seen numerous social divisions emerge. Dom Boaventura is able to foster national unity as the personification of the notion of *funu*, a concept with which the majority of the population positively identifies.

The most popular image of Dom Boaventura, encapsulated in statues and from which all other representations take their inspiration, visually presents a traditional king (*liurai*) and a combatant, armed and dressed in the traditional attire of an East Timorese warrior (*aswain*). This depiction symbolises the concept of an indigenous *funu* is an integral part of the collective's past, which he is imagined to have begun and which continued up until the very recent past. His exemplary act of rebellion is believed to have inspired the struggle for independence from Indonesia, and such imaginings enable his heroism to transcend time. Indeed, a crucial trait of national heroes is their 'para-historical existence,' or their seemingly timeless presence and relevance in the life of the nation (Eriksonas 2004, p. 36; see also Henken 1996, p. 23). This particular aspect of the national character that Dom Boaventura embodies is evoked in common visual depictions of him, and this pictorial representation is integral to his symbolic power as a national hero; he is a warrior-king who wears the traditional costume that has been proudly worn by East Timorese warriors since the pre-colonial era. As a traditional *aswain*, he represents an indigenous form of militancy and embodies imaginings of the earliest stirrings of *funu*, the notion of struggle that is central to a contemporary East Timorese national identity.

In the final days of the Indonesian occupation the popular belief in Dom Boaventura as the embodiment of *funu* and leader of the national liberation struggle was firmly held. In the face of Indonesian militia violence in the late 1990s, there was a widespread belief among the people from Dom Boaventura's traditional kingdom (Manufahi) that his spirit would protect them (Nygaard-Christensen 2012, p. 221). In the weeks following the 1999 independence ballot, one man had stated his firm belief that 'the spirit of Dom Boaventura is still very much alive. He will protect our people in Kabulaki [in the heart of the Manufahi region]' (Inbaraj 1999). The specific cultural and cosmological context of Timor-Leste emphasises the symbolic power of Dom Boaventura because the presence of the dead and ancestral spirits continues to be felt and recognised as a central to social life in the twenty-first century. At one of the most crucial stages of the recent liberation struggle, Dom Boaventura was called to mind and invoked to inspire and aid the resisting people of his traditional kingdom. The connection made between this national hero and the concept of *funu* is clear and believed by many to have a real influence on the life of the national community.

The specific visual representation of Dom Boaventura, dressed in garments of the traditional kings, invokes ideas of the indigenous social order and ethno-cultural heritage that is the foundation of imaginings of national identity. The *liurais*, the rulers over the traditional kingdoms, represented a figure of authority in a pre-colonial social system that has survived centuries of foreign occupation and is therefore understood to be truly East Timorese. The formal consolidation of an indigenous heritage was underlined as the primary goal of the resistance movement in the later years of the Indonesian occupation, before any political identity were to be formed. Xanana Gusmão, writing as the leader of the overall resistance movement in 1985, stated that 'if Timor becomes master of its own destiny [...] then an ethnic-historical identity, a cultural and religious identity and eventually a political identity will develop irresistibly, like the torrential streams of the rivers of our nation' (cited in Leach 2017, p. 224). The popular image of Dom Boaventura captures the figure of the *liurai* as well as the *asvaim*, representing a national identity that is founded on an indigenous culture, unaffected by Portuguese or Indonesian cultural influence.² The fact that

²The first encounters of the European powers with the island of Timor in the early sixteenth century detail the existing pre-colonial social structure of kingdoms (see Kammen 2010, pp. 244–269).

liurais are still attributed significant respect (if not executive power) in the post-independence years indicates that this particular aspect of cultural heritage is consciously preserved and esteemed as an element of East Timorese-ness that is unique to the national community. Authority and reverence are associated with the role of the *liurais*, and Dom Boaventura is consequently attributed such respect, presented as an archetype of traditional authority within an indigenous social system. The imaginings of a unique East Timorese way of life, as well as the sense of *funu*, are personified in the visual symbols of the warrior-king.

The symbolic representations of Dom Boaventura drawn from his iconic portrait as an armed warrior also conjure notions of strength and power in an East Timorese cultural context. The depiction of Dom Boaventura as an armed combatant presents a prototype of strong masculinity and power within an East Timorese cultural context, as traditional expressions of masculinity and strength are bound up with militancy and a man's potential to use violence, albeit mostly at a symbolic level (Myrntinen 2009, p. 16). The strength that is attributed to the protagonist of Dom Boaventura by national narratives stems from this common conception of leadership and power. These connotations predate the colonial era and the cultural associations invoked by traditional weaponry would be recognised by many in Timor-Leste (Myrntinen 2005, p. 237). Indeed, certain weapons and swords are often considered to be *lulik* objects, retaining the spiritual potency of the ancestors who had previously owned them (Babo-Soares 2004, pp. 15–33; Bovensiepen 2009, p. 325), and this connection would also be made to the arms that Dom Boaventura is invariably presented with. Popular ideas of militancy, strength, and power are incorporated into imaginings of Dom Boaventura and his role in the national past, his glorious rebellion, and the start of the liberation struggle which culminated in self-determination in 2002. Strength and authority are typical characteristics of popular leaders and political figures, a fact that further attests to this *liurai's* status as national hero as the embodiment of the national struggle and character.

Thus, immortalised in this stance, Dom Boaventura continually evokes the East Timorese struggle, traditional authority, and popular understandings of strength and leadership. In this way, Dom Boaventura performs the symbolic function of heroes for the nation by representing *funu* as a core tenet of nationalism and a culturally specific and familiar East Timorese heritage. The visual (re)presentation of Dom Boaventura supports narratives that present him as the personification of the

national character and facilitates collective identification with him. Dom Boaventura demonstrates how a popular connection with official nationalism is enabled by national heroes. Moreover, the way in which Dom Boaventura's symbolic power is mobilised affirms popular recognition of his esteemed position in national imaginings, and the legitimacy that can be acquired through association with a national hero.

THE MANUFAHI CONNECTION: INVOKING THE NATIONAL HERO FOR POLITICAL LEGITIMACY

Given the crucial importance of leadership in transitional and fledgling nation-states, the symbolic capital of national heroes is frequently utilised by members of the political élite to garner popular support, to foster national unity under their leadership, and to secure their position in power. Indeed, it is common for political leaders in nation-states across the world to associate themselves with national heroes in order to share in their legitimacy and admiration (Brunk and Fallaw 2006, p. 3). By invoking heroes, political leaders attest to their symbolic power but also gain for themselves some of the respect and credibility that is attributed to those with hero status by association.

Post-independence Timor-Leste provides an exemplary system in which such heroes are regularly evoked and utilised by political actors to augment their authority within the nation-state. When Dom Boaventura is invoked, his unifying symbolic power as a national hero is mobilised, affirming the central role of national heroes in the processes of national identification. Popular identification with Dom Boaventura as a national hero and father of East Timorese nationalism is strong, as seen by the numbers of people who participated in celebrations of the centenary across the country. The notion of Dom Boaventura as the instigator of the national *funu* and identity is reproduced all over at a grassroots level, as articulated by one East Timorese man:

Boaventura is a symbol, a symbol of people from the grassroots during the Portuguese time that start to speak out about something, speak out against the Portuguese government about paying taxes. He was able to speak out in his time, [...] the government at the time was kings like in England and you cannot do something against those peoples, very very strong and very very powerful [...]. [He] is a symbol of human rights, to speak out about what is not right, we have to say no and we have to speak out about that.

[...] He led a small group against the government at the time which is good, good sign for the step to the independence. [He was] the first one. (personal interview 2012)

Though diverging from state discourse somewhat in details, this articulation of what Dom Boaventura represents within the national imaginary reflects the belief that he began the long struggle for self-determination. It is with these popular imaginings in mind that his image and symbolic power are appropriated and mobilised by political parties to garner support in the post-independence state.

The optimum time to gauge how nationalist symbolic capital is mobilised to its maximum potential is during a period of electoral campaigning. Political activity and outreach is persistent and symbols in all their forms are ubiquitously visible. While this flurry of political activity is perhaps unrepresentative of that in the periods before and after election campaigning, these weeks can provide an insight into the strength of feeling and the extent of positive identification with political symbolism that is possible. Moreover, the materials produced during campaign periods in Timor-Leste are often functional, everyday items that can be re-used and displayed once the votes are counted, such as pens, T-shirts and jackets, baseball caps, and even wall clocks. One such example from the 2012 parliamentary election campaigns were the T-shirts created by the ASDT (*Associação Social Democrata Timorense*), which were given to supporters at rallies (Fig. 4.1).

The ASDT T-shirt displays the portraits of three men. On the left is the iconic image of Dom Boaventura; in the middle is a portrait of José Ramos-Horta who was formerly the president and prime minister of Timor-Leste³; and to the right is an image of Xavier do Amaral, the first president of Timor-Leste and the then-president of the ASDT party.⁴ The ASDT T-shirt provides an interesting example of political symbolism because it explicitly demonstrates the use of national heroes and leading personalities in symbolic forms, and how their images are used to draw on the symbolic capital they are imagined to have. The same

³José Ramos-Horta was the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste from 2006 to 2007, and President of the Republic from 2007 until 2012.

⁴When independence from Portugal was declared in 1975, Xavier do Amaral was instated as the President of the Republic, albeit for a number of days. Xavier do Amaral died in 2012, shortly before the parliamentary elections took place.

Fig. 4.1 A T-shirt designed by the *Associação Social Democrata Timorense* (ASDT) party and given to supporters at rallies, featuring the images of (left to right) Dom Boaventura, José Ramos-Horta and Xavier do Amaral

three men were featured in the ASDT posters and banners that could be seen across Dili in the weeks leading up to the 2012 election (Fig. 4.2). The T-shirt design hosts a range of key political figures from different generations, specifically selected because of their association with aspects of East Timorese nationalism. Each individual is understood to have contributed to the national liberation struggle in some way and have acquired significant symbolic power and capital as a result of their

Fig. 4.2 An ASDT party's 2012 election campaign banner in Dili

respective roles in the national past. This was not the first time that Dom Boaventura had been invoked by a political party to garner popular support; in 1974, the original ASDT party had visited the *liurai*'s widow and asked her to back the party, knowing that popular support would then follow (Hill 2002, p. 72; Nygaard-Christensen 2012, p. 221).⁵

The three men in the T-shirt are also connected by their region of origin. Dom Boaventura was the *liurai* of the Manufahi region; the leading statesman José Ramos-Horta's maternal family also originates from Manufahi (Nicol 2002, p. 121), and the then-party president, Xavier do Amaral, is reportedly a descendent of the line of *liurais* of the same district (Nixon 2012, p. 52). It is noteworthy that the regional link between the individuals chosen for the T-shirt directly corresponds to the areas of most electoral support for the ASDT; that is, Manufahi

⁵The first political independence movement was also named the ASDT, but reformed and was renamed as Fretilin (*Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente*) in 1974.

and the other specifically Mambai districts. The Mambai people are the largest of Timor-Leste's distinct ethnic groups, residing primarily in the Manufahi, Ainaro, Aileu and Manatuto districts. In the parliamentary elections of 2001, the highest number of ASDT votes was received in Aileu (52%), Manufahi (22%), Ainaro (15%), and Manatuto (12%), surpassing the dominant party of the time—Fretilin—in some areas by a significant margin (King 2003, p. 754).⁶ This was no coincidence as regional cultural identity was a consistent focal point for the ASDT; throughout the first decade of independence, its electoral campaigns were driven by appeals to traditional ideas of the Mambai ethnic identity and consistently drew on do Amaral's origins in the central mountains of Turiscai (King 2003, p. 754). The strategy of appealing to ethnic, regional identity from previous election campaigns had been successful and set a precedent for the ASDT's tactics in 2012. In light of this, the individuals chosen to represent the party in its symbols appear to be a logical and strategic selection of recognisable individuals from the ethnic Mambai heartland.

The clear geo-political link between three men is perhaps a lesser reason for their depiction on the T-shirt. The use of José Ramos-Horta's image was logical because in 2012 he had pledged his support to the ASDT party in the parliamentary elections, though officially he remained independent. His support was significant for the party because of his central role in the politics of Timor-Leste; Ramos-Horta was a founding member of the first pro-independence movement, from which he has gained significant legitimacy, and had been the international representative for the resistance movement at the United Nations throughout the Indonesian occupation. In 1996, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, together with Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo, for his efforts in seeking a peaceful solution to attaining self-determination. Since then, he has been attributed significant respect and political capital for his role in the struggle for self-determination (Nygaard-Christensen 2012, p. 213). By adopting his portrait, the ASDT identified with Ramos-Horta as

⁶The same regions held the most support for the ASDT in the following elections of 2007 and 2012. In 2007, the ASDT-PSD coalition was strongest in Aileu (47.3%), Ainaro (29.1%) and Manufahi (26.8%) (McWilliam and Bexley 2008, p. 76). In 2012, the same regions were the areas in which the ASDT received the largest percentage of votes: Aileu (6.9%), Ainaro (4.21%), Manufahi (2.85%), though a significant decrease in the number of votes received should also be noted (STAE 2012).

one of the leading personalities in East Timorese politics, past and present, and the legitimacy and respect he is given.⁷ Xavier do Amaral was also given significant legitimacy in the nation-state because he was also directly involved in the leadership of the national liberation movement. He was a founding member of the original ASDT (before it became Fretilin) and was the first President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (RDTL) during the brief period of self-determination in 1975.⁸ After the independence ballot in 1999, Xavier do Amaral went on to 'revive' the ASDT party again in 2000 (in fact, creating a new political party but under the old name), and remained president of the contemporary party until his death in 2012 (Shoesmith 2011, pp. 18–20).

However, Dom Boaventura has no connection to the party and died long before the ASDT came into existence. He is distinct from the other two leaders in that he is an historic figure who died in the early twentieth century, and is only connected to the other two figures through regional commonality. Yet this geopolitical connection was enough for the ASDT to associate itself with Dom Boaventura and mobilise his symbolic power, strengthened by do Amaral's connection to the *liurai* line. The symbolic capital that is attributed to Dom Boaventura in the post-independence state is such that its appropriation by the ASDT is an astute means of securing popular support in electoral politics. By invoking an undisputed national hero, the political party presented itself as a 'true' East Timorese electoral representative, a claim that is sustained and legitimated by the association with the father of East Timorese nationalism. The symbolic capital acquired by the *liurai* as an embodiment of the struggle against foreign occupation furthers the appeal of the party to the population, making connections to the original pro-independence movement and the ideal of national liberation. Moreover, given the centrality of ethno-cultural identity to the ASDT's electoral campaigning, Dom Boaventura is a potent symbol to evoke as he personifies an historic, indigenous cultural heritage. The Manufahi connection may be a happy coincidence that justifies the symbolic connection,

⁷José Ramos-Horta held the office of President of the state from 2006 until 2007. His successful political career throughout the occupation and international recognition as a respected statesman significantly aided his presidential election campaign.

⁸This position had long been disputed by some members of Fretilin, who recognised Nicolau Lobato as the first President as a result of do Amaral's surrender to the Indonesian military in the late 1970s.

but it strengthens the identification of the ASDT as a party that recognises official notions of East Timorese nationalism and claims to truly represent the interests of the nation.

The visual representation of Dom Boaventura on the ASDT T-shirt is one example of how political actors mobilise the symbolic capital of national heroes to appeal to the population in an effort to bolster electoral support. Indeed, Maj Nygaard-Christensen notes that in various Asian contexts ‘such appeals to national ancestors, spirits and the “potent dead” (Chambert-Loir and Reid 2002) in the pursuit of legitimacy are often part of modern, electoral politics’ (2012, p. 221). However, the cultural context and prevalent cosmology of Timor-Leste has also made it possible for Dom Boaventura’s power to be mobilised at an unofficial level. It is worth elaborating on the power of the distinct cultural context of Timor-Leste in this respect, because spirituality is integral to a posthumous presence and the permeating influence of Dom Boaventura in contemporary politics.

Though the majority of the population are practising Roman Catholics, many also continue to hold to an indigenous cosmology, and the power of ancestral spirits and the presence of the dead continue to be an important part of social life in Timor-Leste. It is believed that the universe is divided into material and spiritual realms, which are directly connected and interdependent (Babo-Soares 2004, p. 22). Honouring ancestors, safeguarding spiritually potent ancestral objects (*luliks*), and respecting the spiritual power of ancestral lands are deeply embedded in East Timorese culture. The spiritual realm is not only connected to the world of the living, but can directly impact upon it and material benefits are understood to be a result of active ancestral spirits, embedded in the land (Bovensiepen 2009, p. 326). This cosmology is of great importance to everyday life and the spirits of the dead are accordingly treated with fear and respect. Thus, recognition of the spirits of ancestors and the dead and their continued influence in the material world enables Dom Boaventura to maintain a heightened presence as a national hero in the post-independence state, over a century after his death. In this context, the spirit of a national hero continues to command reverence from the members of the national community who identify with the spiritual and cultural heritage of the national community. The case of Alfredo Reinado expounds Dom Boaventura’s posthumous presence and the power that national heroes have when the national community imagines them as

such, since this rebel on-the-run was seen by many as a contemporary hero-figure because of his associations with Dom Boaventura.

A SPIRITED REBEL? ALFREDO REINADO AND DOM BOAVENTURA

Taking the spiritual and cultural context of Timor-Leste into consideration, the invocation of Dom Boaventura has taken place in potent ways that surpass visual and symbolic representations. In 2006, a relatively unknown figure in East Timorese politics suddenly became infamous at a national level following a series of events that led many to believe that he was the reincarnation of Dom Boaventura himself. Evidence can be found in the numerous news reports both from East Timorese and international newspapers and news channels at the time, as one of the more unusual outcomes of the 2006 Crisis.

At a time of serious civil unrest and political turbulence, ‘Major’ Alfredo Reinado came to the fore of the political arena and presented himself as a contemporary hero of the East Timorese people.⁹ In a discussion of exemplary leaders and national heroes in Timor-Leste, Alfredo Reinado is perhaps a strange figure to consider: his time in politics was brief, he had no discernible political position or ideology, and he left no significant legacy. Indeed, many have forgotten him since his death in 2008, and his name is only briefly mentioned in scholarly analyses of the 2006 crisis (except Nygaard-Christensen 2012, pp. 209–229). Yet for two years, he enjoyed notable popular support to the extent that he was described by many East Timorese as ‘a symbol of the disenfranchised’ (Reckinger and Gonzalez 2008), ‘a hero’ (Murdoch 2006), and a ‘living legend’ (Cristalis 2002, pp. 309–310). Reinado’s (relative) popularity can be attributed to the way in which he mobilised the symbolic capital and power of Dom Boaventura, and attests to the influence that members of the national community have in imagining and creating national heroes.

Reinado’s rebellion originated in the political crisis of 2006, which began with the sacking of almost 600 soldiers from the East Timorese armed forces after a strike over alleged discrimination (see Kingsbury 2007). It was claimed that the soldiers from the western districts—known as *Loromonu* in Tetun—had been denied the opportunity of promotion and advancement as a result of their ethnic and regional

⁹Alfredo Reinado’s official rank was not Major, but Lieutenant Commander, though he was popularly referred to as the ‘Major’ (Callinan 2008).

identity (Sahin 2007, pp. 251–252; see also Wallis 2012, pp. 6–10; Scambary 2009). Though the strike began with peaceful demonstrations, the situation quickly escalated as riots in Dili followed and a number of military policemen deserted their posts to fight against government forces. The dissenting officers organised and established themselves as the ‘Petitioners Group,’ led by Alfredo Reinado (Kingsbury and Leach 2007, pp. 5–6).¹⁰ With the escalation of violence, Reinado made headlines in Australia as well as Timor-Leste, and soon became a criminal on the run. The fact that this took place in 2006 is pertinent: it was a time of significant political crisis and instability – the worst the country had seen since the return to independence. At that time, perhaps more than ever, the young nation needed an inspirational hero figures to provide some sense of unity, as the disputes between the government and the President had led to disillusionment with the political establishment. It was for this reason that Reinado claimed to be the reincarnation of the undisputed national hero, Dom Boaventura, to unite the people behind him, rally support for his cause (unclear though it was), and avoid capture and imprisonment.

Despite the fact that Reinado was wanted by the state and had no clear ideological position, he was able to garner enough popular support to elude capture until his death in 2008.¹¹ In the words of renowned journalist Max Stahl, Reinado became ‘a poster figure on laptops, and graffiti sketches around Dili [...] like a poster character, the meaning of his protest shifted its ground’ (cited in Reckinger and Gonzalez 2008). Maj Nygaard-Christensen notes that during her field research in Dili in 2007,

impromptu “Viva Alfredo” graffiti tags decorated private and public buildings all over the city. Sprayed on the side of a house in large letters in *Bairro Pite*, one of Dili’s most troubled neighbourhoods, was the text “Major Alfredo is our hero, is the best, is revolution”. (2012, p. 220)

¹⁰The name ‘petitioners’ came after 200 of the disaffected soldiers signed a petition outlining their grievances to give to the then president, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão in January 2006 (Leach 2017, p. 175).

¹¹Major Reinado was arrested and incarcerated in June 2006, though he escaped shortly after. He claimed, ‘I just walk out the door [...] I tell them that I want to go out. They let me go’ (cited in Bullock 2007).

With no exact political agenda, it is perhaps difficult to comprehend his direct involvement—at times, his centrality—in national politics throughout the crisis. However, by mobilising the symbolic capital of the national hero Dom Boaventura and laying claim to a spiritual connection with him, Reinado was able to garner enough popular support to evade imprisonment and to even gain recognition as a contemporary hero-figure for two years.

Throughout his campaign, it was rumoured that Reinado had taken part in a traditional ceremony during which he had been endowed with the supernatural powers and spirit of Dom Boaventura (Sengstock 2008). The ritual involved the traditional leaders of Manufahi, believed to possess supernatural magic or power, placing their hands on top Reinado's head. The placing of hands indicates that cosmological power had been transferred to him and it was clear by the shouts of 'Viva Alfredo, viva Boaventura' as the ceremony closed that it was the spirit of the dead *liurai* that had been passed on (Suara Timor Lorosae cited in Nygaard-Christensen 2012, pp. 220–221). From this moment on, Alfredo Reinado's supporters saw him as the reincarnation of Dom Boaventura and endowed with supernatural powers. Rumours of his escape from capture, of his ability to become invisible and see in the dark, and spiritual protection from bullets all contributed to the super-human, heroic aura that surrounded him (Nygaard-Christensen 2012, pp. 221–222).¹²

The details of the ritual demonstrate an acute awareness of associations with Dom Boaventura as a national hero not only from Reinado, but from the supporters he gained. Moreover, the heightened potency of Dom Boaventura as a national hero in Timor-Leste, where the presence of the dead is recognised as part of everyday life, is expounded by the widespread recognition of the ritual and its cultural significance. Alfredo Reinado's participation in a traditional ceremony such as this is a strategy of leadership that is employed to garner popular support in various political contexts; engaging in rituals and symbolic acts enables leaders to share in a less political arena but still assert their influence and gain support (Menon et al. 2010, p. 52). In the context of a distinct, East Timorese cosmology and with full recognition of the importance

¹²Popular belief in the protection offered by ancestral spirits to worthy subjects is prevalent; it was believed that many Falintil guerrillas were similarly protected and hidden from Indonesian soldiers in the mountains during the occupation (Bovensiepen 2011).

of Dom Boaventura to imaginings of the nation, Reinado took part in a ritual that would foster popular belief in a spiritual connection to the national hero and thereby mobilise Dom Boaventura's symbolic capital. In doing so, Reinado was able to elevate his status and legitimise his position in the eyes of the East Timorese people. The potential for gaining power and influence was increased by the specific cultural context, where the vitality and potency of the spiritual realm in daily life is acknowledged and such ceremonies are respected traditions.

The fact that Alfredo Reinado's strategy to legitimise his position was carried out—successfully—in this way attests to Dom Boaventura's hero status and his central symbolic place in imaginings of national identity. Reinado's choice of hero, ritual, and location were all deliberate and based on his understanding of what it means to be 'true' East Timorese in the eyes of the people. Reinado's participation in the ritual was critical to gaining power and influence because it initiated a belief in the reincarnation of Dom Boaventura and enabled a direct appropriation of the symbolic capital of a national hero. Moreover, it allowed Reinado to identify as a 'true' East Timorese man who recognised, respected, and continued to value a system of beliefs that is considered to be at the core of the national cultural heritage. In other words, Reinado mobilised the symbolic power of Dom Boaventura to present himself as a 'true' East Timorese man who was in touch with the unique ethno-cultural and spiritual heritage of the East Timorese nation.

The popular belief in the rumours surrounding the ceremony was possible for several reasons: first, the prevailing belief in ancestral spirits and its related rituals was still strong and the ceremony was believed to have been carried out in accordance with custom. In Timor-Leste, village elders are also ritual leaders and are traditionally seen as figures of authority as the intermediaries with the ancestors (Loch and Prueller 2011). The imparting of Dom Boaventura's spirit on Alfredo Reinado was given credence because it was performed by respected elders according to a deeply held system of beliefs. A second detail of the ceremony that was crucial to fostering popular belief in its success was its location, which was in the traditional kingdom of Manufahi. During the months that he avoided detention, Reinado was based in Same, a sub-district of the same region over which Dom Boaventura had ruled almost a century before. Specifically, the ceremony that transferred the supernatural powers of Dom Boaventura took place in the mountains of Same, which is a significant location in itself when contextualised.

In Timor-Leste, mountains are understood to be directly associated with ancient, indigenous custom and ritual, and are exceptionally spiritually potent because of their closeness to ancestral spirits (Da Silva 2011, pp. 147–148). Manufahi was Dom Boaventura's kingdom and if his spirit were to remain anywhere in his land, the mountains would be where his spiritual presence would be strongest as a *lulik* or sacred site. Thus, since Alfredo Reinado wanted to convincingly claim to have taken on the spirit of Dom Boaventura, the mountains in Same were an obvious choice of location. The regional identification with Manufahi and the spirit of Dom Boaventura was evidently made, as 'the young Timorese would [...] whisper, "Did you know Alfredo has very strong connections with the people of Manufahi? They say he's blessed with the spirit of Dom Boaventura"' (Sengstock 2008). The location was specifically chosen by Reinado because of its connection to Dom Boaventura and the potential popular support that the rebel could gain as a result of his strengthened claims to association with this national hero. Support for Alfredo Reinado attests to the power of Dom Boaventura as a national hero, and the power of popular belief in an ethno-cultural and cosmological heritage, as key components in imaginings of nationhood.

The symbolic power of Dom Boaventura as a national hero was mobilised by Major Reinado in a further, more perceptible way to strengthen his claims to a spiritual connection with the national hero. As a hero of national narratives, Dom Boaventura has been portrayed in a specific light as a warrior-king and visual symbols of him are constructed to represent this character. Visual representation was therefore also of great importance to Alfredo Reinado's claims and, after taking part in the traditional ritual and relocating to the ancient kingdom of Dom Boaventura, Reinado reinforced the connections by presenting himself as the modern-day warrior-protector. The cultural association of masculinity and strength with militancy and violence in Timor-Leste was exploited by the rebel. Dom Boaventura is imagined to be a traditional warrior from the past and Reinado replicated and modified this notion in the post-independence state; in photographs featured in news reports at the time, he consistently posed in camouflage or military fatigues, carrying heavy weaponry, sporting big muscles, and hiding in the mountains as the Falintil guerrillas had. In presenting himself as a contemporary warrior, Reinado furthered his apparent connections with Dom Boaventura by employing visual symbols that evoke common connotations of struggle, strength, masculinity and leadership. Taking his

inspiration from official narratives and depictions of Dom Boaventura as a warrior-king, Reinado adapted his own appearance to strengthen his claims to the spiritual link that legitimised his position in the eyes of the East Timorese people. The fact that this strategy was utilised and positively received by Reinado's supporters underlines how Dom Boaventura embodies these particular traits of a national character and is imagined in this particular way by the national community.

The case of Alfredo Reinado brings to light the potency and symbolic capital attributed to Dom Boaventura by official notions of East Timorese nationalism, and how contemporary figures can mobilise them to gain a degree of credibility through the recognition and support of a number of East Timorese people. It attests to the representative power of Dom Boaventura in national identification as a symbol of *funu* and strength, of an indigenous East Timorese spiritual and cultural heritage and an emerging East Timorese nationalism. Indeed, Reinado's popular support would not have been possible without the hero-status of Dom Boaventura. Interestingly, the rebel has seemingly been forgotten since his death in 2008 and is not posthumously celebrated as other heroes are. Anthony D. Smith argues that nations necessarily require heroes but that not all of them are immortalised in the national culture:

nations need heroes and golden ages. The heroes may be modern revolutionaries [...] who will soon pass into the mythological pantheon, or be consigned (temporarily?) to oblivion while other more ancient heroes are rehabilitated. [...] For heroes exemplify an "age of gold", which embodies the ideals to which present-day leaders aspire. (1987, p. 213)

It could be argued that while Alfredo Reinado may have been considered by many to be a modern-day hero while he was alive, he has since been consigned to the past or oblivion and forgotten. However, because he had evoked Dom Boaventura at the height of his rebellion, Reinado was able to rehabilitate or transform the way in which the East Timorese people understood the *liurai* as a national hero. By participating in a traditional ceremony to bestow the spirit of Dom Boaventura upon Reinado, the power of the *liurai* was reaffirmed and his presence in contemporary East Timorese society was strengthened. Alfredo Reinado may have been no more than a rebel seeking fame and recognition, and was never a true national hero in the way that Dom Boaventura is believed to be. Yet his life and rebellion exemplify how national communities need to have

heroes, particularly in difficult times such as the 2006 Crisis, and how members of the collective continually seek the heroic and inspirational elements of their historical and cultural heritage as part of the processes of identification.

CONCLUSION

National heroes are integral to popular imaginings of nationhood, as they perform similar representative functions as symbols. They embody and personify the traits and characteristics of national identity that are outlined in nationalist narratives. They facilitate the imagination process by giving members of the national community a face and a story with which they can identify, and which provides the inspirational element of nationalism that foster positive identification and national unity. The role of national heroes is often overlooked in studies of nationalism and national identity formation, despite its centrality. Moreover, in nation-building and analyses of its processes, hero-figures are rarely considered. This chapter has underlined the importance of national heroes to national identity construction, and the active role that they can perform in national politics. When invoked, the symbolic capital that hero-figures retain can be mobilised and used as a significant source of legitimacy and popular support that cannot be underestimated, especially in times of significant political instability or turmoil, as can often be the case in post-conflict, transitional societies.

A century after his death, Dom Boaventura is revered in East Timorese society as an icon of the struggle for independence and, his status as a national hero is strengthened by the specific cultural context of Timor-Leste in which the spirits of the dead endure. In the visual symbols of Dom Boaventura, he is presented as the embodiment of core aspects of a pre-colonial cultural heritage that which have endured centuries of foreign occupation and provide the foundation for official East Timorese nationalism in the post-independence state. Depicted as a traditional warrior, he evokes the five-hundred year *fumu*, indigenous militancy against foreign occupation and ideas of strength and masculinity. As a *liurai*, he represents the traditional social structure of kingdoms that was in place on the island of Timor before the arrival of the European colonial powers. The connotations of authority and power that reside with the status are understood and accepted within a contemporary East Timorese cultural context, where the position of *liurai* still commands great respect.

Allusions to symbols of an ethno-cultural heritage are furthered by the *lulik* sword Dom Boaventura carries which not only indicates a strong male figure, but conjures ideas of animist beliefs and respect for ancestral spirits with which he is now posthumously associated. As such, Dom Boaventura is both a national hero and can also be understood to symbolically represent official articulations of a 'true' East Timorese-ness that encompasses the struggle and an ancient system of beliefs and social order. It is for this reason that visual symbols of Dom Boaventura are invoked and utilised to not only represent an East Timorese national identity and the core principle of the struggle, but to afford legitimacy and popular support for those who identify with him.

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‘Big Brother Xanana’: The Cult of Personality and the Creation of a Contemporary National Hero

National heroes are the embodiment of the national character and the leading protagonists in histories of the nation. Heroes are often found in legends and myths from the past, invoked as the representative of the values and goals of the national community, who enable popular imaginings of nationhood and inspire its members to unite under a common identity. However, national heroes do not need to be confined to the distant past to have this unifying symbolic power; popular charismatic leaders of the present can become the heroes of the future, especially in young nation-states. Such charismatic leaders commonly have ‘cult’ followings, which can lead to politics being dominated by personalities rather than policies. Since the return to independence in 2002 this has certainly been the case in Timor-Leste where national elections, campaigns, and party organization have focused primarily on a select few individuals who have dominated the political arena (McWilliam and Bexley 2008, p. 69). These leaders have dominated the limelight because of the resistance-era symbolic capital they retain, and are considered by many to be heroic because of their role in the liberation struggle of the recent past.

The former resistance leaders have acquired significant symbolic capital because of the centrality of the struggle to national identification and the social hierarchy that has been established, based on contribution. At the top of the hierarchy of state recognition are the Falintil guerrillas, who the government sees as ‘glorious’ and ‘whose historic actions are

deserving of praise' (RDTL 2007, p. xiii).¹ The Falintil guerrillas are believed to embody the core concepts of *funu* (struggle) and *terus* (suffering), and veterans are duly honoured in the post-independence state (Da Silva 2008, p. 162).² It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, the former Commander in Chief of the Falintil and leader of the overall resistance movement, has stood out as the most prominent heroic personality in East Timorese national politics. His leadership of the nation has been a point of continuity throughout the recent past; not only did Xanana Gusmão lead the resistance from 1981 through to the 1999 independence ballot,³ but he has held the positions of President of the state (2002–2007) and Prime Minister, after creating his own political party, the *Conselho Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor* (CNRT), in 2007. He maintained this position of leadership until he resigned in 2015.

This chapter explores the ways in which Xanana Gusmão, 'the most illustrious ex-Falintil still alive' (Da Silva 2008, p. 170), has (re)presented himself to the national community as a hero-figure, drawing upon his resistance-era capital to legitimise his leading position in national politics. Xanana Gusmão's symbolic self-presentation to the national community has been tailored to fit powerful identity narratives of struggle and sacrifice, to ensure that he appears to embody the national character. This has been achieved through visual symbols and reinforced by powerful discursive practices and appeals that coalesce with popular needs and desires. The symbolic, public hero-figure of Xanana Gusmão allows us to understand how personality cults come to exist in young nation-states and how they are sustained, through the mobilisation of symbolic capital from nationalist identity narratives to secure popular support for a leader's hero status. In Timor-Leste specifically, an analysis of Xanana's personal-politics helps to explain how this phenomenon has contributed to the

¹'*A frente armada foi protagonizada pelas gloriosas Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste (FALINTIL), cuja gesta histórica cabe exalter*'. Translation my own.

²The 'veterans issue' originating in disputes over state pensions and monetary compensation for their role in the struggle should be noted. For an overview, see ICG (2011).

³In 1981, Gusmão was elected the National Political Commissar, the president of the CRRN (the umbrella group for all factions of the resistance), and Commander in Chief of the Falintil (see Niner 2001, p. 20).

monopolisation of the nation-building project by a select few resistance leaders, which has led to the numerous symbolic conflicts for ownership of identity narratives that have taken place since 2002.

THEORISING CONTEMPORARY HERO-FIGURES AND CHARISMATIC LEADERS

In order to examine contemporary popular heroes more closely, this section develops the theoretical framework of symbols and national heroes from the previous chapter and incorporates theories of charismatic leadership to elucidate the symbolic and political power that they have in the national community. Since personality politics and narratives of heroism have dominated the first decade of independent Timor-Leste, this is one aspect of nation-building that merits more attention. The national heroes of tomorrow have great political influence today, and it is therefore important to better understand how they gain their elevated status.

In post-colonial nation-states, the importance of heroism and leadership is heightened due to the transitional and uncertain nature of nation-building, and the need to objectify the abstractions of national identity (see Edelman 1974, p. 80). Historian Jean Lacouture underlines the importance of a strong figurehead in times of emergent identity formation in post-colonial states: 'when searching for its identity, a people needs a face and a voice more than it needs a policeman' (1969, p. 12). This perspective underlines the crucial role that national heroes perform, as it is assumed that stability, peace, and national unity proceed as a result of strong leadership. Indeed, charismatic leadership and personality politics have a tendency to flourish in such transitional contexts, particularly in light of an anti-colonial liberation struggle (Willner and Willner 1965, pp. 80–81). Considering this, the personality politics of Timor-Leste can be understood as an inevitable product of the recent past and the ongoing processes of state- and nation-building. The drastic political change of the abrupt decolonization of the half-island by Portugal, followed swiftly by its invasion by Indonesia, meant that strong leadership was crucial to fostering a unified sense of East Timorese nationhood in the face of foreign occupation.

East Timorese nationalism was initially imagined in a context of resistance to the Indonesian occupation, and it was during this period that heroic leaders were most urgently sought. Elissa Henken argues that in

such circumstances, heroes naturally emerge if two basic criteria are met: if the collective has a conscious sense of distinctive peoplehood and identity, and if they believe that they are being oppressed by an out-group (Henken 1996, p. 23). Under the repressive and brutal conditions of the Indonesian occupation, there was a real need for inspiration and leadership that created a platform for an heroic national representative to emerge. In times of distress, Lacouture agrees that a heroic leader inevitably comes forward due to the ‘collective thirst for justice (he becomes a judge) or for national identity – and has an answer for everything. [...] He believes in himself and even more strongly in the indissolubility of the ties that bind him to the people’ (1969, p. 23). Following the 1975 invasion, East Timorese nationalism had begun to take form. The conditions and popular need for strong leadership were evident and the resistance movement fostered that close bond between its leaders and the East Timorese people.

In the case of recently independent nation-states such as Timor-Leste, Henken’s theory of national ‘redeemer-heroes’ is particularly useful because of its associations with national liberation. Henken defines a redeemer-hero as

the hero who has never really died, but who, either in sleep or in a distant land, awaits the time when his people will need him, when he will return and restore the land to its former glory (or in some cases to *an unprecedented future glory*). This type of hero, a familiar figure quickly recognized, has appeared in many cultures and many lands. (1996, p. 23, emphasis added)

In the case of post-colonial states, this unprecedented future glory is the national self-determination that had been denied by centuries of foreign occupation. Indeed, the concept of a redeemer-hero is in keeping with a Fanonian understanding of leaders who, when instigating the struggle for national liberation, come to the fore and promise the national community ‘a forward march, heroic and unmitigated’ (Fanon 1965, pp. 135–136).⁴ By taking up the mantle and providing the strong

⁴It is noteworthy that Fanon critiques such leaders post-independence; ‘The leader pacifies the people [...] he uses every means to put them [the national community] to sleep, and three or four times a year asks them to remember the colonial period and to look back on the long way they have come since then’ (Fanon 1965, pp. 135–36).

leadership that is sought in a liberation movement, contemporary heroes emerge because the roles of representative, guide, and protector are fulfilled. Murray Edelman refers to this as the necessary 'dramaturgical performance' that emphasises the traits popularly associated with leadership: 'forcefulness, responsibility, courage, decency, and so on' (1974, p. 81). In this way, popular leaders can become the heroic protagonists of nationalist narratives by adopting the characteristics and traits associated with national heroes, a performance that is facilitated by the context of national liberation.

The leaders of such national liberation struggles are often celebrated as heroes once independence has been gained. In those cases where the liberation struggle took place in the recent past, as was the case in many formerly colonised nations of Africa and Asia, it is likely that surviving leaders would, for a time at least, enjoy the reverence often afforded to them. In this way, many heroic leaders in post-colonial nation-states stand in stark contrast to archetypal national heroes who are posthumously celebrated, and are depicted in nationalist narratives as having their origins in a mythic, distant past. Though writing about mythic heroes in a Welsh context, Henken's framework for national heroes does explain more this modern, post-colonial phenomenon. She argues that a redeemer-hero is believed to be much more tangible than individuals from legends of the past: 'the redeemer is a figure of intense political immediacy rather than mere mythological romanticism. Belief in the redeemer seems to exist not simply on a symbolic level, but to be rather firmly and literally held' (1996, p. 47). In this way, contemporary leaders become powerful national representatives because they have this sense of realism and can engage with the national community, by having both a physical presence and an interactive relationship with them.

Given that national heroes embody abstractions of a national identity like flags, monuments and other national symbols, there is need for a reciprocal relationship with the national community through meaning-making and receiving in imaginings of identity. This relationship is similarly required of contemporary hero-figures and is in fact expounded by the fact that the relationship is alive, literally engaging and tangible. And like symbols and national heroes, the visual representation of contemporary leaders is crucial to their inclusion in heroic national imaginings. A key function of national heroes is to facilitate the imaginings of the national community by making the abstractions of identity narratives comprehensible and, like national symbols, visual portrayal is crucial to

enabling this process. As with symbols, their success in emitting particular meanings is dependent on the positive reception, recognition, and acceptance by the national community (Conger and Kanungo 1998, p. 47; see also Rost 1993, pp. 102–103). Terence Moore argues that these symbols of leaders ‘are not historical documents and they are not portraits of human beings’ but rather they are the ‘physical embodiments’ of the ideals of a collective (1993; see also Osborne 2002).

However, the success of a contemporary hero’s meaning-making is far more likely if managed and presented in accordance with sources of power, identity, and legitimacy. As charismatic leaders recognise the power of national identity narratives and symbols, they are able to sustain their position of influence by recreating and reproducing similar symbolic meanings, and thus continue the cycle (Baczko 1981, pp. 40–41). Popular leaders frequently model their images to include allusions to national symbols to further simulate their synecdotal representation of the national community. As Hugh Duncan articulates,

through symbols we intensify or enlarge the impression of personality, because we are able to identify with the self those symbols which have been given power by the community to use. [...] The resonance of symbols, the sensuous as well as the intellectual attention evoked, supplies the individual with means by which he can enlarge or intensify his sphere of power. (1961, p. 107)

Sharing (or appearing to share) in symbolic meaning with recognised national symbols is a powerful strategy because it appeals to the emotive side of nationalism. Moreover, it automatically ensures large support since a degree unity and consensus on the symbols’ meanings and their importance has already been established through institutionalisation and positive identification of the nation with them.

Yet the leader’s self-presentation to the nation incorporates more than the identification with national symbols. A strong figurehead may have the qualities and characteristics required to lead but their image is crucial to relaying this fact to the collective. Indeed, much social psychology research on leadership has demonstrated that the success of a charismatic leader is dependent on a combination of an appearance consistent with strong leadership traits, and the skills made plausible by that appearance (for example see Cherulnik 1995, p. 293; Mio et al. 2005). Depending on the political context and the state in which these leaders operate,

this appearance could mean smart suited statesman, a military leader in fatigues sporting medals, or a dress code that taps into an ethno-cultural identity. Regardless, their appearance must visually reflect the persona sought by the nation and the charismatic, interactive relationship must be sustained through discourse.

The discourse employed by popular leaders is intrinsically linked to their personal image because authority and legitimacy emanate when the former mirrors the latter, and vice versa. Rhetoric is deliberately chosen by leaders to reflect the strength, courage, and wisdom needed by their followers, and dress, appearance and body language are made to reflect these assets (Cherulnik et al. 2001, p. 644). The ability to adapt and manoeuvre image and discourse, and to consistently provide strong leadership, in order to secure popular support regardless of changing circumstances are characteristic of contemporary hero-figures. Flexibility and adaptability of image and discourse are required of such hero-figures to evoke aspects of nationalist narratives, much like symbols are necessarily fluid in nature. As Edelman states, 'always [...], he is made to be what will serve the interests of those who follow him and write about him or remember him' (1974, p. 94).

As identity is an evolving and changing process, those symbols and individuals that are believed to embody elements of an identity are also required to adapt according to the needs and imaginings of the collective. In Timor-Leste, the transition from oppressive foreign rule to self-determination and the rapid process of nation-building that has taken place has tested the ability of leading figures to adjust. Xanana Gusmão has demonstrated his capabilities in this area by sustaining his popularity, his political leadership, and his elevated place in the national imaginary for decades.

KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão was born in Manatuto, east of Dili, in 1946. He grew up and was educated under Portuguese rule, after which he worked in several unskilled jobs before becoming involved in the growing pro-independence nationalist movement in 1971 (see Gusmão 2000). In 1975, Gusmão was appointed as Press Secretary for Fretilin and was charged with filming the official inauguration ceremony of the first independent government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on 28 November 1975. Following the Indonesian invasion of December

that year, Xanana retreated into the mountains to become more firmly involved in the resistance. After the resistance movement was reformed and renamed as the National Council of Revolutionary Resistance (CRRN), he was elected as overall leader and assumed the position of Commander in Chief in March 1981 (Gusmão 2000, p. xiii, p. 68). In 1991, he was captured by the Indonesian military and held as a political prisoner in Cipinang where he remained until the end of the occupation in 1999. He continued to lead the resistance from his cell and remained a primary spokesman for the liberation movement, meeting with UN representatives and international dignitaries during his imprisonment, including Nelson Mandela who met with Xanana in July 1997 and recommended his release soon after (Gusmão 2000, p. xv). Following the UN-sponsored ballot's overwhelming result in favour of independence, Xanana was released from prison and remained the *de facto* leader of the nation until the first presidential elections of April 2002. Although running as an independent candidate, Xanana Gusmão had the backing of eleven political parties and won by an overwhelming 82.69% of the vote (Wallis 2016, p. 109). Thus, he was unanimously appointed as the first President of the post-independence state in 2002.

Since 2002, Xanana Gusmão has held both the positions of President of the Republic (2002–2007) and Prime Minister (2007–2015), the two most powerful positions of government.⁵ His political party, the CNRT, has become the only real opposition to Fretilin in electoral politics since its creation in 2007 and has led two coalition governments. As we will see, the party's success is largely attributed to Xanana's leadership. Gusmão has unquestionably been one of the most influential and popular public figures of the first decade of self-determination, and stands out in the personality politics that has characterised the independent state. It is worth noting that Xanana Gusmão's leadership has not been seamlessly characterised by popular support and hero worship. There have been significant points in time where the façade of infallibility has been threatened by his critics and, more recently, allegations of corruption and poor political practice.

⁵Since he retired from the premiership in 2015 he has remained in charge of the party and continues to influence national politics, the most notable recent example being his key role in negotiating the signing of a maritime treaty between Timor-Leste and Australia over oil and gas reserve in the Timor Gap.

An early challenge to his leadership took place in 1984–1985, when a schism within Falintil signalled an early but significant criticism of Gusmão. At a time of particularly low morale across the resistance movement (following the near decimation of the guerrilla army and the fall of the last resistance base in November 1978), an internal coup against Xanana was organised by a group known as the *Hudi Laran*, led by the Falintil Chief of Staff, Commander Kilik, and his Deputy, Paulino 'Mauk-Moruk' Gama (Niner 2004). The motivations behind the insurrection are not exactly known but they are believed to be connected to the ideological split between Xanana and Fretilin in the mid-1980s (Niner 2004). Xanana sought to make the resistance movement more pluralist and move away from the Marxist ideology of some Fretilin hardliners, while the *Hudi Laran* group saw themselves as true revolutionaries, purist in their values and unwavering. The general disillusionment that had seeped into the resistance at the time caused the group's (limited) supporters to aim criticisms at Xanana, who they branded as a traitor to the nation and the struggle (Niner 2004). The coup was unsuccessful, however, and Gusmão went on to reform the Falintil and wider resistance movement, maintaining his position as Commander in Chief without further challenges. The *Hudi Laran* incident, whilst relatively minor in Xanana's time in leadership, demonstrates some dissent and a critical moment when his dedication to the liberation struggle had even been questioned.

In the post-independence state, Xanana has been subject to more criticism as a politician than he was as the Commander in Chief of the resistance. Corruption scandals and accusations of nepotism have found Gusmão in less than heroic circumstances, diminishing his seemingly infallible governance. For example in 2009 Xanana was at the centre of a scandal over millions of dollars' worth of government contracts that were given to a rice production company, which was partly owned by his daughter (Gunn 2010, p. 236). This allegation of nepotism was not the first; other disputes over favouritism in granting road construction contracts have periodically cast an unfavourable light on Gusmão's premiership (Shoesmith 2011b, pp. 327–330). As Sara Niner has noted, it is widely held that Xanana Gusmão 'has "his hand on the tap", as Timorese say, able to turn on and off the water supply to the rest of government' (2016). The political scandals can be seen to be symptomatic of a strongly independent leadership style that, at times, has seemed to disregard consultation with government ministers and even Xanana's

own political party (Shoesmith 2011b). Such executive decision-making was better suited to his command under the Indonesian occupation than the democratic system of governance that has been established (Niner 2005, p. 40). James Scambary has even pointed to the legal ambiguity of aspects of Xanana's:

At the same time, the political system has become highly centralized under the leadership of its former resistance leader Kay Rala 'Xanana' Gusmão. Procurement decisions, contracts, and spending consistently evade regulatory oversight both through Gusmão's executive-style decrees and through a complex web of informal networks and sub-legal mechanisms. (2017, p. 267)⁶

Rumours, accusations, and political scandals have been directed at several other leading East Timorese politicians, including former Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri.

Crucially, despite the political scandal Xanana Gusmão's hero status seems to have been relatively unaffected. A slight decrease in votes for his CNRT party could indicate some influence of allegations on public opinion, reflected in the ballot box, but as an individual he remains a widely respected public figure at the top of the East Timorese social hierarchy. This phenomenon can be explained by the ways that Xanana and his political party have visually and discursively mobilised the symbolic capital of the liberation struggle to present Xanana as the embodiment of the national character—in other words, an undisputed contemporary national hero.

VISUALISING THE HEROIC: THE ICONIC IMAGERY OF XANANA GUSMÃO

The personality politics that have dominated the first decade of independence is a result of the valorisation of the liberation struggle, enabling a select few resistance-era figures to monopolise the political arena

⁶For example in 2009, after a professional relationship fraught with tension, the then Deputy Prime Minister, Mário Carrascalão resigned from his position in Gusmão's AMP-coalition government. Carrascalão stated that Xanana had made himself unavailable for standard consultation meetings, had 'screamed' at him during a meeting, and listed twenty-nine instances of corruption and bad governance (Shoesmith 2011b, p. 327). The charges were never taken further and Xanana continued in his premiership until he retired in 2015.

and nation-building project. Interestingly, Xanana Gusmão has been a vocal critic Fretilin's monopolisation of nation-building yet his own political strategies have enabled him to do precisely that. The support that Xanana Gusmão has enjoyed best exemplifies the way that symbolic capital has been mobilised and used by former resistance figures to legitimate leading positions in government since self-determination in 2002.

The visual representations of Xanana Gusmão have drawn on and simultaneously strengthened the symbolic capital attributed to him, and thus the legitimacy he claims from his role in the national liberation struggle. Like other symbols, the visual representations of Gusmão sustain his relationship with the East Timorese people as they are incorporated into popular imaginings, consolidating his cult of personality. This cult following is so strong because the history of Xanana's leadership coincides with the emergence of East Timorese nationalism (of a similar trajectory to Fretilin), and has developed alongside it. The fact that he has retained similar levels of respect is testament to his ability to adapt to changing political contexts. He has aligned his image with imaginings of the hero-figure needed by the nation in differing circumstances and enjoyed mass support as a result, both in times of conflict and peace.

Few visual representations of Xanana Gusmão are as popular or powerful as the iconic photograph of him as Commander in Chief of the armed resistance (Fig. 5.1). The portrait is of a Falintil soldier dressed in military fatigues and beret, presenting him to the national community as the personification of the struggle (*funu*) and a living symbol of the resistance (Domm cited in Gusmão 2000, p. 142). The military dress is an explicit evocation of the revolutionary and armed nature of the struggle. This visual representation of Xanana invokes specific imaginings upon which his hero status and symbolic capital are dependent, and reminds the East Timorese people of his central role in the liberation of the nation. By calling to mind the struggle and heroic Falintil, Gusmão appeals to the national community through these unanimous points of identification, performing the unifying function that typifies national heroes and symbols. The frequency with which Gusmão has been represented in this way, in election campaigns for him and his CNRT party, has ensured that he is incorporated into popular imaginings as the man who led the recent fight for independence, taking up the mantle from

Fig. 5.1 A CNRT election campaign poster featuring the iconic photograph of Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão as Commander in Chief of the Falintil

his predecessor Dom Boaventura.⁷ The strategy of utilising imagery of resistance veterans and leaders such as Xanana is commonplace in East Timorese election campaigning. McWilliam and Bexley note that in 2007, ‘campaign symbolism promoted heroic images of the respective leaders, their contributions to the national struggle for independence and their capacity to reclaim the much sought after *Unidade Nacional* (National Unity)’ (2008, p. 69). Positive reception of this image by the national community has affirmed Xanana’s symbolic capital and

⁷This idea is aided by the fact that Xanana, like many other Falintil guerrillas, changed his name; common in other post-colonial states, the East Timorese warriors rejected their Portuguese names (for Xanana, this was José Alexandre) in favour of their indigenous names (Kay Rala) as a sign of direct descent from the *aswain* warriors of old (Niner 2007, p. 113).

ensured that he has continuously been imagined as a national hero-figure. Indeed, it is because of this image its nationalist connotations, and the cult following that it has inspired that Xanana has become, as Irena Cristalis notes, 'the man whose image the Timorese wore on their T-shirts and in their hearts' (2002, p. 106).

The resistance-era symbolism is potent and the links made between Xanana and collective suffering, or *terus*, as a marker of East Timorese nationalism, are also invoked by this image. This is a particularly potent factor in fostering popular support and a real, tangible relationship felt between Xanana and those who remember the struggle. After a decade of self-determination, this idea still held that Xanana deserves respect for the simple reason that he had stayed and suffered with the people in resistance. As one East Timorese man articulated: 'he was suffering under 24 years here, suffering together [...] with the Timorese people. Because him understand people have suffering [sic], people have life under him in East Timor' (personal interview 2012). This image reminds the national community of Gusmão's commitment to the cause of independence, which is a principle source of legitimacy and popular support in the personality politics of Timor-Leste. Indeed, it is common for East Timorese political party leaders and candidates to run on a platform based precisely on their capacity for suffering and sacrifice, in order to win the trust of the electorate (Da Silva 2008, p. 164). This evocation of legitimate contributions to the liberation struggle carries connotations of respect, dignity, and recognition due, which is understood to be expressed by the vote (Da Silva 2008, p. 164). It is for this reason that the iconic portrait of Xanana as Commander in Chief is used in the election campaigns of his party, the CNRT.

XANANA GUSMÃO AND THE CNRT

Many East Timorese still think of Xanana as their Commander in Chief, and this has been reflected in the electoral support he and his CNRT party have enjoyed (Niner 2016). Gusmão's name has become synonymous with the party, and chants of '*Xa-Xa-Xanana*' and cries of '*Viva Xanana!*' at the CNRT's 2012 electoral campaign rallies were the resounding response to each speech given at the events (Fig. 5.2). In the context of a political system that thrives on personalities and popularity,

Fig. 5.2 A group of CNRT supporters en route to a party rally, accompanied by Xanana

visual representations of Xanana as a war hero have inevitably been used by his political party to gain legitimacy and garner support.⁸ The iconic image of the Commander in Chief is used extensively by the CNRT in election posters and on T-shirts, banners, and other party merchandise (Figs. 5.3 and 5.4). This strategy of mobilising symbolic capital has evidently been highly effective; figures from the elections held since the creation of the party reveal that the CNRT has gained the most popular support and electoral success in recent years (24.1% in 2007 and 36.6% in 2012; see CNE 2007; La'o Hamutuk 2012).

Xanana's famous portrait is not the only symbol used to invoke and exploit this symbolic capital from the recent past. In order to strengthen contemporary connections between Xanana Gusmão and the Falintil, his political party strategically draws on other potent resistance-era symbols. The party's own flag is modelled on the Falintil and resistance flags, using similar colours and shapes.⁹ In the campaign period before the

⁸For an outline of the history of the party and its ideological standpoint, see Shoesmith (2011a, pp. 21–23).

⁹See Chapter 6 for a fuller discussion of this.

Fig. 5.3 A CNRT campaign rally in Dili, where many supporters wore T-shirts with Xanana Gusmão's portrait on them

parliamentary elections of 2012, the original Falintil flag was flown at the CNRT party rallies and party members dressed in military uniform were on stage next to Gusmão as he spoke to the crowds (Fig. 5.5). By flying the Falintil flag at rallies against a backdrop of Xanana's iconic portrait, the resistance-era symbolic capital is expounded and appropriated by the CNRT through the evocation of the armed wing of the resistance, which is now symbolically synonymous with *funu* and *terus*. The selection of highly-esteemed military symbols has been deliberately chosen to afford the CNRT legitimacy in the eyes of the electorate and expand its support base by associating with national identity symbols and a national hero.

Fig. 5.4 A CNRT baseball cap, given to supporters at election campaign rallies in 2012 and also featuring the image of Xanana

Fig. 5.5 A CNRT election rally in Dili, featuring veterans wearing military fatigues and waving the original Falintil flag

REPRESENTING XANANA AT A GRASSROOTS LEVEL

Images of Gusmão as a guerrilla hero are also reproduced at a grassroots level in street art, in which he is unofficially celebrated and depicted as an East Timorese revolutionary warrior akin to international icon Ché Guevara. The portrayal of Xanana in this heroic light presents a clear example of how popular imaginings of East Timorese nationalism have incorporated his image, to the extent that it is used by a marginalised younger generation as a means of legitimating their claims to national identity (see Arthur 2016).¹⁰ Having been alienated from a nation-building project that privileges the cultural heritage of the older generation, the younger generation of East Timorese reproduce images

¹⁰This issue of youth identification and the generation gap in post-independence Timor-Leste is discussed in further detail in Chapter 7.

associated with an official nationalism to identify with the nation. The incorporation of Xanana's image in this way illustrates his elevated status and popular appeal to all East Timorese, inclusive of those who have been alienated from the political arena and the nation-building project.

By publicly celebrating the struggle for independence and painting nationalist imagery, the younger generation has demonstrated a desire to overcome the generation gap and integrate more fully into the national community by identifying with its powerful symbols. The depiction of Xanana Gusmão in street art is therefore telling of the symbolic capital he has mobilised; the replication of his image is employed as an effective way for the *Geração Foun* to symbolically connect with an official nationalism and its symbols. If Xanana were not a central protagonist in the narratives of a national past, he would not be included in the iconography of the struggle that is depicted in street art. Indeed, for the younger generation as much as for other East Timorese, the Falintil and their Commander are inextricably tied to imaginings of national identity, as Marisa Ramos-Gonçalves attests:

A geração jovem expressa o seu orgulho nacionalista e sentido de nação através da pintura de murais com símbolos da resistência e as imagens dos seus líderes. Os artistas fazem uso da iconografia revolucionária, usando as imagens de Che Guevara [...]. Alguns dos guerrilheiros das FALINTIL, como Xanana Gusmão [...] são representados como aspecto dos ícones revolucionários globais. Os membros das FALINTIL adoptaram estilos visuais e usavam roupas e adereços semelhantes aos dos ícones. (2012, p. 76)¹¹

Nationalist pride is incurred when painting Xanana in this light, suggesting that he fulfils the expectation of national heroes to inspire their people and simultaneously embody the national character, knowing how esteemed the Falintil are in the post-independence. The *Geração Foun*'s appropriation of Xanana's image in street art attests to its symbolic power and its representation of tenets of East Timorese nationalism. Ironically, Xanana's political strategies that have enabled a monopolisation of nation-building by resistance-era leaders have not led to the

¹¹ 'The young generation expresses its nationalist pride and sense of nation through the painting of murals with symbols of the resistance and images of its leaders. The artists make use of revolutionary iconography, using the images of Che Guevara [...]. Some of the Falintil guerrillas, like Xanana Gusmão [...] are represented with a similar appearance to global revolutionary icons'. This translation and all others in this chapter are my own.

Fig. 5.6 A man wearing military fatigues, a beret, and dreadlocks is painted in a mural in Dili

younger generation distancing themselves from him. Instead, his image has been integrated into the array of nationalist symbols with which they positively identify, demonstrating the success with which Xanana has emitted nationalist symbolic meanings by presenting himself to the national community in this way. Those former members of the youth and student factions of the resistance perhaps recall the special attention that Xanana gave to their involvement in the struggle in the numerous letters he sent to the ‘Beloved Youth and Maubere Patriots’, such as his *Message to Catholic Youth in East Timor and Students in Indonesia* in 1986 (Gusmão 2000, pp. 85–126). Gusmão’s image is believed to have a degree of legitimating influence for the younger generation and it is strategically employed to strengthen their claims to ‘true’ East Timorese-ness. This appropriation underlines the central role that Xanana has had in the construction of the national community and his fundamental position in national imaginings of a collective identity.

Images of other revolutionary figures such as Ché Guevara are frequently utilised to elevate the status of the East Timorese national heroes in street art (see Parkinson 2010, pp. 10–11, 16–19, 27; Arthur 2016, pp. 188–189). The depiction of Xanana Gusmão at an equal level to such international icons makes a symbolic connection between the East Timorese struggle for independence and other revolutionary movements, furthered by aesthetic similarities in the images produced. Henri Myrntinen affirms that such comparisons can logically be drawn, since ‘globalised iconic figures of just (male, vaguely leftist) rebellion such as Bob Marley and Ernesto “Che” Guevara were and remain popular in Timor-Leste and were identified mainly with the pro-independence cause’ (2005, p. 240). In the image (Fig. 5.6), symbols of both Marley and Guevara are merged in an image of a man with dreadlocks wearing

the revolutionary beret and military fatigues. International icons that have been associated with the cause of self-determination in Timor-Leste are thus logical hero-figures to accompany Xanana Gusmão in street art that celebrates national liberation and an emancipatory ideology.

Given that Xanana was a revolutionary guerrilla leader like Ché Guevara, parallels can be drawn between the two men's images: the pictorial representations of both Xanana and Guevara in East Timorese street art are invariably of the guerrilla hero in fatigues and beret. Memories of Xanana's infamous war-cry, which echoed Guevara's, during the resistance era could further strengthen the connection; he signed off his letters and messages to the East Timorese people with 'Homeland or Death! To resist it to win!' (Gusmão 2000, p. 73, 83, 126; Guevara 1969). Interestingly, a specific understanding of Ché Guevara's life and ideology has developed that re-tells his history within a specifically East Timorese framework. While many are familiar with Alberto Korda's famous portrait of Ché, the image that made him an international icon of revolution (see Smith-Llera 2017), the specific details of his life are generally not known and many have formed an understanding of his ideals based on their own experiences of revolutionary politics. One East Timorese man outlined his views on Ché Guevara as follows:

I can't say that I like him, but I appreciate what he did in Cuba, in Bolivia, generally in Latin America. Fight against Batista regime, bring democracy for Cuban people. In Timor-Leste, many people use him as a symbol because he relates with the struggle for independence and for many young people, he inspires. (personal interview 2012)

Significantly, the Marxist nature of Guevara's political ideology has been omitted and instead reinterpreted to coincide with the narrative of East Timorese national liberation. For many East Timorese, the notion of freedom is now synonymous with democratic values. The struggle was primarily for self-determination but also against the repressive Suharto dictatorship that had forcibly annexed the territory into Indonesia. With independence came the establishment of a democratic system of governance and consequently, freedom and democracy as now seen as invariably connected. Revolutionary freedom fighters are understood to have fought for democratic values within this paradigm, with the points of reference being Xanana and the Falintil (Arthur 2016, p. 190). Subsequently, it is assumed that Ché Guevara must have

brought democracy to Cuba, just as Xanana did in Timor-Leste. The factual inaccuracies are not of significance so much as the viewpoint behind the visual associations made between Guevara and Gusmão in street art. This narrative and the associations made with Xanana Gusmão underline the elevated hero status he has been attributed as the leader of the struggle and liberator of the national—precisely fitting Henken's redeemer-hero model.

MAUN BO'OT XANANA: SYMBOLIC MEANING IN DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES

National symbols and heroes require positive recognition from the members of the community in order for them to maintain their place in popular imaginings of national identity. Contemporary popular figures must also secure their leading positions by gaining similar recognition, and this is achieved by engaging with the national community through discourse. The discursive strategies that Xanana Gusmão employs to strengthen the symbolism of his image principally draw on his rhetoric during the occupation. As Commander in Chief of the resistance movement, Xanana wrote letters and recorded messages on tape to the East Timorese people to boost morale and the motivation to keep resisting.¹² This occupation-era discourse has been re-presented by the CNRT to further strengthen the associations made between its president and the resistance, and to strategically draw on his legitimacy for the benefit of the contemporary political party. The specific discourse taps into a profound and emotional level of engagement between Gusmão and the national community, which is widely believed to be a tangible relationship.

For many East Timorese, there is a firm belief in a real connection with Xanana that is founded on the relationship established under his leadership of the resistance. In the numerous messages and letters smuggled out of the mountains over the years, a sense of connectedness was fostered through a rhetorical analogy of family. Nationalism is often framed within familial language of blood ties to the Mother/Fatherland, etc. (see Connor 1994; Smith 2013; Johnson 1986, 1987; Johnson et al. 1987; Lauenstein et al. 2015), and this was particularly powerful

¹²Examples of these messages, including the annual New Year's addresses, can be found in Xanana Gusmão's autobiography (see Gusmão 2000).

under the occupation when that very sense of family and nationhood was under attack. Xanana repeatedly referred to the Maubere people as ‘my brothers and sisters’ (Gusmão 2000) and crucially, this familial terminology was reciprocated. Recounting the support shown him by the Falintil guerrillas, Gusmão noted in his autobiography: ‘*Maun Boot sa’e, ami sa’e, Maun Boot tun, ami tun*. Older brother climbs up, we move up; older brother climbs down, we climb down’ (2000, p. 65). The armed wing of the resistance was a crucial part of the Maubere family for Xanana, indicated by repeated references to the ‘Falintil guerrillas, your blood brothers and sisters of the same Homeland’ in letters throughout the occupation (Gusmão 2000, p. 94).

The strength of the links between notions of the family structure and nation is clear in the continued familial imaginings in the post-independence years. Despite the fact that many East Timorese may not know Gusmão personally, he is still referred to as *Maun Bo’ot* Xanana and is considered to be ‘my friend, my brother Xanana’ by many who support him (personal interview 2012). The idea of resistance leaders as ‘big brothers’ to the nation has been manifest in the ‘*maun bo’ot*’ (big brother) culture that now exists in the post-independence state (Scambary 2017, p. 270; Soares 2013). This ‘big brother’ culture refers to the environment that has enabled a select few men to retain significant respect and authority, including executive political decision-making powers based on their own personal judgement, because of their role in the liberation struggle (Scambary 2017, p. 270). In other words, the culture creates the context in which it is possible for a minority to monopolise the nation-building project because of the respect and loyalty they inspire, and *Maun Bo’ot* Xanana Gusmão is an exemplar in this respect.

The family analogy continues to resonate with followers of Xanana who still perceive him as having a paternal role in the national community. As the Commander in Chief of the resistance, Gusmão was seen by many as the head of the same East Timorese family (see Niner 2002). The conception of Xanana as a father-figure has been incorporated into contemporary imaginings of a national family and sustained in his discursive political strategies. Within an East Timorese cultural context, assuming the role of the head of the family has significant connotations of authority. In the traditionally patriarchal society, much power and respect is automatically attributed to the male figurehead of the family and its origin house (Trindade 2011, 2015; Traube 1986; Bovensiepen 2015). Moreover, associations of strength and power with masculinity in this

context, particularly in relation to an ability to use violence (Myrntinen 2005, 2009), have rendered it unsurprising that the former Falintil Commander is understood to possess the exceptional leadership qualities of national heroes.

This protective, guiding, fatherly sentiment, framed within a familial discourse, has been strategically employed by the CNRT in the first decade of independence to further its popularity and electoral authority. A slogan used by the party in its 2012 electoral campaign made explicit reference to the role Gusmão had as a father-figure and head of the Maubere kin: '*Xanana mak aman ba unidade nasional*' ('Xanana is the father of national unity'). The family paradigm is suggestive of unity in itself and with Xanana at the head of the family, national unity is possible under his rule. This is precisely the type of language and rhetoric needed to consolidate popular identification with the visual representation of contemporary hero-figures. An explicit statement that unity can be fostered under Gusmão suggests to the nation that he performs that unifying function of symbols and national heroes. Any post-independence social divisions that have emerged are subsequently put to one side in the process of collective, national identification. This is a powerful strategy for the CNRT to employ in political campaigning and the party's success in the 2012 elections testifies to its efficacy. As one East Timorese man noted, 'Falintil gave liberation to Timor-Leste in the resistance. The resistance included the people, fighting together with Falintil. They gave national unity to the people of Timor-Leste' (personal interview 2012). Such discursive strategies thus strengthen Gusmão's visual (re)presentation as a hero-figure and enable him to perform the symbolic unifying role of national heroes.

In this way, Gusmão's cult of personality is maintained through the CNRT's symbols by drawing on the rhetoric of the national leadership during the resistance to the party's electoral advantage. If the East Timorese people believe that they belong to a national family that is headed by Xanana Gusmão, then it is implied that the members of the family would congregate under him. In electoral politics, this has manifested in the majority of the national vote for the CNRT. Gusmão's CNRT party uses his role in the struggle for national liberation to gain legitimacy and respect in contemporary politics and, ultimately, to afford the party significant electoral support. The significant margin by which it has won past elections suggests that this strategy has been highly successful.

Despite the significant symbolic capital that is afforded to Xanana Gusmão in light of his leadership of the past resistance, there is an evident transition in national identification which is reflected in his self-presentation as a national representative. In a post-colonial, post-conflict context, the desire for peace and stability is now becoming incorporated into popular discourses of national identity in Timor-Leste. While the concepts of *funu* and *terus* are integral to the national past and a historic identity, there is widespread hope that the future of Timor-Leste will be peaceful and prosperous. Collectively identifying as a peaceful nation that has left behind its violent past is a concept that is increasingly articulated, as the following chapters will discuss. As a result, the meanings attributed to symbols of an East Timorese national identity are seemingly adapting to this change. Contemporary leaders are most influential when they also adapt and (re)present themselves according to the needs and values of the people they represent.

Peace is of paramount importance to contemporary popular imaginings because the brutality and oppression that was endured during the Indonesian occupation is still remembered by many. In the words of one East Timorese man,

Paz, dame, domin, unidade [peace, peace, love, unity] are very important for everyone. There are different opinions about creating peace – some people really want to have peace and some people want peace but money. 20 years ago, I lived in war, remember bad times, many people suffer, I know war is bad and peace is good. 25 years of war, 25 years is enough. Before our people use violence to get the right to independence and now we have peace. Sometimes the situation obligates us to use conflict, but now, not only me but all Timorese people, want peace. (personal interview 2012)

The desire for peace has been acknowledged by the political leadership and Gusmão has assimilated his engagement with the national community accordingly, particularly in his official discourse. In doing so, Xanana can be seen to adapt to popular goals and values as a requirement of the successful representation of the national community. This is crucial to successful leadership, as Ann Willner articulates: ‘he evokes, invokes, and assimilates to himself the values and actions embodied in the myths by which that society has organized and recalls its past experience’ (1984, p. 62). This is because, when a national culture and politics evolve,

leadership and heroes must adapt to coincide with changing popular values with the same fluidity as other national, political symbols.

The first decade of independence has witnessed some instability, most notably the 2006 crisis in which Xanana had a significant role. Within this context, peace and national unity have been of paramount importance, a consideration that has been recognised in much political discourse and especially that of Xanana Gusmão. The change in focus of Gusmão's official discourse has been fitting of the President and Prime Minister of the new nation-state that has undergone state- and nation-building under the auspices of the UN. Rhetoric of peace and reconciliation has also typified Xanana's leadership since self-determination was regained, facilitating further comparisons with other iconic individuals and elevating his status as a national hero-further. Just as aesthetic comparisons are made in street art between Xanana and Ché Guevara, rhetorical parallels have been drawn with other internationally recognised leaders to augment his profile as a statesman. Such comparisons not only raise awareness of Gusmão's profile at an international level but confirm his importance in national politics and the inspirational and heroic traits he is believed to have.

A primary example of such parallels is the comparison made between Xanana Gusmão and Nelson Mandela, based on their similar discourse of reconciliation and the mutual respect between the two after they met in 1997. Xanana's imprisonment in 1992 was a significant turning point in the struggle for independence because Timor-Leste had its own Mandela-like figure: a political prisoner with an international profile, whose leadership had not only prevailed during his imprisonment but had in fact been significantly strengthened. His cell in the high-security Cipinang prison in Jakarta became a more effective platform for him to speak out for the liberation struggle than his hiding places in the mountains had ever been (Cristalis 2002, pp. 5–6). In light of such state and media attention, Xanana's discourse as the main representative of the East Timorese people was his primary tool. His focus changed from a militant call to fight for freedom to one of peaceful resistance with the intention of increasing support for the independence movement from outside actors. The strategy proved to be successful and combined with his post-occupation rhetoric of reconciliation with Indonesia, it gained Gusmão worldwide recognition as 'the Mandela of Southeast Asia'

(Niner 2001, p. 23).¹³ Gusmão's discourse of peace and reconciliation has gained him much respect and support in Timor-Leste across all sectors of society, as peace and stability are at the top of the priority list. By drawing on traditional concepts of '*badame* (reconciliation) over justice,' Xanana has further demonstrated his ability to adapt his rhetoric to relate to those with a stronger attachment to older authority structures and gain their support in this policy area (Wallis 2012, p. 19; see also Grenfell 2006).

The potency and impact of Xanana's rhetoric has brought him further recognition as a peace-builder and an inspirational figure befitting of a national hero. In the words of Marcus Einfeld, '[in] this and other respects Xanana stands alongside other peace giants of the recent past including the likes of Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King' (2005, p. xiv).¹⁴ The significant distinctions between Xanana and these leaders are seemingly unimportant in Einfeld's characterization. The anti-colonial sentiment behind Ghandi's peaceful protest is shared by Gusmão, though the latter's methods of guerrilla warfare do not correlate. Similarly, a stance calling for justice and civil rights is common to both Xanana and Martin Luther King but the issue of an armed struggle is not noted in the comparison. Yet, the ambiguity of heroes and symbols enables different meanings and interpretations to be given to them, and contemporary popular leaders adapt the meanings they emit through image and discourse to changing circumstances. Of most importance in these comparisons is the esteemed and status attributed to Xanana, and the belief that he possesses the inspirational traits of an archetypal national hero.

Xanana Gusmão is evidently perceived by the national community in different ways that are dependent on his presentation; the connection between Xanana and Falintil is evoked in the appropriate circumstances and when most politically advantageous for him as leader. The visual

¹³The peaceful ideals and rhetoric shared by Xanana Gusmão and Nelson Mandela were highlighted by the international media by a meeting between the two in July 1997. After this meeting between the two leaders, it was reported that then-President Mandela viewed Xanana Gusmão as 'one of the most impressive people he had ever met' (Cristalis 2002, p. 105).

¹⁴Marcus Einfeld is an Australian former Federal Court Judge, and was an active advocate and supporter of the East Timorese pro-independence movement during the occupation.

representation of Xanana as a 'peace giant', though less explicit than the military symbolism of the resistance-era, has taken the form of the archetypal statesman that conjures ideas of stability, democratic governance and peace. Interestingly, the portrayal of Xanana as an evolving national hero that represents the future hopes of the national community is often accompanied by the iconic Falintil portrait, upon which his hero status is dependent. An example of such symbolic representation is the CNRT's political symbolism during the 2007 parliamentary election campaigns, as outlined by McWilliam and Bexley:

The newly formed CNRT Party (National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction), under Xanana Gusmão, drew heavily on images of independence and modernity with Xanana himself the prominent public face of all CNRT campaigning. On one of the banners, widely displayed across the capital, Xanana featured in two complimentary images. On one side he is dressed in military fatigues, the charismatic leader of the armed resistance and champion of independence. On the other side he is portrayed in a suit and tie, the image of the statesman and competent leader guiding the development of the nation. (2008, p. 69)

The contrast is stark but the two visual representations of Xanana in this way enable him to retain the symbolic capital of a national hero, and the legitimacy afforded to a democratic statesman. The dualistic presentation of Xanana Gusmão seeks to garner the maximum electoral support by drawing on popular understandings of strong leadership in contemporary East Timorese society, which is in transition from a context of extreme violence to one of nation-building.

These different perceptions of Xanana Gusmão reflect the transitional nature of the nation-building project in Timor-Leste and the changing nature of national identity construction. The national community's recent past is crucial to forming a national cultural heritage and identity and the 'occupied-occupier' paradigm is the foundation of national narratives. The concept of the struggle, or *funu*, is still essential to contemporary notions of true East Timorese-ness and consequently, Xanana Gusmão evokes his role in the recent past to identify himself with this tenet of East Timorese nationalism in order to present himself as a national representative, with the potential to be a national hero. When appropriate, this persona of Xanana has been presented through images of the archetypal democratic statesman, to lead a nation that wished to identify as a

peaceful people with a prosperous future. Equally in discussions of democratic governance, peace and stability in the post-independence state, rhetoric that allows parallels to be drawn between Xanana and internationally recognised advocates of peaceful leadership affirms his hero-status and position of leadership in a post-conflict context.

CONCLUSION

In post-colonial, post-conflict nation-states where the processes of state- and nation-building are ongoing, the popular need for strong and inspiring leadership is prevalent to guide the national community through unstable and uncertain political times. Popular leaders, like national heroes, provide a face with which a collective can identify and who they see as the personification of abstractions of national identity that would be difficult to comprehend without some visual representation. In light of a violent independence struggle or a turbulent past, the potential for heroism is greater when the leadership of the national struggle is strong enough to withstand dramatic political transition.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão is an archetypal contemporary hero-figure, who has retained his esteemed place at the top of the social hierarchy throughout the first decade of independence. By evoking his leadership of the resistance movement, both through visual symbols and symbolic discursive practices, he has been able to associate himself directly with nationalist symbolic meanings of struggle, sacrifice, and suffering. After stepping down from the presidency, Xanana created his own political party, the CNRT, and mobilised his resistance-era symbolic capital to ensure that the party would enjoy the electoral support that his personality would afford. This has proven to be a very successful strategy and the CNRT continues to be one of the biggest players in East Timorese parliamentary politics.

The success of Xanana Gusmão's strategies of mobilising his capital has been proven in the reproduction of heroic imaginings of him at a grassroots level. He is depicted as a revolutionary hero in street art, embodying the national character and representing a means of legitimisation for a marginalised younger population (as will be discussed fully in Chapter 7). Moreover, he is commonly referred to in familiar, affectionate terms by many East Timorese. Many never even met Xanana but still refer to him as a friend or brother in some cases, and as the hero and liberator of the nation in other grander terms. Imaginings of Gusmão

in this way testify to the power of concepts of *funu*, *terus*, and sacrifice and the centrality of the resistance to East Timorese nationalism. As the embodiment of all respected aspects of this identity, Xanana is an obvious choice for national hero and head of the East Timorese family. The strength of feeling, the widespread appeal he has, and the power of popular imaginings is significant; it is this belief in Xanana as a hero that has enabled him to survive political scandals and accusations of corruption and nepotism that would have otherwise ruined his career.

Taking Xanana Gusmão as a case study, it is possible to see how national heroes perform the same functions as national symbols in relation to meaning-making, and how contemporary leaders are able to perform similar roles in order to ensure their hero status and continued popularity within the national community. Contemporary hero-figures must project their ability to embody the national character, as posthumously celebrated national heroes do, and this is done through the visual and discursive associations made with national identity tenets. As symbols must be flexible in order to remain meaningful in changing political contexts, so too must popular leaders. Their presentation and portrayal of themselves to the national community must adapt to different circumstances, as Xanana Gusmão's has from a time of resistance and war to one of peacebuilding in the post-independence state.

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PART III

Symbols of Peace and Prosperity

The Struggle Continues: Peace and Prosperity, Democratic Values and Development in Political Party Flags

Historically, an East Timorese national identity has been defined by struggle and suffering in the name of self-determination and freedom from foreign rule, principally in relation to the recent Indonesian occupation. However, there is evidence to suggest that aspects of this identity are evolving. With independence regained, the five hundred year *funu* has been won. As a result of the recent conflict, hopes for a peaceful, prosperous, and stable future have now taken a central position in popular imaginings, shaping the symbolic representation of a contemporary East Timorese identity. As a result, the central concept of *funu* in East Timorese nationalism has subsequently been re-imagined and reconceptualised; in the processes of state- and nation-building. The struggle continues in the post-independence state but it is now a figurative struggle against poverty and the numerous social, economic, and political problems that prevail.

At the swearing in ceremony of the 2012 government, a decade after the return to independence, the then President Taur Matan Ruak encapsulated this idea thus: ‘to build the country we dream of we have ahead of us battles so hard and stringent as the battles we have had in the past’ (Taur Matan Ruak cited in Myrntinen 2013, p. 213). The discourse of the national *funu* has proven so powerful in fostering national unity in the past that it has been applied to the numerous post-independence challenges. The struggle is imagined as being far from over (Myrntinen 2013, p. 215), and this post-independence perception of the struggle has

been articulated at a grassroots level, as well as by the state. As one East Timorese man articulated,

Indonesia came to Timor-Leste, invaded Timor-Leste, and colonised Timor-Leste about twenty-four years. Through [the] referendum we got our independence in 1999. *We must fight again with development* because our people want to live same as other people, other countries. We want to live in peace. (personal interview 2012, emphasis added)

The national community wants a peaceful and prosperous future, for which they are prepared to struggle and fight, and democracy and development have been presented as the apparatus to aid them.

This chapter examines how political parties and state actors adapt their symbolic representations to state nationalism in order to garner popular support, reflecting national identity in their own political identities. It highlights how political contexts and external influences can directly impact on how identities and their symbolic representations are defined. The chapter looks at how the redefined national struggle, framed within a discourse of democracy and development, has been enshrined in political symbols at the level of the state, focusing on political party flags that have been created since the 1999 independence ballot. A primary role of political party symbols is to enable popular identification with the party and its values. This process is more likely to occur if the political party's identity is aligned with an official nationalism, considering the needs and desires of the electorate. Positive identification and subsequent popular support are the motivation behind many young political parties that have constructed their identities, goals, and symbols around the new, reconceptualised struggle, and framed them within a discourse of democracy and development.

The shift in political discourse stems from the UN state- and nation-building mission (from 1999 to 2002), and reflects the reconceptualization of the national struggle in accordance with the needs of the nation-building project.¹ The redefinition of the notion of *funnu*

¹The United Nations Transitional Administration of East Timor (UNTAET) mission was the most intensive in terms of administrative and executive power in Timor-Leste. The other UN missions in Timor-Leste were the United Nations Assistance Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET), United Nations Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL), and the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT).

demonstrates how identity narratives evolve with changing political contexts, while maintaining a sense of continuity with the collective past. The symbolic representation of this new struggle in contemporary political flags enables the national community to enter into the imagination process and believe that as a nation, they continue united in the struggle towards peace and prosperity. By aligning their identities and symbols with an official nationalism, political parties are able to claim legitimacy as national subjects and representatives, and to garner popular support within the national community.

The flags of the three political parties that formed the 2012 coalition government best exemplify the representation of discourses of democratisation to redefine the national struggle: *Frenti-Mudança* (*Frente de Reconstrução Nacional de Timor-Leste - Mudança*), the Partido Democrático, and the *Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor-Leste* (CNRT). As noted in Chapter 2, flags constitute a powerful symbol of political authority and even spiritual potency in an East Timorese cultural context (Bovensiepen 2011; Traube 2011), and are primary markers of allegiance and identity (McWilliam and Bexley 2008, p. 70). Considering this, it is crucial to examine the discourse that defines the symbolic meanings of these flags and which suggests changes to an evolving national identity within a framework of democracy and development. An analysis of the political party flags and their symbolism thus deepens an understanding of how national identity is constructed and represented at a state level, and how symbolic meanings reflect changing political contexts.

Interestingly, prior to 2002, Timor-Leste had not experienced any real democratic governance, after centuries of Portuguese colonialism and a repressive occupation by the Suharto regime. The only period of democratic rule to take place in Timor-Leste was from the declaration of independence on 28 November 1975 until the Indonesian invasion on 7 December, mere days later. Following the return to independence, a discourse of democratisation and development was rapidly adopted in the wake of the UN missions. This is noteworthy when we consider that new, Western conceptions of democracy—disseminated by the UN in Timor-Leste—have been used to outline an evolving national identity. If we consider criticisms of UN missions elsewhere in the world and the ‘cookie cutter’ approach to democratisation (for example see Benner et al. 2011, pp. 12–50), this is immediately problematic. Indeed, the democratisation efforts in Timor-Leste were characterised by problems of implementation, as this chapter discusses. The rapid adoption of a

UN-style democratic discourse by the political leadership thus warrants closer investigation.

By analysing the political party flags, it becomes clear that the paradigm of the national struggle has been used to legitimise the use of a foreign, Western rhetoric of democratisation and development. The concept of the struggle is powerful and its flexibility has enabled the successful appropriation of a foreign discourse by the political élite to meet the new needs of nation-building. Popular identification with symbols that represent the reconceptualised struggle has likely led to a wider engagement with democracy, and in Timor-Leste flags constitute powerful symbols to enable this process. If we contextualise the dissemination of this discourse by the UN, we can better understand the initial problems of introducing Western concepts of democracy in Timor-Leste, the reasons for the appropriation of these discourses by the East Timorese political élite, and the subsequent need for a legitimising force (the concept of *funu*) to make Western democratic values more familiar to the population.

REDEFINING THE STRUGGLE: THE UN, DEMOCRATIC VALUES, AND DISCOURSE APPROPRIATION

The years following the 1999 independence ballot have seen the dissemination of a Western discourse of democratisation in Timor-Leste by the UN missions, particularly the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). Just as symbols can be appropriated because of their capital and power, so too can discourse. This rhetoric has been appropriated and adapted by the East Timorese political élite to gain recognition from the UN as a success, to secure international aid, and therefore to achieve the goals of the nation-building project. In framing this discourse within the analogy of the national *funu*, they also gain recognition and legitimacy from the state that has valorised the liberation struggle. The symbols that represent the political parties and their identities have thus been constructed with these nationalist and democratic values in mind. The creation of new symbols and identities that are influenced by a specific political context, characterised by relations with the UN, is no coincidence. As David Kertzer explains:

symbols do not simply arise spontaneously, nor is the continuing process of redefinition of the symbolic universe a matter of chance. Both are heavily influenced by the distribution of resources found in the society and the

relationships that exist with other societies. Though symbols give people a way of understanding the worlds, it is people who produce new symbols and transform the old. (1988, pp. 4–5)

These new political symbols represent the transformation of the old concept of the armed *funu* and demonstrate the flexible nature of identities that are continually (re)constructed and (re)imagined in light of the changing needs and circumstances of East Timorese society.

The redefinition of the national struggle has been shaped by the aims of the nation-building project and needs of the population, in response to the devastation left by the Indonesian occupation. By the end of the occupation, the position of senior Indonesian military officials was clear: if they were to withdraw from the territory, they would ensure that it was left with nothing (Tanter 2001, p. 194). The Indonesian military carried out a Scorched Earth pogrom and the so-called ‘Operation Clean Sweep’ in the weeks following the results of the 1999 ballot (Chawla 2001, p. 2293). This meant that all main towns and villages were razed to the ground; 70% of the country’s physical infrastructure was destroyed, with street-by-street burnings reducing 95% of buildings, homes, and roads to rubble (Chopra 2000, p. 27). In addition to the physical destruction, the human-skills base and administrative structures were all withdrawn from the territory, and whole sectors—including agriculture, health, and the very economy—were left in ruins. In sum, the task of post-occupation reconstruction was rendered almost impossible (Chopra 2000, p. 27). Consequently, the rebuilding of these core areas constituted primary objectives in state-building and development plans in the post-independence state (RDTL 2010; RDTL Planning Commission 2002). Poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, and unemployment have constituted equally pressing issues to be tackled in the first decade of self-governance to ensure the stable future of Timor-Leste (see Cotton 1999; 2007). It was within this context that the UN missions oversaw the transition to independence, engaging with the East Timorese political leadership who intimately knew the damage done and the need for financial assistance and investment.

Since the initial transition period, the belief that a peaceful and prosperous future is intrinsically tied to democratic governance has been widely established. As has been the case in many UN state-building interventions and peacebuilding endeavours throughout the global South in recent decades, democratisation was widely understood to be the foundation stone for positive peace and economic development. Such post-conflict

interventions are based on assumptions that democratic states are more peaceful and just in nature than those with other governmental systems. Good governance is largely accepted as a prerequisite for post-conflict peacebuilding and, since it is also assumed that this is synonymous with democratic rule, democracy has been the only viable option from this Western perspective (see Call and Cooke 2003).² Within this paradigm, as peace and democratic processes are established, development is possible. As Balakrishnan Rajagopal has summarised, the three elements are understood as mutually dependent:

Peace is essential for the functioning of the basic mechanisms of democracy as well as development, whereas a culture of democracy is likely to lead to peace, both intra-nationally by defusing discontent and tensions, and internationally by enabling democratic states to trust each other more, due to their openness. The relationship between development and democracy, while more problematic, is also seen as positive: democracy enables development to succeed through its participatory methods, whereas development encourages the stakes that a community has in defending its autonomy. (2003, p. 143)

Thus, in the wake of the devastation and violence of the Indonesian occupation and departure from the half-island, democratic processes were widely seen as the means to meeting the needs of the population and achieving the goals of peace and prosperity. In order to achieve these goals, the East Timorese leadership's adoption of a Western democratic discourse was therefore necessary.

While the adoption of democratic values has been evidenced by the symbolism of political party flags, the implementation of foreign concepts in a recently independent state is problematic. More problematic still is the fact that the history of Timor-Leste has been characterised by repressive rule and foreign occupations, and that there was little experience of democracy, an equally foreign concept in itself. Indeed, terms such as 'democracy', 'human rights', 'gender issues', 'women's rights', and 'inequality' were all cited as new, foreign, and untranslatable elements of the discourse disseminated by the UNTAET mission in Timor-Leste

²'Western' influence has come from not only the UN, but the World Bank, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), charities and other interested states. By 'interested' states, I refer to those states that have political, economic and strategic interests in Timor-Leste, notably Timor-Leste's neighbouring Australia as a significant power in the region.

(Molnar 2006, p. 346). The rapid adoption of democracy under the auspices of the UN mission consequently raises questions, especially as democratic values are now enshrined in symbols of identity.

An immediate criticism that was made of the UNTAET mission was that a neo-colonial subtext was present in its practices, with no regard for existing social structures (Morison 2010; Anghie 2007). This is an issue common to democratisation and development projects across the global South, addressed by Post-development thought. Post-development critiques, championed by scholars such as Arturo Escobar, posit that such dissemination of a Western democratic discourse is a modern form of colonialism, an exertion of power over the so-called 'Third World' through language. Adopting a Foucauldian lens, Post-development thought sees development as a more subtle colonisation through knowledge, discourse, and power in an attempt to convert non-Western states to particular economic and cultural behaviours; in sum, as Escobar notes, 'the American way of life' (1984, p. 382; see also Escobar 1995). From this perspective, knowledge and notions of 'development' are constructed by Western states to expand their political and economic power, and discourse is the primary vehicle (see Escobar 2009, p. 430). This discourse, Majid Rahnema argues, has had

[a] hidden – yet clear – message that every development project has carried to the people at the grassroots [...] that their traditional modes of living, thinking and doing have doomed them to a subhuman condition; and that nothing less than a fundamental change in their ways of confronting modern realities will allow them to emerge from that condition and earn the respect of the civilised world. (2000, p. 311)

It is argued that assimilation to the Western way of life by adopting neoliberal democracy and engaging in the global free market is essential to becoming 'developed'. Post-development theories thus see development ventures by Western states and international organisations like the UN, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and others as modern-day colonialism through ideology, disregarding or at worst eradicating indigenous, traditional social structures, custom, and identity.

In the case of Timor-Leste, the implementation of a Western discourse of democratic values and development could have been perceived as an example of such *de facto* neo-colonialism. At best, the execution of the UNTAET mission demonstrated a misunderstanding

of the existing social structures and cultural context, and at worst a complete disregard for them. James DeShaw Rae notes that the UNTAET mission was characterised by '[t]he international community's frequently paternalistic attitude, the casual arrogance of UN staff, and the failure to comprehend the local context of each mission, instead relying by and large on a one-size-fits-all approach' (2009, p. 119).³ A paternalistic attitude and a 'cookie cutter approach' to democratisation and state-building have been primary criticisms of the UN and Western state interventions, for example in states in Africa, Eastern Europe (post-Cold War), and Afghanistan (see Bariagaber 2006; Varhola and Varhola 2006; Alkon 2002; Hill 2010), and are seen as an indication of neo-colonial attitudes. Despite civic education programmes run by the UN for the East Timorese people, deep-rooted indigenous perceptions of legitimacy, authority, and leadership clashed with those defined by the new paradigm of democracy due to its foreign nature (see Hohe 2002a, pp. 581–584; Chopra 2002). The UNTAET mission demonstrated little to no understanding of the existing *liurai* system, kinship and family ties through traditional houses (*uma*), and local government. The unawareness of the indigenous authority structure led to disrespect towards esteemed village elders on occasion, only serving to further alienate many East Timorese from the aims of the mission (Morison 2010, pp. 180–183). In light of the apparent incompatibility between democratic governance and the existing East Timorese socio-cultural context, the argument for ideological imperialism in the new nation-state is becomes painfully clear.

Yet despite the difficulties in Timor-Leste, the UN's democratisation and state-building missions are generally perceived to have been a success (Strohmeyer 2001, p. 46). Given that successful, free and fair elections are considered to be a litmus test of successful state-building, the first decade of independence in Timor-Leste would largely attest to that. Indeed, the incorporation of democratic values into official East Timorese political symbols and flags would only serve to consolidate the view. What happened to enable such a deep engagement with democracy? In order to explain the success of the mission, it is necessary to critique post-development theory, which has been accused of homogenising both the practices and local experiences of democratisation and development projects (see Ziai 2015, 2007, pp. 81–128; Kiely 1999; Matthews 2004;

³See also Beauvais (2000, pp. 1101–1179) and Molnar (2010, pp. 10–18).

Storey 2000; Andrews and Bawa 2014). The dissemination of discourse and its subsequent implementation was perhaps much more complex than mere brain-washing by international organizations. Indeed, it would ironically be in keeping with a paternalistic approach to assume that the East Timorese people were so easily colonized by the power of UN discourse. Addressing the issue of discursive practices, Marc Edelman argues:

it is surprising too that, in discussing the power of labelling discourses, they [post-development theorists] downplay or ignore altogether another, contradictory tendency that is also a key postmodernist concern – the capacity of subalterns to appropriate labels (and more complex discourses) and infuse them with new and positive meaning. (2002, p. 410)

Indeed, if a Foucauldian approach to development is adopted, then UN discourses of democratisation and development can be seen as a form of ‘governmentality’ (Foucault 1991); a discursive framework that legitimises a liberal, Western democratic system of governance, regardless of the context in which it is established. Yet within this approach, it is critical to consider the inevitability of subaltern resistance to this power play, and the agency of the non-Western actors at a local level is also critical (Richmond 2010; Bhabha 1994, p. 232; see also Spivak 2010). Focusing on subaltern agency within discursive practices, it becomes clear that it is precisely the *appropriation* of discourse by the East Timorese political leadership that problematizes a post-development understanding of the success of the democratisation process, and explains the widespread positive reception of democratic values in Timor-Leste. The view that language compatible with UN values was appropriated and reinterpreted, rather than merely disseminated and imposed, is perhaps a fairer assessment of the East Timorese case.

There are several pragmatic reasons for the appropriation of the discourse of democratic values and norms by East Timorese political actors. First, to secure international aid and trade agreements, as other democratic states in the region were more likely invest and trade with Timor-Leste as a democratic state. Moreover, the aspiration of gaining membership of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) would depend upon it.⁴ Second, to ensure the departure of

⁴ASEAN is a regional organisation that promotes political and economic cooperation in Southeast Asia through free trade and security agreements. It holds a commitment to human rights and democracy in high regard and a criterion for membership (Thuzar 2017). At the time of writing, Timor-Leste had not yet gained membership though its bid has been stronger in recent years on account of its stable democracy.

the UN once its missions had been successfully completed, and thus realise true self-determination. Third, to gain electoral support from a population that has expressed the desire for a peaceful and prosperous life. Many had gone through the UN's civic education programmes and had some understanding of the role of democracy in peacebuilding. Popular imaginings of the future centre on the transformation of the current socio-economic situation, explicitly in reference to material wealth, cosmic harmony, peace, and justice (Myrntinen 2013, p. 217; Bovensiepen 2016, pp. 75–88). Political parties consequently use a discourse of democratic values and development as the means of reaching this utopian goal, and symbolically represent it to appeal to popular demands for stability, prosperity and peace.⁵

In order to facilitate a deeper engagement and familiarisation with democracy in post-independence politics and to gain a degree of legitimacy, its values are enshrined in visual symbols and framed by the idea of an ongoing national struggle, or *funu*. Changes in political governance, discourse, and organization of a national community inevitably influence its symbolic representation; as Abner Cohen articulates:

Though autonomous, the political and the symbolic are interdependent in such a way that a change in one is likely to affect the relation between the two even if the other remains apparently unchanged. For example, a change in power relationships may not lead to a change in the form of kinship. But in the new situation the idiom of kinship will assume different functions. *Socio-cultural causation operates dialectically, not mechanically.* (1974, p. 36, emphasis in the original)

The idea of the struggle as a defining tenet of national identity seems to be unchanged in essence but is inevitably influenced by the changing post-independence political context. The notion of the national struggle is a particularly potent means of justifying a strategic adoption of a Western-style democracy in Timor-Leste because of the unanimous respect it commands and its unifying power in collective identification processes that have not changed. In this respect, the adoption of

⁵Such discourse represents a Kantian view of peace being co-dependent on democracy, free trade, and liberalist values. This view typifies the 'Western'-style democratisation process and peacebuilding by states, non-governmental organisations, and international agents such as the UN and the World Bank (see Richmond 2006, pp. 293–301; 2008, pp. 21–38).

a foreign system of governance and its values was legitimised by being associated with and framed in the ongoing national *funu*. Political symbols and flags that represent both democracy and the reconceptualised struggle for peace and prosperity are a powerful way in which the political élite has implemented its strategic appropriation democratic values and mingled them with imaginings of nationhood and identity; an approach which I argue has ultimately been successful.

CONTINUING THE STRUGGLE: EVOKING SYMBOLS OF THE FALINTIL AND RESISTANCE IN FLAGS

The concept of struggle, or *funu*, is evoked more explicitly in some symbols than in others, where the visual construction appropriates key colours and aesthetics of symbols from the resistance era. One symbol that has been evoked for its symbolic capital is the flag of the Falintil (*Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste*). Such symbolic allusions are deliberately made by contemporary political parties to further imaginings that the struggle continues, and to legitimise their leadership of it. Not all political parties make these symbolic claims and identifications but it is often the case that parties do so because their leadership is made up of former Falintil guerrillas and resistance heroes. The flags of the Falintil and former resistance movement are an especially potent source of symbolic capital from which to model party symbols, especially considering the spiritual and political power of flags in an East Timorese cultural context. Taking the flags of the CNRT party and *Unidade Nacional Democrática da Resistência Timorense* (UNDERTIM, a party that also ran in the 2012 parliamentary elections) as case studies, it is possible to see how the idea that the national struggle has continued into the post-independence state is sustained through potent, visual symbols. These flags provide some of the most visually explicit invocations of the former struggle being continued on in the present.

The CNRT and UNDERTIM party flags make aesthetic connections to former flags of the resistance movement for several reasons; to reflect their belief in the ongoing struggle, to present themselves as legitimate candidates to lead the modern-day *funu*, and to draw on the significant symbolic capital that connections to the resistance movement afford them. Visual evocations of the former resistance and the Falintil guerrilla army reflect a direct identification with an official nationalism, tracing the struggle of the past through to the present. Both the UNDERTIM

Fig. 6.1 The flag of the *Unidade Nacional Democrática da Resistência Timorese* (UNDERTIM)

Fig. 6.2 The flag of the *Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor-Leste* (CNRT)

Fig. 6.3 The flag of the *Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste* (Falintil), the armed wing of the resistance

and CNRT party flags (Figs. 6.1 and 6.2) are strikingly similar to the flags of the Falintil and the former resistance movement (Figs. 6.3 and 6.4), and there is a clear appropriation of the symbolism of the resistance movement. The construction of the flags—three horizontal rectangles—and the choice of colours blue, white, and green are unmistakably alike. By identifying with a source of significant symbolic capital, the CNRT and UNDERTIM parties claims some ownership of the symbols and present themselves as ‘true’ East Timorese, legitimate candidates for national leadership in the ongoing struggle, in an attempt to garner electoral support. The visual connection and ownership claims are furthered by the fact that both parties are led by former Falintil combatants, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão and Cornelio da Consesão Gama (alias ‘L7’). Just as there is a popular belief that the struggle is still not over, heroes of the resistance era are also believed to be the best suited to continue to lead the nation into the future (Myrntinen 2013). Not only have these leaders retained much respect for their former roles in the liberation struggle but

Fig. 6.4 The flag of the *Conselho Nacional de Resistência Timorense* (CNRT), the reformed resistance movement

the visual connection made between resistance symbols and contemporary political party flags has further strengthened their positions in the post-independence state, now defined by the ‘new’ struggle.

The CNRT party flag is emblazoned with its acronym, which is the same as that of the former resistance movement, evoking the glorious resistance of the past and blurring the lines between the movement and the contemporary political party reinforcing the claims to the authority of the past struggle (ICG 2012, p. 7). The ‘CNRT’ acronym was originally the acronym of the final resistance movement after a series of changes throughout the 1980s. The numerous reforms of the movement resulted in the formation of the non-partisan umbrella group *Conselho Nacional de Resistência Maubere* (CNRM) in 1987 (Niner 2001, pp. 21–22). Later, this group was renamed as the *Conselho Nacional de Resistência Timorense* (CNRT) in 1998, which was the official and final name of the resistance movement until independence was officially regained in 2002. This strategy has been highly effective, aided by the common leadership of the resistance and the party by Xanana Gusmão. Speaking to one East Timorese man at a CNRT rally in Dili in July 2012, I was told:

CNRT before command resistencia Timorense [sic], now it’s different than before, because now like construction. I don’t know, I like [it] because before [it was] resistencia. CNRT *commando nacional de resistencia timorense*. (personal interview 2012)

In explaining the party to me, there was a blending of ideas and names and it was clear that, despite limited English, certain words were understood. Interestingly, this man had a different idea of the name behind the acronym. Such imaginings of the contemporary CNRT party underline the effectiveness of its mobilisation of resistance-era symbolic capital, and the continuity that is believed to exist under Gusmão’s leadership.

The post-independence CNRT political party, created in 2007, has constructed its symbols to align its party identity with an official nationalism, and to draw on the significant symbolic capital and legitimacy of the iconography and symbols of the resistance movement. The party flag is an explicit blurring of past and present symbols of struggle to retain a large following.

UNDERTIM similarly draws on the symbolic capital of the Falintil, stating that the party's contemporary organization was inspired by the guerrilla army (personal interview with UNDERTIM member 2012). A party member stated that in the post-independence years, it is carrying on 'the promise that was made during [the] resistance to liberate the people' and continues the struggle of the guerrillas, which is now against poverty (personal interview with UNDERTIM member 2012). Democratic values are alluded to in the UNDERTIM party name—*Unidade Nacional Democrática da Resistência Timorense*—as is the resistance movement, fusing the two in the idea of the reconceptualised struggle. The idea that the national *funu* continues and the need for resistance is not gone was reflected in the party's campaign posters in preparation for the 2012 parliamentary elections (Fig. 6.7). The image of party President Cornelio da Consesão Gama presents him in Falintil fatigues alongside the party flag, making a direct visual association between the party leadership and the armed struggle.⁶ The 2012 party's election campaign slogan was e=perhaps more explicit in connecting the struggle of the past and the present: '*vota atu realiza mebi Falintil no funu nain sira nian* [vote to realise the dream of Falintil and fight to be our own masters]'.⁷ The idea that UNDERTIM maintains the Falintil ideals and vision for the people of Timor-Leste reinforces the idea of the continuation of the resistance today, now against prevalent socio-economic challenges (personal interview with UNDERTIM member 2012). Using clear rhetorical references to underline the symbolic connections, UNDERTIM presents itself as a legitimate candidate to lead the on-going struggle and a worthy successor to the Falintil heroes. The dream of the Falintil is presented as true self-determination, free from foreign occupation and from poverty, implying that the struggle is not yet over. Only when the goals of peace, stability, and economic

⁶L7 is a popular (though highly controversial) figure and still commands great respect in Timor-Leste (Smith 2004, p. 285). This is similar to Xanana Gusmão's self-representation in CNRT election campaign materials. See Chapter 5 for an in-depth analysis.

⁷This and all translations in the chapter are my own.

development are achieved will the nation be truly independent—or so it is suggested.

A COALITION OF PRINCIPLES? DEMOCRATIC VALUES, DEVELOPMENT, AND THE NEW STRUGGLE

Within the paradigm of a national struggle, democratic values and development are presented as the apparatus with which the existing problems of poverty, corruption, and instability can be overcome. As with all abstractions and imagining of national identity, these values must be embodied in symbols in order for the collective to identify with them. The symbolic message that has been emitted by the East Timorese political parties is positive; the national struggle is ongoing but the nation will ultimately triumph and achieve the peaceful and prosperous society it longs for, characterised by stability and economic development. In order to be able to achieve these goals, the Western tools of democratic governance must be appropriated and used to that end. With new party flags, there are fewer symbolic conflicts; there is common identification with the continued struggle of the present, leaving aside the hierarchy of legitimacy of the former struggle.

The flags of the three political parties of the 2012 coalition government pictured (Frenti-Mudança, the Partido Democrático, and the CNRT) exemplify the symbolic representation of democratic values and development, framed within the concept of the ongoing national struggle. It is important to analyse the symbols created at this level in a discussion of nation-building because, as Michael Skey attests, ‘institutions continue to have a key role to play in underpinning and disseminating forms of knowledge that largely (re)create the idea/l of the nation as a bounded, coherent and knowable entity’ (2011, p. 19). State actors who promote an ideology of democratisation, in the fight for liberation from socio-economic and political problems, shape the imaginings of the nation in a powerful way when this ideology is preserved in their symbols.

FRENTI-MUDANÇA

In 2012, Frenti-Mudança was one of the most recently formed political parties in Timor-Leste and came fourth in the national parliamentary elections (see EU 2012, p. 3). The notion of struggle is integral to the party’s identity, particularly the idea of a reconceptualised, ongoing struggle.

The party's very name—Frenti or Front—is demonstrative of this idea, as articulated in the party's manifesto:

Tamba sa mak bolu Frente? Tamba hakarak balibur maluk funu nain sira nebe uluk atu liberta Nasaun Timor-Leste atu sai Independente [...] mos atu balibur Timor oan botu botu nebe hakarak luta nafatin atu liberta Povo Timor-Leste husi kiak no mukit liu husi hametin Unidade Nasional hodi cria Paz no Estabilidade nudar condisaun atu halao Dezenvolvimento Nasional atu ita nia Povo bele betan moris diak'. (Frenti-Mudança 2012, p. 1, emphasis added)⁸

In this statement, it is clear that core tenet of *funu*, now for peace, stability and unity, are at the heart of the party's identity. The party's mission statement explicitly states that through participation in the democratic process, it seeks to bring peace, stability, development and well-being to the East Timorese people: '[Frenti-Mudança] *lori ba Nasaun ne'e ho Povo ne'e ba Paz, Estabilidade, Dezenvolvimento no Bem-estar*' (Frenti-Mudança 2012, p. 1).

This discourse of democracy and development that the Frenti-Mudança has adopted is also reflected in its symbols. Within its flag, the various components are attributed symbolic meanings that reflect the new, reconceptualised struggle. The red segment symbolises the present fight for freedom from '*kiak no mukit*' (poverty and, literally, lacking), so that a better life can be achieved for the people of Timor-Leste (Frenti-Mudança 2012, p. 2; Fig. 6.5). Interestingly, there is also a commemorative component to this segment as it symbolises the former fight of the East Timorese people against foreign powers, echoing the symbolism of the national flag and firmly aligning the party with an official nationalism (Frenti-Mudança 2012, p. 2). The change in meaning from traditional interpretations of the colour red reflects this aspect of an evolving East Timorese national identity. This evolution is further emphasised by the yellow segment of the flag, which symbolises a consciousness

⁸'Why are we called a front? Because we want to gather together kin and leaders of the former struggle who fought to liberate the nation of Timor-Leste to become independent [...] and to gather all Timorese people together *who still want to continue to fight* to liberate the People of Timor-Leste from poverty and lacking towards National Unity, in order to create peace and stability, as the conditions for carrying out National Development, so that our People can have a good life' (Frenti-Mudança 2012, p. 1).

Fig. 6.5 The flag of the *Frente de Reconstrução Nacional de Timor-Leste – Mudança* (Frenti-Mudança)

and hope for the future in through the liberation of the people and the land of Timor-Leste from poverty (Frenti-Mudança 2012, p. 2).⁹

In an analysis of discourse that redefines the national struggle as one against poverty, one aspect of the Frenti-Mudança party flag that requires particular attention is the white star. The star of this flag has positive connotations, much like the symbolic meaning of the same star in the Fretilin flag and the national flag (see Chapter 2), though the official symbolic meaning behind the Frenti-Mudança star differs significantly.¹⁰ Frenti-Mudança states that the white star symbolises the light that comes from the ‘*Uma Lulik Timor*’ (sacred home of Timor) that guides the struggle for freedom of its entire people: ‘*Fitun Mutin signifika naroman nebe mai husi Uma Lulik Timor no mata dalan ba ita nia luta atu liberta ita nia Povu Timor-Leste tomak*’ (Frenti-Mudança 2012, p. 2). Within a specific reference to the redefined national struggle, Frenti-Mudança’s mention of the *Uma Lulik* is noteworthy in itself. For those who are familiar with the symbolism of the flag, the reference to a sacred home has significant historical and cultural connotations, relating the UN discourse of development to the specific cultural context of Timor-Leste.

The *Uma Lulik* has been a significant marker of social, familial, and ethnic identity in Timor-Leste for centuries, and is a cultural icon that predates Portuguese colonialism (McWilliam 2005, p. 28). The sacred home is a symbol of East Timorese tradition, custom and ritual, a place that holds ancestral artefacts (*luliks*) and is filled with spiritual power

⁹‘*Cor kinur significa konsensia no esperansa atu liberta Povo no rai ida nee husi mukit*’ (Frenti-Mudança 2012, p. 2).

¹⁰The Frenti-Mudança flag is reminiscent of the Fretilin flag, in terms of its structure and visual composition, as a result of the party’s origins. Frenti-Mudança was formed by a break-away group of disillusioned Fretilin party members in 2011 (personal interview with member of Frenti-Mudança 2012; see also Shoesmith 2011).

(see Hicks 2008, pp. 13–16). Applying the imagery of the ‘home’ to the struggle, Fretil-Mudança attempts to foster a sense of national unity through symbolism by employing potent and familiar cultural tropes. This is a powerful way of using cultural symbols to represent ideas of democracy and in order to familiarise concepts that may have initially been foreign. Moreover, it taps into an indigenous ethno-cultural heritage that retains great legitimacy and capital in itself, thus affording the party some share in that legitimacy by identifying with it. Fretil-Mudança thus draws on the symbolic capital of aspects of an ethno-cultural heritage and the concept of *funu* as outlined in national narratives to identify as a ‘true’ East Timorese political party and legitimate representatives of the electorate.

The incorporation of democratic and development principles alongside potent cultural symbols in national imaginings of a collective heritage is a key way that UN discourse has been appropriated, enabling its positive reception in Timor-Leste. For democratic symbols to incorporate culturally and spiritually potent iconography (such as the *Uma Lulik*) not only demonstrates how esteemed they are within the national community, but illustrates the extent to which these principles have now been included in imaginings of an evolving national identity, and even respected. As Damien Kingsbury summarises,

As traditions evolve and change to incorporate new elements, so too has *lulik* changed to incorporate such symbols [...] perhaps democracy, as a practice and an idea, represented by symbols, has begun to be incorporated into the inner lives of the Timorese people. Perhaps, just perhaps, democracy has developed a sense of the *lulik*. (2012, p. 7)

The alignment of cultural symbols, democratic values, and the ongoing national struggle thus shapes imaginings of national identity from a state level.

Fretil-Mudança also prioritises peace in its outlook. Though the concept of peace is not explicitly represented in the party flag, Fretil-Mudança outlines the importance of peace in another of its official symbols in such a way that suggests an outlook that sees peace and democracy as inextricably linked. The party symbol is a circular emblem which bears the party’s motto, ‘*Paz, Democracia e Prosperidade* [Peace, Democracy, and Prosperity]’ (Fig. 6.6), around the image of two hands shaking beneath a shining light (Fretil-Mudança 2012, p. 2). The two hands symbolise national unity amongst the East Timorese people (‘*Fretil-Mudança nia Simbolo/Logo*

Fig. 6.6 The party symbol of Frenti-Mudança

maka kaer liman metin nafatin nebe signifika Unidade Nasional; Frenti-Mudança 2012, p. 2). The symbolic reference to fostering national unity is typical of political actors in new nation-states as popular symbols must create an allegiance to the new state and its evolving national identity (Kolstø 2006, p. 679). While Frenti-Mudança is not the sole contributor to national identity formation, the party is aiding the construction and imagination of the new struggle and an evolving aspect of East Timorese nationalism. Popular imaginings of a peaceful nation that has left behind its violent past is sustained when individuals identify with symbols of groups that represent the ideal. The clear reference to peace and democracy in the motto and symbol demonstrates the significance of these values for Frenti-Mudança and its identity, and the appropriation of a UN discourse by the party. Given the centrality of peace and unity to an evolving national identity and the belief that democracy is the means with which to achieve these ideals, it is logical that these values should be enshrined in the party's symbolism. Crucially, the party identifies itself with contemporary ideas of East Timorese nationalism and reaffirms the evolving meaning of the struggle in its symbols.

PARTIDO DEMOCRÁTICO

The Partido Democrático (hereafter PD) was created in 2000 and secured 10.3% of the vote and eight seats in the 2012 parliamentary elections. Its flag differs visually from all other party flags as it is not constructed in the common format of horizontal rectangles and triangles. It is a dark blue flag with overlapping white lines imposed on top, in a shape that is reminiscent of the Union flag of the United Kingdom (Fig. 6.7). The blue segments of its flag have been attributed the meaning of peace, representing the belief that '*ema tenke hakmatek, paz, estabilidade nee ninia mensagem nee; paz, estabilidade*' (personal interview 2012).¹¹ The fact that blue is one of the dominant colours

¹¹ 'People have to have calm, peace, stability which is its message; peace, stability.'

Fig. 6.7 The flag of the *Partido Democrático* (PD)

of the flag suggests the importance given to peace by the PD and the connection between it and democratic values, as the party name implies. This component of the party's flag demonstrates its appropriation of a discourse that sees democratisation as a tool for attaining peace, and its positive identification with this aspect of an evolving national identity.

The white of the PD flag symbolises honesty (personal interview with PD member 2012). Familiar connotations of the colour white with purity, transparency, and clarity are alluded to in this symbolic representation of a key democratic principle. In a political arena that has witnessed numerous corruption scandals, honesty is a virtue that is highly desirable for many.¹² As one (non-political) East Timorese woman stated, 'Honesty and integrity. Honesty and integrity [...] and sense of responsibility. This is enough, this is very important to everybody, everybody in the country' (personal interview 2012). In the post-independence state, honesty is imagined as a crucial aid in tackling the socio-economic and political problems that exist, including economic development, employment, and fairer distribution of wealth (Molnar 2010, p. 162). Subsequently, honesty and transparency are democratic values that the PD advocates as part of its identity and a useful tool in the struggle. By representing these principles, the PD flag can be seen to perform the crucial symbolic function of providing assurance for the national community. Murray Edelman argues that symbols should represent 'what large masses of men need to believe about the state to reassure themselves. It is the needs, hopes, and the anxieties of men that determine the meanings' (1974, p. 2). In Timor-Leste, as in any other democratic state, there is a popular need to believe that honest leadership

¹²Anti-corruption initiatives—instigated by both the Timor-Leste government as well as by the UN and NGOs such as USAID—were implemented in Timor-Leste as a result of the growing concerns over transparency at government level, though their relative success is open to debate (see *Tempo Semanal* 2011; East Timor Law and Justice Bulletin 2010).

is possible. The PD thus addresses any doubts about the establishing and sustaining a democratic system of governance in its flag's symbolism.

Connected to the principles of honesty and transparency is the notion of open dialogue and debate. The white lines of the PD flag that are positioned in two over-lapping crosses point towards the central image of a *lugu*. The *lugu* is a table, traditionally positioned in the centre of the home where people would gather to talk, drink coffee, and chew betel nuts together. For centuries, this cultural symbol has embodied the idea of communication and in this contemporary flag it represents open dialogue within a context of democratic governance (personal interview with PD member 2012). The familiarity of the *lugu* as an everyday household object makes its connotations of social interaction instantly recognisable for the national community. Initially, this symbol of East Timorese culture perhaps does not explicitly evoke contemporary notions of democracy. However, the party has used the traditional *lugu* as a symbol to connect the historic cultural reference to post-independence politics in Timor-Leste, and make democracy more familiar to their supporters. The tradition of sitting and talking together around the *lugu* has been transformed within the symbolism of the PD flag to represent debate as a marker of democracy: '*Partido Democrático foti ninia valor democrático nebee mak kultural [...]. Kultura Timor e valor democrático foti husi lugu nee. Lugu nee representa democrasia*' (personal interview with PD member 2012).¹³ By including a symbol of the East Timorese cultural heritage in a flag defined by a discourse of democratisation, the PD exemplifies how these values have been appropriated and adapted to fit a culturally distinct nation-building context, making them appear less 'foreign'. Moreover, it implies that Timor-Leste has always had a tradition of dialogue and democratic debate that predates the international presence and state-building missions. The implication is that democratic values have always been part of the East Timorese way of life, and that the UN discourse is not actually as foreign as it initially may have seemed. Democratic debate and discussion, represented in this way, further supports the idea that democratic values have been incorporated into an evolving national identity, or rather, had always been a part of it.

The so-called 'holy trinity' of peace, democracy and development (Rajagopal 2003, p. 143; see also Boutros-Ghali 1996, p. 9) as presented

¹³'PD promotes democratic values [...]. Timorese culture and democratic values are promoted by the *lugu*. The *lugu* represents democracy.'

by UN discourse is reflected in the symbols of the East Timorese political parties that identify with an East Timorese nationalism now framed by the reconceptualised *funu*. The PD alludes to the importance that development also has in the ongoing national struggle in the party motto; encircling the image of the '*lugu*' are the words '*Hanoin... Harii... Hametin*' ('Think... Build... Strengthen'). The alliterative words implicitly refer to economic development as well as to the physical infrastructure; to rebuild and develop what was destroyed by the Indonesian military, substantial funds are required. In light of this, the strategic nature of the discourse appropriation is expounded, to ensure that such funding was secured. At the end of the Indonesian occupation and the time the PD was formed, national executive decision-making was greatly influenced by potential donor countries and other big political actors in the region. The East Timorese leadership was faced with the choice of complying with the World Bank, the IMF, and the Asian Development Bank or maintaining the state's autonomy and going without external support (DeShaw Rae 2009, p. 107).¹⁴ In the initial stages of independence, the influence of international actors was significant in this respect and, the need to comply with international expectations to secure development funding was an incentive to appropriate the relevant language. Equally, the reconceptualization of the concept of *funu* is important in explaining the centrality of development in contemporary identity narratives. Development has been presented as a useful aid to securing the utopian society that is the goal of the new figurative struggle. It was thus inevitable that rhetoric of development, to complement democratic values, would be appropriated for its symbolic function as well as for its material benefits.

CONGRESSO NACIONAL DE RECONSTRUÇÃO DE TIMOR-LESTE (CNRT)

The CNRT party has clearly demonstrated its belief in the continued struggle through its visual evocation of the Falintil and resistance movement in its flag's colours and its name. The CNRT's slogan for the 2012 parliamentary election campaign was even more explicit: '*Liberta tiha ona Pátria, liberta fali Povu!* [the homeland is liberated, now we

¹⁴James DeShaw Rae goes on to highlight that the Fretilin government, led by Mari Alkatiri, did keep its political autonomy.

will liberate the people!]' (see CNRT 2011a, p. 1). The party's mission statement uses similar language of peace and prosperity as key goals for the future of the nation:

[the CNRT acts] in response to the need to instil a democratic culture in the whole heart of the community, as one culture of transparency and responsibility in state institutions, a credible, independent and impartial culture of justice in the judicial system of Timor, a culture with social justice in order to involve citizens in the big decisions to do with the state (CNRT 2011a, p. 1; see also CNRT 2011b).¹⁵

The language used is saturated with political language and democratic terminology, reflecting the party's identification with democratic governance at the apparatus with which it will 'liberate the people.' The fact that the CNRT party was formed in 2007 is noteworthy when considering the language used; the 2006 crisis had shaken East Timorese society to the core and much faith and trust in the government and state had been lost. Outside of the half-island, there were serious concerns from the international community that Timor-Leste would become a 'failed' state. Failing states are generally judged on their transparency (or the lack thereof), levels of corruption, and how well democratic processes function. The CNRT addresses numerous concerns in this statement that would have been primary concerns for East Timorese citizens and foreign observers alike at the time the party was created. By adopting this democratic discourse and making it the centre of its mission goal, the CNRT demonstrated a strategic appropriation of UN-style language to gain support and credibility to its electorate and to the outside world. Democratic principles and values are equally enshrined in the symbolism of the party flag, in a similar way to the Fretilin and PD.

The necessary conditions for democracy—open dialogue, transparency and honesty—as represented in the PD flag, are also seen in the flag of the CNRT (Fig. 6.2). The central band of the CNRT flag is white, which symbolises numerous democratic principles including political tolerance,

¹⁵ 'Atu batán ba nesesidade atu inkulka (batama no banorin) kultura demokrátika, iha comunidade tomak laran, nudar kultura ida ho transparénsia i responsabilizasaun iha Instituisoens Estadu nia laran, kultura ho justisa, kredível, independente no imparcial, iha Sistema judisial Timor nian laran, kultura ida ho justisa social hodi envolve sidadauns iha desizaun boot hirak nebé kona-ba Estadu.'

reconciliation and national unity as a foundation for peace: '*Faixa iha klaran ho kór mutin, simboliza prinsipius demokrátikus hanesan tolerânsia polítika, rekinsiliasaun no unidade nasional, fundamentu ba paz rohan laek iha Paiz ne'e laran*' (CNRT 2011a, pp. 1–2). In the CNRT's 2012 official party manifesto, the connection between democratic values and peace is also directly made. Open debate and discussion, represented by the *lugu* in the PD flag, are made possible by political tolerance (*tolerânsia polítika*) invoked in the CNRT flag. Thus, it is possible to trace a common understanding of democratisation in the symbolism of the three parties' flags and its role in the continued national struggle. The representation of these ideals in symbols of political party identity reflects an evolving national identity and the parties' positive identification with it.

The top band of the CNRT flag is light blue which symbolises moral valour and humanist ethics that must guide East Timorese society: '*Faixa iha leten liu, ho kór azul, nebé simboliza valor moral, étiku no umanu hirak nebé tenki orienta sociedade timorense*' (CNRT 2011a, p. 1). While the white band of the CNRT flag explicitly represents the core democratic principles, the blue band alludes to a further sense of humanitarianism as an accompaniment to democracy. Humanitarianism was a key part of UN missions' rhetoric because international involvement in Timor-Leste was due to the mass human rights violations perpetrated under the Indonesian occupation (United Nations Security Council 1999, pp. 1–2). Humanitarianism went hand-in-hand with a discourse of democracy and the two are presented as being mutually sustaining in this flag. Supporting this idea, Hua Fan has argued that 'the East Timor case further illustrates the potential of democracy to link the group right of self-determination with *the rights and well-being of individuals*' (2007, p. 188, emphasis added). The connection between democratic values and the well-being of individuals underlines the belief that democracy is the necessary apparatus to tackle issues of poverty, illiteracy, socio-economic and political problems. Further, references to such values to *guide* East Timorese society suggest anticipation of a future goal: the struggle is not over yet and democracy, peace and unity, complimented by humanitarian ethics, are all ideals that are symbolically represented in the symbols of the party flags that demonstrate an appropriation of UN discourse, reinterpreted as a means to achieve the end goals of peace and prosperity.

Though the colours chosen to represent ideas of development differ between the various coalition parties' flags, similar sentiments are found in the symbolic meaning behind the CNRT party flag. The bottom band

of the flag is green in colour which has several symbolic meanings, one of which is the hope for ‘*moris di’ak liu* [a truly good life]’ (CNRT 2011a, p. 2). This green rectangle highlights the universal goal of the struggle that is invoked when development discourse is employed: that of a good life for the East Timorese people in the future. The CNRT believe that this is to be achieved through productivity, combined with the democratic principles and values that will guide the party’s vision: ‘*Faixa ida, iha okos liu, ho kór verde, simboliza [...] productividade nebé ás husi sidadauns sira*’ (CNRT 2011a, p. 2).

Development policies in Timor-Leste often focus on the nation’s natural resources, and in the symbolism of the coalition government party flags the theme of development is presented in terms of investment in the land. The CNRT party also designates the green band of its flag for the representation of the land, the environment, and their protection: ‘*Faixa ida, iha okos liu, ho kór verde, simboliza [...] meu-ambiente ida ke tenki proteje ho didi’ak*’ (CNRT 2011a, p. 2). This idea is similarly represented in the Fretili-Mudança flag, which attributes several symbolic meanings to the green element of its flag: green is representative of the rich land of Timor-Leste that, with caution, can be used to invest in the future of the country (Fretili-Mudança 2012, p. 2). This illustrates an awareness of the resources and the potential for investment, particularly in relation to the natural oil and gas reserves in the Timor Gap, which was a priority in the state-building mission by the UN (Croissant 2008, p. 658). In a UN Poverty Environment Initiative report, written in 2001 and just prior to the official return to independence, it was noted that ‘it is important that East Timor develops environmental policies to ensure sustainable management and utilisation of natural resources’ (Sandlund et al. 2001, p. 7). Investment in the land, as a strategy in the new struggle, can be seen in this way to help tackle the socio-economic problems that continue to pose challenges to the nation-building project.

The concept of a sustainable utilization of natural resources is connected to another meaning attributed to the green segment of the Fretili-Mudança flag. In this particular flag, green also symbolises the duty of the East Timorese people to protect their land and the environment (Fretili-Mudança 2012, p. 2). Notions of development through productivity and the preservation of the environment further exemplify an approach that focuses on a stable and prosperous future for Timor-Leste. Eco-politics and policies of sustainable development and the environment—as yet—have not been central in the political debate in

Timor-Leste, but are very much in keeping with the dominant political rhetoric of UN. This ‘green’ meaning present in both the Fretilin and the CNRT flags does indicate a focus on the future that incorporates this particular concept of development in Timor-Leste. The concept is one of physical development of the state in terms of the use of natural resources, as well as the ideological development of policy in the democratic system.¹⁶ By investing in and simultaneously protecting, the CNRT posits that the nation can achieve the goal of prosperity. The legitimising symbolic capital of the concept of *funu*, invoked by the party flag’s resemblance of the Falintil and resistance flags, renders the UN discourse of peace, honesty, tolerance and development as worthy traits of an East Timorese identity.

CONCLUSION

Since the restoration of independence in 2002, the social and political context in which the East Timorese nation collectively identifies has changed significantly. Self-determination has brought with it socio-economic challenges that must be overcome; poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, malnutrition and underdevelopment have all been issues of priority in the first decade of independence. These challenging circumstances have influenced the ways in which national identity is articulated and, as a result, the core tenet of *funu* has been reinterpreted and re-presented in narratives and symbols.

The UNTAET mission sought to lay the foundations of the state- and nation-building project in Timor-Leste and introduced discourses of democratisation and development to a nation that formerly had no real experience of democracy. The rapid adoption of democratic governance and values thus raises questions, particularly in light of the initial problems experienced during the UN mission. However, these foreign, Western discourses have been appropriated and strategically reinterpreted by the political élite in order to secure international aid and achieve the aims of the nation-building project. Framed within the paradigm of the ongoing national struggle, democratic values have been made more familiar to the East Timorese population and foreign ideals have been legitimised by this powerful tenet of East Timorese nationalism.

¹⁶Eco-politics and environmental awareness is a policy area that is discussed, albeit in a minor way, by the CNRT, for example (see CNRT 2011a).

Political party flags have provided clear examples of how democracy and development, understood to be the tools to tackle existing socio-economic problems, have been incorporated into narratives of a reconceptualised figurative *funu* and symbolically represented.

As the political party flags analysed in this chapter have shown, symbols provide powerful tools for negotiating and representing evolving identities. Within an East Timorese cultural context, flags in particular constitute powerful markers of an identity based on struggle that is evolving and changing in the post-independence state. By making aesthetic connections to older symbols of resistance (such as the CNRT and UNDERTIM party flags), and by incorporating cultural symbols (such as the *Uma Lulik* and the *lugu*), political parties make an initially foreign ideology more familiar and in fact present democratic values as an ethos that has always existed in Timor-Leste. This facilitates a deeper engagement with democratic rule and strengthens the belief that democratisation is a crucial tool in the ongoing struggle for peace and prosperity. Ultimately, this approach to representing the reconceptualised *funu*, as a core tenet of an evolving national identity, has been successful and positively received by the national community. Testament to the positive way in which the population identifies with democracy is the widespread participation in the electoral process (Kingsbury 2014, p. 12), and the reproduction of similar discursive practices at a grassroots level in the streets, as the next chapter will discuss.

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Painting Peace and Prosperity: Street Art, the *Geração Foun*, and Identifying with an Evolving ‘East Timorese-ness’

In post-independence Timor-Leste, the concept of an ongoing national struggle, or *funu*, against poverty and prevailing socio-economic problems is central part to an evolving national identity. As we have seen in Chapter 6, this concept has been enshrined in the symbols of political parties at the highest levels of government. A similar discourse of identity has also been reproduced at a grassroots level, and ideals such as peace, national unity, democracy, and development as part of the ongoing struggle are represented in street art. The visual representations of these concepts reflect how national identity changes and is reimagined according to political context and the needs of the national community. Street art is a powerful symbolic medium of expression and identification for many younger East Timorese, who have used it to positively identify with an evolving national identity and to challenge the largely exclusivist nature of nation-building thus far.

This chapter examines the critical role of street art in national identity formation for those who do not have direct access to sources of power and capital. This symbolic form has been overlooked in studies of nationalism and nation-building, yet it is often the most accessible and powerful medium of expression for many young members of the national community. The chapter explores the ways in which young street artists of the *Geração Foun* (the ‘new’ generation) have identified with their nation as ‘true’ East Timorese subjects in the first decade of independence by incorporating symbolic representations of a redefined struggle

for peace and prosperity into their work. However, within the context of this generational group's social and cultural alienation in the post-independence state, there are also evident symbolic conflicts in the street art of Timor-Leste. Their choice of street art as an unofficial and temporary medium of communication and self-representation is indicative of the socio-political situation of a younger generation of East Timorese who had no formal political platform. An analysis of art produced by this generation reveals wider issues of exclusion in nation-building by the older generation of resistance leaders and the subsequent generation gap that has emerged since 2002.

Street art, as a form of symbolic representation, is a product of the youth subculture that has emerged from this generational divide in the post-independence state. Youth subcultures typically identify with, and simultaneously challenge, the dominant culture of a given society and it is precisely this tension that is demonstrated in the content of the street art in Timor-Leste.¹ The young graffiti artists have demonstrated an attempt to relate to state nationalism through their art by highlighting points of consensus on peace, stability, economic development, and a future of non-violent self-determination. Their engagement with narratives of the new, figurative struggle has been facilitated by the fact that this aspect of East Timorese nationalism is more inclusive than state commemorations of the resistance era, in which youth participation has largely been overlooked. Yet these artists also challenge certain perceptions of East Timorese-ness, institutionalised by a state that has privileged the resistance history and cultural heritage of the older generation. These challenges, presented through unofficial street art, underline the symbolic conflicts arising from a lack of inclusion and platform for the *Geração Foun* and the generation gap as a significant obstacle to nation-building itself.

Within the first decade of self-determination, the *Geração Foun* constituted over 60% of the population, rendering their underrepresentation a considerable shortcoming of the nation-building project. A lack of formal platform has served to expound the critical importance of street art for this generational group to share its ideas on the past, present, and the future of their nation. Marisa Ramos-Gonçalves initiated research on street art in Timor-Leste, and affirms

¹For an overview of the main schools of thought on youth culture, see Carles Feixas and Jordi Nofre (2012).

A imaginação de uma nova sociedade projectada nas paredes deste jovem país é provavelmente a mensagem mais forte que pode ser visualizada. [...] As “artes de rua” timorenses dão continuidade ao combate pela dignidade humana, seja através da invocação dos fantasmas do passado ou da revolta contra as injustiças do presente, seja através da proclamação da vitória do direito do povo à autodeterminação ou do protesto contra a discriminação e pobreza que permanecem no seio da sociedade timorense. (2012b, p. 80)²

Thus, whether street art is used by young people to positively identify with their fellow East Timorese, or to critique the social and political problems of the state, it is a vital tool for communication and expression for the marginalised. This chapter expands on Ramos-Gonçalves’ work to critically analyse specific case studies taken from my own ethnographic fieldwork in Dili. It explores the visual representation of identities through symbols and language choices at a grassroots level, demonstrating the tensions and cultural differences inherent in intergenerational relations in post-conflict, post-colonial states. The case studies also demonstrate how street art is strategically employed by members of the *Geração Foun* to positively identify with an evolving official nationalism. By outlining the causes of their under-representation and the reasons for their choice of street art as a medium of communication, we can better understand how a youth subculture has emerged in Timor-Leste and how such conflicting are has been produced.

THE GERAÇÃO FOUN AND THE YOUTH SUBCULTURE IN TIMOR-LESTE

The East Timorese generation gap that has emerged since 2002 is a direct legacy of the history of foreign occupations of the half-island, by both Portugal and Indonesia. It presents a significant challenge to national unity in the post-independence state as distinct generational groups are divided along lines of cultural and linguistic heritage, and in terms of official recognition of their contribution to national liberation

²‘The imagination of a new society projected on the walls of this young country is probably the strongest message that can be displayed. [...] The Timorese “street art” continues the fight for human dignity, either by invoking the ghosts of the past or the revolt against the injustices of the present, either through the proclamation of the victory of the people’s right to self-determination or to protest against the discrimination and poverty that remain within Timorese society.’ Translation my own.

from foreign rule. In the post-independence state, there are three main generational groups: the Generation of '75, who lived and were educated under Portuguese rule; the *Geração Foun*, who grew up under the Indonesian occupation; and the Independence generation, who were born and grew up after the 1999 independence ballot (Ramos-Gonçalves 2012a, p. 4).

Members of the *Geração Foun* are aged over twenty and under fifty years, or approximately in their thirties on average (Arthur 2015, p. 42), and identify as youth as a result of their membership in the youth clandestine resistance movements under Indonesia (Wigglesworth 2016, p. 1). Since the dominant political leadership of the post-independence state has belonged to the Generation of '75, it has been their Lusophone cultural-linguistic heritage that has been given precedence in national identity construction. While there are members of the Independence generation who participate and engage in street art, the original authors of painted messages on the walls in the post-independence years belong to the *Geração Foun*. Indeed, the street artists with whom I spoke during my fieldwork in Dili all identified as members of the *Geração Foun* in terms of their age and their cultural and educational backgrounds.³ Many of these artists are based in the Centro Arte Moris in Dili, which is a non-profit art school in the capital (Arte Moris, <http://artemoris.org>), and it is their work and experiences that inform this chapter. These street artists are now passing on their ideas and techniques to the next generation of younger East Timorese, however, this chapter focuses on the original artists who instigated this trend in identification throughout the first decade of independence.

Since the return to independence, social divisions such as the generation gap have emerged, and the national unity that was fostered under the resistance has somewhat weakened with the absence of a common enemy (see Kingsbury 2010). Due to the successive foreign occupations by Portugal and Indonesia, the legacies of two divergent cultural-linguistic heritages exist in the post-independence state, which are central to the collective identification of the respective generations. The state's decision to adopt Portuguese as a national language and construct an East Timorese national identity with Lusophone roots has meant that

³The artists at the Centro Arte Moris in Dili kindly helped me with my fieldwork and contributed greatly to my research on street art in Timor-Leste. Most interviews are with artists from this centre.

those born and educated under the Indonesian occupation have struggled to fully identify with their older, fellow East Timorese (Ramos-Gonçalves 2012a, p. 4). Upon the return to independence in 2002, over 75% of the population belonged to the younger *Geração Foun*, over 90% of whom had complete fluency in Bahasa Indonesia (Leach 2017, pp. 54–55), only 2.5% of whom self-identified as fluent Portuguese speakers (Leach 2003, p. 144; see also Taylor-Leech 2008, 2012). Having been formally educated under the Indonesian occupation, many members of the *Geração Foun* have little or no knowledge of Portuguese. Those who do understand the language often shy away from using it, for fear of ridicule or embarrassment at making mistakes or at mispronunciation (Wigglesworth 2016, p. 98). Since independence, critics from the younger generation have seen this ‘Lusophonisation’ of the national heritage as a means of retaining power and influence for the older generation (Leach 2017, p. 155), a statement that summarises the political fallout of the generational divide.

The privileging one cultural-linguistic heritage over another did not, however, signal a complete negation of the older generation’s criticisms of colonialism. While national identity has been constructed around the concept of the liberation struggle from foreign occupation, including Portugal, as we have seen identification with a Luso-European heritage was a strategy adopted by the resistance to differentiate the East Timorese nation from the more recent Indonesian occupiers. As such, national identity was to be constructed round the history of struggle but the older generation of resistance leaders sought to include a preservation of the Portuguese language and culture as integral parts of East Timorese-ness, well integrated after the centuries of colonialism (Hull 2000). The Independence generation has now grown up in the state education system that has incorporated this history, heritage, and language into the national curriculum, and they are thus able to identify with an official nationalism and thereby access its symbolic capital. Consequently, the *Geração Foun* has remained in the middle, overlooked and isolated in processes of national-building.

In terms of an exogenous language use, the *Geração Foun* generally has an excellent command of Bahasa Indonesia as a result of their education under the occupation. Their indirect identification with the most recent foreign occupier through language use has consequently undermined the legitimacy of their claims to nationhood in the eyes of the state, in light of nationalist narratives of the struggle against Indonesia.

The affiliation has been viewed so antagonistically that members of the older generation have referred to them as the *Generasi Supermi* (the *Supermi* generation), which has several negative connotations. *Supermi* instant noodles are a popular import from Indonesia and referencing young people in this way denotes softness (like the noodles), an ‘instant’ attitude towards life that opposes traditional values, and a lack of experience and leadership qualities (Bexley 2011, pp. 7–9). The derogatory label and implications are combined with the cultural and linguistic ties of the young generation to Indonesia, resulting in stark cultural alienation from the rest of East Timorese society who are deemed to be legitimate subjects of the nation in accordance with state narratives (Arthur 2015, p. 49).

In the post-independence state, the established social hierarchy based on contributions to the liberation struggle has privileged resistance leaders and members of the Generation of ‘75. As we have seen, this elite is seen to have suffered and sacrificed the most, and its members are thus the gatekeepers to the symbolic capital of identity tenets of *funu* and *terus*. Struggle and suffering are crucial to claiming legitimacy and recognition as members of the national community in post-independence Timor-Leste (Bexley 2007b, p. 73; see also Bexley 2007a). Thus in the context of a state that, in its early years, did not recognise the contributions of the civilian and youth population to the national liberation struggle, the *Geração Foun* have been even further alienated from notions of ‘true’ East Timorese-ness. State commemorations of the past struggle have been so exclusive in practice that they have overlooked the numerous youth and student resistance organizations that existed under the Indonesian occupation. The absolute precedence given to the Falintil (*Forças Armadas para a Liberação Nacional do Timor Leste*) and the political leadership has overshadowed a significant number of youth and student resistance organizations, such as RENETIL (*Resistência Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor-Leste*), OPJLATIL (*Organizasaun Popular da Joventude Louriku Assuain de Timor Leste*), FITUN (*Frente iha Timor Unidos Nafatin*), and the LEP (*Liga dos Estudantes Patriotas*) (Arthur 2016, p. 179; Wigglesworth 2016, pp. 15–22; Leach 2012). Indeed, the East Timorese government’s reluctance to build the Santa Cruz memorial in the initial years of independence (see Chapter 3) was a clear example of how these youth factions had been overlooked. With this in mind, Jill Jolliffe describes the *Geração Foun* as ‘Timor’s best and brightest – who feel they have been denied a chance to participate in the society for

which they sacrificed all' (2011).⁴ The younger generation has been unable to fully share in imaginings of solidarity through struggle as enjoyed by the Generation of '75: a reality which is in stark contrast to the pursuit of a collective identity and national unity, a primary objective of nation-building (Arnold 2009, p. 380).

Not only has the *Geração Foun* been excluded from state commemorations of the national liberation struggle and discourses of an official nationalism but since independence was regained, they have been faced with limited prospects for employment and self-sufficiency. In 2002, over 60% of the population was aged under 25 and a youth bulge has characterised the first decade of self-determination, with many more young people leaving school and university than there were jobs to go to (Wigglesworth 2005, p. 127; 2016, p. 4; see also Wigglesworth 2012). Many young people have migrated from rural areas to the capital city in search of work but saturation in the job market has meant that Dili's unemployment rate has consistently remained very high, verging on 44% in 2008 (Guterres 2008, p. 368; Peake 2005, p. 80). With few jobs commensurate with their level of education and limited prospects for economic advancement, the *Geração Foun*'s specific socio-economic situation constitutes a further and significant source of disillusionment with the new nation-state. This is expounded by the fact that their elected representatives—those to whom younger people have looked for social and political change—belong precisely to the older generation who have alienated them.⁵

As a result of their significant under-representation at an official level, many members of the *Geração Foun* have turned to street art to express themselves publicly and visually articulate their imaginings of identity. Symbolic conflict is inherent in East Timorese street art because of its origins in exclusion, and it can provide some of the most telling symbolic representations of identity for young people and insight into their social grievances and ideals (see Stocker et al. 1972, p. 356). Given that graffiti and street art are useful indicators of current social and political climates,

⁴Jill Jolliffe is an Australian journalist and scholar who has written and published on the half-island since the 1975 Indonesian invasion, through the years following the return to self-determination.

⁵It is worth noting that since 2012, a marked increase in youth representation in national politics has taken place. The Partido Democrático has a large youth following and, at the time of writing, the newest political party to be created, Enrich the National Unity of the Sons of Timor, or *Khunto*, claims to be specifically for the young, forgotten members of East Timorese society (see Scambary 2017).

the large amount of street art in Timor-Leste or any transitional society should not be seen as simply an illicit sign of a rebellious youth, but rather as an important tool for contestation and symbolic representation for marginalised social groups.

Theories of youth subcultures provide insight into the processes of identification and imagination for the *Geração Foun* because of the complex ways in which they interpret the dominant culture of the older generation, institutionalised by the state. Sociologist Phil Cohen founded contemporary theories of youth subcultures and argues that there is always a tension at the heart of youth subcultures that stems from its inextricable roots in its ‘parent’ culture (1972). He asserts that youth subcultures are ‘a compromise solution between two contradictory needs: the need to create and express autonomy and difference from parents, and by extension, their culture; *and* the need to maintain the [...] parental identifications’ (1972, p. 26, emphasis added). The tension evident in youth subcultures is at the heart of how the younger generation of East Timorese negotiate their perceptions of identity in relation to an official nationalism, created by the Generation of ‘75. The collective identity of the *Geração Foun* has clear connections to its parental roots, but there is also a continual conflict evidenced by their contestation and critique of the dominant culture.

This tension becomes most clear in the visual signs of street art since it is by making the challenge to the dominant culture visible that youth rebellion and subcultures are most effective. Dick Hebdige highlighted that ‘the challenge to [cultural] hegemony which subcultures represent is not issued directly by them. Rather it is expressed obliquely, in style [...] at the profoundly superficial level of appearances: that is *at the level of signs*’ (1979, p. 17, emphasis added). These visual signs are symbolic representations of the identities and values of young generations who seek to challenge the cultural hegemony or dominant culture in a society (see Clarke et al. 1976, pp. 39–42; see also Clarke 1974). The street art produced in the first decade of independence in Timor-Leste expounds this process of reflecting such contestations. As Chris Parkinson affirms, ‘it’s a scene that keeps re-asserting itself as a marker of identity and continues to splash positive representations and messages around the country that critique, conflict and absolutely collide with the politics of the day’ (cited in Storey 2013).⁶ Taking street art as a visible product of youth

⁶Chris Parkinson is a professional photographer and scholar who has extensively documented street art in Timor-Leste since 2002.

subcultures as the focus of analysis, it is possible to better understand how those at a grassroots level, and even those at the periphery, identify with their nation.

(UN)WANTED MASTERPIECES? DEFINING STREET ART IN TIMOR-LESTE

The increased popularity of street art has encouraged a greater focus on the subject in scholarship, in which it is largely understood to be a powerful tool for communication and subversion. Street art is essentially any piece of art developed in a public space, and encompasses free-hand aerosol work, graffiti stencils, tagging, murals, and sticker art. Indeed, ‘street art’ is a flexible, umbrella term for any creative expression in public that is utilized for political communication, and which reacts to dominant social narratives (Chaffee 1993, pp. 3–4; see also Lewisohn 2008; Riggle 2010). Jack Pelsinger, founder of the Nation of Graffiti Artists (NOGA), argues that ‘everybody has the need to be important’ and regards such artistic expression as the most effective way ‘to feel important and be important to others’ (cited in Giller 1996). From this perspective, graffiti and street art become tools for young people to assert power and identity, and to have a voice in a society that perhaps would not listen otherwise.

One of the most common forms of street art is graffiti, which is the practice of illicitly drawing, writing, scribbling, spraying, or scratching on walls and public surfaces. There are three main categories of graffiti: ‘tags’ are names that are written or scrawled on any public surface; ‘throwups’ are tags or acronyms that are enlarged and formed into a single unit; and ‘pieces’ (short for masterpieces), which are the largest works that combine text and image in large spaces (Arthur 2015, p. 44). Due to its subversive nature and its wide associations with younger generations, graffiti can be understood as visual representations of a youth subculture challenging the dominant culture of a society. Moreover, it is a particularly effective medium of communication for a subversive younger generation because of its focus on text and messages. As prolific American graffiti artist Chaka Jenkins asserts, in graffiti ‘letters are primary; characters (images, pictures, portraits) are secondary. Graffiti is visual slang’ (1995, p. 34). The focus on text in graffiti enables an explicit articulation of the grievances, hopes and identities of younger generations. The nature of the street art in Timor-Leste,

which gives its primary focus to text and is often of a large size and scale, renders it most easily defined as a series of ‘pieces’. Further, the materials used (often spray paints) and the unofficial, uncommissioned nature of much of the art would suggest that it falls under this general category. The structure and form of the East Timorese street art was perhaps deliberately adopted to engage in symbolic conflicts because of its ability to directly and explicitly project messages through the focus on text.

Yet the street art produced in the first decade of independence diverges from general categorisations in several ways, and exemplifies the unique socio-political context in which the *Geração Foun* artists have worked. Many recent ‘pieces’ of street art that are not commissioned are often not removed, suggesting that they are not necessarily unwanted graffiti (Menis 2002, p. 44). In some instances they stay unchanged on the walls for so long that the colours fade, and some street art that has faded with time is even refreshed and repainted. In this way, unlike archetypal graffiti, many East Timorese pieces are not necessarily viewed in a negative light. Indeed, they are even seen by some non-artists as a celebration of contemporary East Timorese culture. Talking about the walls in her neighbourhood, one East Timorese woman said that when she looks at graffiti, ‘*hau nia hano in kreatividade cada juventude atu halo rame cidade*’ (personal interview 2012).⁷

The professional skill executed in street art in Dili is perhaps a further contributing factor to its positive reception and the absence of associations with deviance, and vandalism that often accompany graffiti in other nation-states. The authors of much street art in Dili are trained artists from the Centro Arte Moris, who are highly skilled and exhibit their work professionally on an international level.⁸ Nevertheless, the fact that East Timorese street art is an accepted part of the landscape, or even as celebrated cultural expression, does not alter its contemporary unofficial and subversive nature. Artists take their messages to the streets simply because they do not have an alternative, formal platform. The examples in this chapter illustrate this function of street art, providing the *Geração*

⁷‘My thoughts are of the creativity of each young person to make the city lively.’ This translation and all others in this chapter are my own.

⁸For example, in 2013, numerous artists from the centre collaborated with Chris Parkinson in a project, entitled *Animatism*, that exhibited art, murals, and performance pieces in public spaces, both in Timor-Leste and Australia (see Centro Arte Moris 2013; Parkinson 2017, pp. 59–60).

Foun with a public platform for contesting the symbolic monopolisation of nation-building by the older generation, and expressing their own imaginings of identity, including the redefined struggle.

Much contemporary street art is unofficial and appears spontaneously, however, the trend originated from a project commissioned by the government in 2006 as a means of communicating messages of peace and unity in a time of political crisis. As we will see, this project constituted a significant point of collaboration between the two distinct generational groups. The project instigated a wave of street art that has continued since, representing a similar discourse and the same hopes and values of the redefined *funu*, though not without an evident critique of the parent culture.

TROUBLED BEGINNINGS: THE 2006 CRISIS AND THE STREET ART MOVEMENT IN TIMOR-LESTE

The widespread desire for peace in the post-independence years has not only stemmed from the violence perpetrated under the Indonesian occupation in the recent past but from the periods of civil disorder in the initial years following the restoration of independence. In particular, the period known as the 2006 Crisis is widely regarded as the worst since self-determination. The conflict ran deep and neighbourhoods, families, and friends clashed, revealing the numerous divisions that had emerged in East Timorese society (Scambary 2009, p. 265). The violence was concentrated in Dili and at the height of the crisis, over 150,000 people were forced to flee the capital, and dozens of camps were set up to accommodate the internally displaced (Goldsmith 2009, p. 122).⁹ By June 2006, the Dili District Health Service had set up 19 clinics running 24-hour services for the displaced (Anderson 2006, p. 72). By the end of the first three months of crisis, 38 had been killed and 1650 houses had been destroyed (Van der Auweraert 2012, p. 5). Australian peace-keeping forces were brought in at the request of then-President Gusmão to quell the violence, which did not end until 2008 and after assassination attempts on the President and Prime Minister's lives had failed.

It was during this period of unrest that a project of street art promoting peace and unity was conceived of by the government and the

⁹Prior to the Crisis, Dili had been home to over 200,000 people, rendering the scale of violence and destruction unprecedented in the newly-independent state.

artists at the Centro Arte Moris in Dili (Ramos-Gonçalves 2013, p. 10). The 2006 project had a clear aim: to send a message to those involved in the riots that violence and unlawful behaviour were not acceptable. The then-Prime Minister, José Ramos-Horta said that the objective was ‘to produce a graffiti campaign promoting peace, unity, mutual tolerance and friendship’ (cited in Parkinson 2010, p. 4). One artist explained his motivation behind their participation in the project: *‘iha 2006 ema hotu tank atu sai ba liur, atu halo mensagem. Ema tira ba malu. Ami ba, ami pinta. [...] Ami foo mensagem atu ema la bele tank’* (personal interview 2012).¹⁰ The 2006 street art project began a trend that has continued ever since, presenting a vision of peace for the future of the nation-state and demonstrating a universal desire for a peaceful and prosperous future.

Given the typically subversive nature of street art, the fact that the East Timorese government decided to sponsor this graffiti project is telling of the exceptional political circumstances of the time. During the crisis, the fractures in East Timorese society extended to the very top levels of government, as old tensions between the Fretilin government and then-President Xanana Gusmão were exposed in dealing with a national strike held by members of the military. The state-level split culminated in the resignation of Mari Alkatiri from his office as prime minister on 26 June 2006, to be replaced by Gusmão’s preferred José Ramos-Horta (see ICG 2006, p. 13; Nevins 2007). Despite calls for civilians to refrain from violence and rioting, the international media focus was also on divisions in the state’s leadership. At the time, political commentators and state leaders within the international community saw Timor-Leste as a ‘failing’ state, with a government that seemed unlikely to be able to rectify the situation (Nevins 2007, p. 163). While this perspective was prematurely fatalistic, there were serious concerns that the instability in Timor-Leste would render it a ‘failed’ state. Thus, as a means of countering the outside critiques of instability and addressing the inner turmoil, the East Timorese government commissioned the series of ‘pieces’ of street art to be painted across the capital.

The decision to use street art at this time was an important one, and various audiences were targeted as the recipients of the messages painted.

¹⁰‘In 2006 everyone was scared to go outside, to send a message. People were shooting at each other. We went to paint. [...] We gave the message so people wouldn’t be scared’.

There were numerous international organizations, NGOs, and media representatives in Dili and in order to demonstrate to them that youth involvement in the disorder was not universal, this medium of art—primarily associated with young people—was deliberately chosen to communicate positive messages of peace (Parkinson 2010, pp. 4–5). A significant number of young people were involved in the riots in Dili and to convey some level of national unity to the outside world, ideas of peace and unity were painted at a grassroots level to mirror the official rhetoric of the government. The messages were not only aimed at the international community but at the East Timorese national community itself. The strategy of representing official government discourse in the unconventional medium of street art meant that it was seemingly detached from the political arena. Divisions in state leadership were a primary contributing factor to the uncertainty felt by the East Timorese people at the time, and it was likely that any official government discourse would be perceived as hypocritical or fall on deaf ears. By commissioning young artists to disseminate the government’s message through street art, a seemingly independent and impartial voice could be expressed on the walls of Dili. Street art provided an efficient and practical alternative, since a primary function of the medium is as to strategically communicate political ideas (Obeng 2000, p. 228). In this way, the calls to the wider population for unity and stability were more likely to resonate and take effect than the discourse that came from a fractured state leadership.

The 2006 street art project was a product of exceptionally difficult political circumstances, which brought together two distinct generational groups in an attempt to quell the internal conflict. Since then, the *Geração Foun*’s street art has continues to present the themes of peace and national unity, but now includes implicit protests at the exclusive nation-building agenda to date. This suggests that the underlying tensions of recognition and ownership of identity narratives were only set aside during the period of crisis. A consistent theme has been the ultimate goal of national unity and an imagined nationhood that includes the *Geração Foun*. Art produced since the crisis context has demonstrated this through symbolic representations of aspects of the reconceptualised *fumu*. There is positive identification with the new struggle—specifically the desire for economic development, peace and national unity—but not without underlining the shortcomings of the Generation of ‘75.

THE REDEFINED STRUGGLE: PAINTING FOR PROSPERITY AND PEACE ON THE WALLS

Having experienced a degree of cultural alienation from the nation-state since 2002, a common complaint of the younger generation is that their contributions to the former struggle for independence have been overlooked, and that they made great sacrifices for their nation that should be recognised. The disillusionment felt by many younger East Timorese has been further exacerbated by the limited opportunities in terms of employment, financial security, and future prospects that the post-independence state has offered them. Yet, testament to the power of the concept of *funu* in processes of identification, young artists continue to use this trope in their personal expressions of national identity. Imaginings of the redefined, figurative struggle is more inclusive in nature than commemorations of the former fight for independence. Thus, the reconceptualised *funu* is a key aspect of the parent culture with which the majority of the *Geração Foun* publicly and symbolically identifies. They have represented their position on the new struggle, which they understand as one that is specifically against the socio-economic and political challenges that they have faced since self-determination.

The issue of economic development and creating better prospects for the future is a broad area of consensus among the East Timorese population, and one aspect of the redefined struggle that directly relates to the socio-economic situation of the *Geração Foun*. As the following example outlines, there is a belief that ‘every man deserve [sic] to earn, every child deserve to learn, each and everyone deserve to earn’ (Fig. 7.1). This image illustrates the street artists’ preference for using bright colours in their work, and the focus of the piece is the text. This short statement is telling of motivations behind the piece; the repetition of the words ‘every’ and ‘earn’ emphasise the belief in equal opportunities for all, including younger people. Contextualised within the socio-economic position of the *Geração Foun* in the post-independence state and their limited prospects, it is implied that within the first decade of independence this has not been the case. Though there are minor errors of grammar, there is an evident knowledge of English and even an application of rhyme (‘earn’ and ‘learn’), suggesting that this is an educated, creative, and politically aware voice.

Framed within a positive message of equality of opportunity, this piece demonstrates the tension at the heart of youth subcultures. While the message agrees with state discourses on the need for

Fig. 7.1 An aerosol piece reading ‘every man deserve to earn, every child deserve to learn, each and every one deserve to earn’

economic development, an implicit criticism is made. In the context of high unemployment rates specifically for the younger *Geração Foun* in the new state, a significant proportion of the population has not been given these opportunities. Interestingly, there is a small image of a man with dreadlocks in the centre, a symbol which the artists use to represent peace. As one explained,

Tamba nee hanesan popular iba Timor, hanesan “dreadlocks,” tamba hanesan hatudu simbulu hanesan “symbol peace” nian ba ema hotu iba Timor. Bainhira ema hare “dreadlocks” ema deban sira hanesan la duni, sira la gosta halo problema. Hanesan ema “peace”. (personal interview 2012)¹¹

¹¹‘It’s very popular in Timor, like “dreadlocks” because it’s like it shows a symbol, his “symbol peace” to all the people of Timor. When people see dreadlocks people say, “they don’t seem bad, they don’t like to create problems.” They’re like “peace” people’.

The graffiti's statement of belief in the right of all to be educated and work implicitly critiques the state that has neglected the *Geração Foun* in these areas in the first decade of independence. However, accompanied by the image of dreadlocks as a symbol of peace, the criticism is somewhat softened.

Economic advancement and employment opportunities are at the fore of the imaginary of the younger generation in relation to the contemporary struggle and nation-building, and not just for street artists. Ego Lemos, a famous East Timorese singer-songwriter, former member of the student resistance movement and a member of the *Geração Foun*, has articulated this sentiment as follows:

Most of generation *foun* are still unhappy about the way they've been treated. Firstly, *concerning opportunities, I think they've been left out* – nobody thought about what they could contribute after independence. Secondly, it's about language, it is still a big barrier [...] we had no chance to learn like those who lived abroad. (cited in Jolliffe 2011)

This criticism of the state underlines the seriousness of the generation gap and the alienation that has been felt by many since 2002. The gravity of this particular social division is significant, and popular grievances with the way in which the Generation of '75 has led the first decade of independence are reflected in the messages on the walls. Yet the way in which this issue is alluded to in street art is often positive. The inherent need to interact with the parent culture is evidenced but rather than entrench the gap further, the *Geração Foun* presents its ideas in a constructive way. As the following case studies will affirm, peaceful critique typifies East Timorese street art: it is used as a tool for contestation and symbolic conflict, but it is articulated in a positive way that suggests a desire for a peaceful resolution of their differences with the state.

Peace is one of the most common themes in street art in Timor-Leste (see Parkinson 2017). The above example from the 2006 project illustrates the incorporation of this key principle into street art, reflecting the rhetoric that has redefined the concept of the national struggle (Fig. 7.2).¹² Bright colours make the piece aesthetically appealing and

¹²This image from 2006 was kindly shared with me by the artists at Centro Arte Moris from their archives.

Fig. 7.2 Large piece in Dili from 2006, with the words ‘*domin* [love]’ and ‘*dame* [peace]’

the simple construction of short phrases enables an explicit dissemination of a clear message. The focus is entirely on the words ‘*dame*’ (peace) and ‘*domin*’ (love), reflecting the artists’ positive political viewpoint and the message of peace, love, and tolerance that the government sought to emit during the 2006 crisis. The reproduction of these ideals in street art across Dili since then, by both the same artists and anonymous individuals, illustrates how these members of the *Geração Foun* continue to identify with these values shared with the parent culture, understood to be the goals of the new, ongoing national struggle.

In their calls for peace, the ideas of inclusivity and unity are evident as pertinent issues for a marginalised younger generation. These are aspects of the parent culture that are also shared, since national unity is a key aim of nation-building and a goal of the continued national *fumu*. Pieces of street art facilitate an explicit dissemination of a simple message as a result of the technique’s focus on text. References to peace, unity,

Fig. 7.3 A faded piece on a wall reads '*Kria dame Hamutuk ida deit* [Create peace, together only one]'

and solidarity in pieces that state '*Kria dame, Hamutuk ida deit* [create peace, together only one],'*Timor ida deit* [only one Timor],'*Hametin unidade* [strengthen unity],'*Ita ida deit* [we are only one]' are significant markers of the young street artists' desire for national unity (Fig. 7.3). While the phrases are short and simple, in a context of high levels of illiteracy, symbols of peace—such as the dove, the national flag, the original CND sign, cartoon hearts, and out-stretched hands—are also included in much street art to communicate the sentiment of the message. The range of vocabulary used is limited but highly effective because of the fact: there is repetition and a consistent association of the word 'Timor' with notions of unity, togetherness, and strength in inclusion. Since these messages are similar in nature and have been painted across the walls of the capital city and beyond, the same sentiment will be communicated to a wider audience. This serves to strengthen the potential communicative and symbolic power of street art to unify a

diverse collective under shared ideals and imaginings of the nation. The representation of peace and calls for national unity further demonstrate the ways in which the younger generation identifies with these aims of the redefined *funnu*, defined by the Generation of '75. Implicitly, calls for national unity also suggest that more inclusivity in nation-building is still needed and in order to attain this, the generational divide must be addressed.

The importance of national unity for the *Geração Foun* is further underlined by the strategic language choices made in the graffiti (Arthur 2015). The use of Tetun in street art makes the messages accessible to both the older and younger generations and could itself be seen as a unifying force. While Tetun is not as yet fully standardised, it is an official state language and is the most widely used language common to both generational groups.¹³ The way in which these Tetun phrases are constructed emphasises the message of inclusion and invokes a sense of togetherness through the use of a collective 'we'—*ita*. This choice of pronoun is deliberate: *ita* is the subject pronoun for the first person plural and is employed because it is familiar and implied inclusivity. The alternative pronoun for 'we' in Tetun is '*ami*,' which implies exclusivity and is used to address someone from outside of the in-group (Hull 1999, p. 6). Samuel Gyasi Obeng highlights that this is a graffiti technique used across the world: 'graffitists [...] use inclusive and exclusive pronouns – *we, us, our, they, them, and their* – [...] to show closeness or co-membership' (Obeng 2000, p. 342). This inclusive language has been chosen to illustrate the *Geração Foun*'s desire for membership in the nation from which it has been excluded, as well as the unity that is integral to their vision of the future of the national community (Arthur 2015, p. 54).

Since Portuguese vocabulary has become a strong component in the Tetun language (Leach 2003, p. 140), it is not surprising that Portuguese

¹³The East Timorese government endorsed the enactment of the 'Standard Orthography of the Tetum Language' and established the Institute of National Linguistics to further the standardisation of Tetun and promote other East Timorese regional languages (see RDTL 2004; Leach 2017, pp. 154–155). While this and other ongoing projects continue to work on the Tetun vernacular, the configuration of the language is of a sufficiently high level for it to be universally understood and practically used in everyday life (in the media, such as newspapers, television etc.). Interestingly, there have been beginner's courses, textbooks, and learning resources for Tetun language published in recent years for English speakers and non-native Tetun speakers (for example, see Manhitu 2016).

Fig. 7.4 Large piece in Dili, painted in 2006

words for ideas of peace, unity, and solidarity also feature in in street art. For example, the words ‘*paz* [peace]’, ‘*livre* [free],’ ‘*unidade* [unity]’, and ‘*stabilidade* [stability]’ are incorporated alongside some Tetun equivalents in the piece pictured above (Fig. 7.4). Bright colours are once again used in this example, including the prominent red, yellow and black of the national flag. Accompanying the central image of the dove are stencils of numerous open hands and the outline of a cartoon heart, representing the many members of the community and a sense of love. Speaking about this particular piece from the 2006 project, an artist outlined the centrality communicating messages of peace at the time:

Ida nee, ami halo uluk iba 2006. Uluk iba neba iba problema boot entre “East-West.” Entao, ami halo ida nee kona ba lian foun nebe mak iba nia “connection” ho domin, ho dame, ho livre nian, ho paz. Hanesan mee manu

semo livre [...] konecta ho politika tamba tempu iha neba iha problema boot.
(personal interview 2012)¹⁴

Concepts of peace and freedom are represented by the image of the dove, with its wings outspread, and unity is an idea that is frequently referenced in East Timorese street art, as we have seen. However, references to stability are less common and its presence in this piece is perhaps reflective of its origins in the 2006 Crisis. Nonetheless, this piece is an example of street art that has been preserved and not replaced or removed, perhaps reflecting the timelessness and continued social relevance of its message.

In terms of language use, the incorporation of Portuguese vocabulary is noteworthy as is precisely this exogenous language and a Luso-European cultural-linguistic heritage that have contributed to the alienation of the young generation in the first decade of nation-building. For the younger generation who hold no attachment to a Lusophone heritage, the Portuguese language is still foreign and in the early years of independence, only a third of the whole population had full competence in it (Taylor-Leech 2009, p. 15). Indeed, in the event of adopting an exogenous language, Bahasa Indonesia would be a more likely choice for the artists as an estimated 90% of their generational group speaks the language fluently (Leach 2003, p. 140). It is only through deconstructing and analysing the text of the pieces that we can better understand the motivations behind these language choices and how they relate to the generational divide, as the following example demonstrates.

The following piece incorporates Portuguese into its message and exemplifies the concept of code-mixing, or using more than one language in a given phrase (Fig. 7.5).¹⁵ This was painted in 2006 as part of the government-commissioned project and, although significantly

¹⁴‘This one, we did before in 2006. Before, then there was a big problem between East-West. So we did this one about a new language connected to love, to peace, to freedom, to peace. Like the dove flies free. [...] it is connected with politics because at that time there was a big problem’.

¹⁵‘Codeswitching and codemixing are defined as ‘the graffiti discourse participants switch from one language to another within the same sentence’ (Obeng 2000, pp. 360–361).

Fig. 7.5 A faded piece reads ‘*Paz no Dame*’, the Portuguese and Tetun words for ‘peace’

faded, it was not removed from this wall six years later. In this example the Portuguese word ‘*paz*’ is used in tandem with its corresponding Tetun term, ‘*dame*,’ despite the fact that they share the same meaning (peace). Speaking about this particular piece, one street artist agreed, “‘*paz*,’ ‘*dame*.’ It’s the same’ (personal interview 2012).¹⁶ It is important to note that ‘*paz no dame*,’ or ‘*halo dame*,’ are terms commonly used to refer reconciliation ceremonies across Timor-Leste, and are a means of conflict resolution at a local level (see Simião 2005).¹⁷ However, during my discussion with the artist, who painted this piece in 2006 with colleagues from the Centro Arte Moris, the cultural reference to the reconciliation ceremony was not indicated. He only mentioned the words used, their meaning of peace, and their relevance to

¹⁶Interview and transcript in English.

¹⁷I would like to thank Kelly da Silva for bringing this point to my attention.

the political situation in Timor-Leste. The omission of a reference to the reconciliation ceremonies is noteworthy, and further underlines the focus on words and language. The presentation of the words and their aesthetic construction is telling of perceptions of status with regards the respective cultural-linguistic heritages.

Three main reasons explain the use of both Portuguese and Tetun in street art in this way, each demonstrating a participation in a wider symbolic conflict for a share in ownership of the sources of legitimacy of nationhood (see Leach 2002). First, a balanced selection of words from the two languages presents an understanding of equal status between them. Portuguese is not privileged above Tetun and, therefore, the cultural-linguistic heritage of one generation is not given any more authority than the other, countering claims that Portuguese is associated with prestige and high social status (Wigglesworth 2016, p. 96). From this perspective, there is equality given to both generation's cultural background, thus removing questions over the legitimacy of the *Geração Foun*'s claims to 'true' East Timorese-ness. Second, the use of both languages facilitates a sense of unity through visual communication that transcends the cultural-linguistic differences that characterise the generation gap. Adopting aspects of the language that had previously contributed to their cultural alienation, the artists suggest that a dialogue with the older generation is possible. Third, the appropriation of Portuguese vocabulary by the younger generation can be seen as a claim in ownership of this source of symbolic capital, and an attempt to legitimise their visions for the future of Timor-Leste. The *Geração Foun*'s message is transmitted through Portuguese and thus validated in the established paradigm of legitimacy through the heritage of the Generation of '75.

While an attempt to overcome the generational divide has been demonstrated in the graffiti advocating peace and unity, East Timorese street art equally critiques the domination of the nation-building project by the Generation of '75, both in terms of cultural heritage and commemorations of their contribution to the liberation struggle. This monopolisation of cultural and political sources of symbolic capital has been implicitly presented as counter-productive to nation-building. Indeed, the absolute precedence given to the former struggle stands in contrast to dominant discourses of peace and stability that have typified the later years of independence. The characteristic tension of youth subcultures is again highlighted on this point; while street art has been used to commemorate the liberation struggle and its heroes (see

Fig. 7.6 A small, faded graffiti in Dili, reading ‘*Timor nia kultura laos funu maibe dame* [Timorese culture is not war but peace]’

Arthur 2016), much recent art has also focused on a peaceful future of Timor-Leste.

The following example of graffiti is a particularly strong statement, suggesting criticism of the way that the liberation struggle has been valorised above all else in nation-building thus far. There are no images to accompany the text, placing the sole focus on the message: ‘*Timor nia kultura laos funu maibe dame* [Timorese culture is not war but peace]’ (Fig. 7.6). Even at a most superficial level, this piece contests the identity narratives that have been institutionalised by the state, and which are explicitly centred on the concept of *funu*. This statement is powerful within the context of the generational divide, permeated by the elevation of one generation’s contributions to the struggle to the exclusion of another’s. By refuting the idea that East Timorese-ness is founded on the struggle, this piece suggests a rejection of a primary contributing factor to the alienation of the *Geração Foun* and thus to the generational divide.

If the youth and student factions of the resistance to Indonesia are to be overlooked and overshadowed by the Falintil, then a rejection of the concept of *funu* in its militaristic sense would remove one of the most exclusive parts of nation-building so far. The message implies that its author see her/himself as a true advocate of peace and unity within the national community and genuinely concerned with these aspects of nation-building, in contrast to an older generation of resistance leaders who have been too preoccupied with a memorialisation of the past.

The language choice in this example is also telling of a political viewpoint and an implicit critique of the older generation, underlining the function of street art as a site of symbolic conflict. Indeed, it is the language employed in graffiti that makes it truly subversive and consequently, language choice is always deliberate. As J. Normann Jørgensen notes, 'languages have not been chosen at random, but have been chosen because of the stereotypical values more or less ascribed to them, as well as the connotations carried by the individual words' (Jørgensen 2008, p. 247). In this piece, the street artists deliberately employ Tetun (and use no Portuguese) because of the specific connotations of certain words in the context of the post-independence state. The Tetun word '*funu*' has been absolutely central to East Timorese nationalism and the word itself is inescapably linked to official notions of legitimacy and state-sanctioned symbolic capital. Thus, when the artist painted the word *funu* on the wall, (s)he was not only negating the word and its literal meaning but also the institutionalised narratives that have rendered imaginings of nationhood so exclusive. The decision not to include any Portuguese in this piece demonstrates a rejection of the Lusophone aspects of this nationalism, and distances the *Geração Foun* from the Lusophone heritage of the older generation (Arthur 2015, p. 62).

In this way, the above example underlines the tension that is at the heart of the East Timorese subculture. Through language, this piece demonstrates the desire of the younger generation to resolve the contradictions of the parent culture but it also expounds their desire to identify with and claim ownership of an evolving post-independence nationalism. By moving the focus of nationalism from the past struggle against Indonesia, in which the younger generation's participation is largely overlooked, the *Geração Foun* emphasises the contemporary, figurative struggle which is more inclusive. A future-oriented perspective that moves on from a history of *funu* suggests that the younger generation imagines a national identity that differs significantly from

that of their fellow East Timorese, and that is inherently peaceful. One artist explained: ‘[*iha*] *pasado, iha violencia. Agora importante tamba iha futuru barak, hanesan, labarik kiik presisa aprende paz no domin husi ema boot. Entao nee importante tebes iha Timor*’ (personal interview 2012).¹⁸ By shifting their focus away from the militant struggle of the past in favour of peace and prosperity, the younger generation promotes this reconceptualised aspect of an evolving national identity that is more inclusive than commemorations of the past. Moreover, they are able to present themselves as highly eligible candidates to lead this new struggle for peace, precisely because they do not belong to the older, resistance-era generation.

Through their art, members of the *Geração Foun* present themselves as the true advocates of peace and unity and affirm their contribution to the new struggle for stability, peace, and prosperity. They recognise their responsibility as members of the national community in this effort, and have demonstrated this consciousness in much of the street art in Dili. The following example is an explicit recognition of the need for a determined effort in the process of peace-building and of their responsibility in the struggle; ‘*dame hahu husi hau* [peace starts with me]’ (Fig. 7.7).¹⁹ The assertion that peace must begin with the individual implies an awareness of the role that the younger generation has in the process of nation-building, which is centred round peace and development in dominant political discourse. Chris Parkinson, who has worked with many East Timorese youth artists, affirms that the *Geração Foun* recognises its role in this process: ‘they are always thinking and, with humility, understand their role as advocates for peace and harmony in the country’ (Parkinson cited in Storey 2013). Unlike other pieces of street art that were painted with a specific audience in mind, this example is more personal and self-reflective. It could have been painted with the intention of encouraging other to recognise the responsibility that each member of the national community shares but if not, this piece exemplifies the most fundamental characteristics of graffiti: a lone voice that uses public

¹⁸‘[in] the past there was violence. Now it’s important because the future is big, like, small children need to learn peace and love from adults. So it’s really important in Timor’.

¹⁹Interestingly, the Tetun word for peace, ‘*dame*’, is used here, rather than the Portuguese ‘*paz*’, which has previously been employed. The artist, whose message is self-reflective in nature and acknowledges a responsibility to foster peace in the nation, has turned to her/his native tongue to articulate this idea.

Fig. 7.7 A large-scale piece near to port in Dili states ‘*Dame hahu husi hau* [peace starts with me]’

spaces and walls for expression, in the absence of a more official platform (Jørgensen 2008, p. 250).

The street art movement in Timor-Leste originated from the most turbulent period of the post-independence years, during which there was a significant international presence. The artists demonstrate an awareness of an international audience of their art in their use of English text. The presence of an international UN staff, journalists, and Australian peace-keeping forces in the early years of self-determination perhaps instigated the decision to include messages in English in their pieces. The following examples reflect this desire of the younger generation to identify as real advocates of peace to the international community through their messages in English (Fig. 7.8). The references to ‘make art not war’ and ‘*Vive la arte*’ (as opposed to cries of ‘*Viva Falintil*’ and ‘*Viva Fretilin*’ that characterise political rallies and speeches) are indicative of key distinctions made by the younger generation. Adapting the

Fig. 7.8 A piece at the Centro Arte Moris (Dili), featuring a stencil portrait of Bob Marley, an aerosol spray image of a tank, and the words 'Make art not war'

famous refrain from the anti-war protests of the 1960s and the song 'War' by Edwin Starr, the young graffitiists advocate peace through their primary medium of expression and identity representation. This example illustrates how the *Geração Foun* distinguishes itself from the Generation of '75 and its ideas of 'true' East Timorese-ness, overbearingly based on *funu* and war. Parkinson outlines:

You ask a number if East Timorese advocates and artists and they're tired of the 'poor East Timor a nation in conflict' tag. They want to show an international audience what else the country has to offer and want to share a new story of resilience and development, with art as a cornerstone of transmitting this. (cited in Storey 2013)

Presenting themselves as unofficial spokespeople, the young artists can represent their nation as they see it, not as one defined solely by struggle and conflict. In order to get this message across to a wider, international audience—and overcoming the challenge of no real platform to speak out—street art messages are deliberately communicated through English.

The themes of peace and an opposition to conflict are expounded by the juxtaposition of military images (the spray-painted tank) with a symbolic representation of a man with dreadlocks (reminiscent of Bob Marley), which the artists associate directly with peace. One artist explained that in Timor-Leste dreadlocks, Bob Marley and his music are all perceived as positive visual signs in Timor-Leste: '*nee hanesan simbulu ba dame nian, Bob Marley. Hanesan nia obin, hanesan ho nia fuuk, simbulu ba dame nian*' (personal interview 2012).²⁰ Indeed, his name image is also painted in street art and is frequently represented alongside phrases of peace and citing song lyrics such as 'one love' which are, again, in English (Fig. 7.9). The image of Marley in this example is highly reminiscent of the album artwork of *One Love: The Very Best of Bob Marley* (2001), suggesting that this was the inspiration for the piece. The colours used in the background of this piece are red, gold, green, and black of the Rastafarian flag, popularised by reggae artists like Bob Marley and Peter Tosh (Joyce 1991, pp. 543–545). Interestingly, there are two smaller stencils of men with dreadlocks that accompany the main portrait of Marley. It is worth noting that almost every single

²⁰'It's like he is a symbol of peace, Bob Marley. Like his face and his hair, he is symbol of peace'.

Fig. 7.9 Bob Marley's likeness is painted on a wall at Arte Moris, accompanied by the words 'peace' and 'one love'; the red, gold, green and black of the Rastafarian flag; and two smaller stencils of men with dreadlocks

artist with whom I spoke during my fieldwork wore dreadlocks; in this example, it is almost as if the artists have painted self-portraits to directly identify themselves, as individuals, with the sentiment behind Marley's music and ideas of peace and unity. Music is a further primary cultural product of youth subcultures and often goes hand-in-hand with street art movements. In this case, the young artists utilise symbols, colours, and figures from popular reggae music that they associate with peace and incorporate them into an artistic reaction to the dominant culture of East Timorese society, which has been characterised by the glorification of the armed liberation struggle.

Such street art symbolically represents an identification with the reconceptualised national struggle for peace and prosperity as part of the dominant parent culture, presenting this stance to the international community. By implying that they are the true advocates of peace and unity in this new fight, the tension of youth subcultures rooted in a criticism of the older generation is again brought to light. The *Geração Foun* identifies as true East Timorese in accordance with official narratives through street art, but not without highlighting the shortcomings of the older generation.

CONCLUSION

As a product of youth subcultures, street art can provide insight into the values, attitudes and identities of those members of younger generations who wish to contest the dominant culture of their societies. An examination of the street art in a state can offer great insight into the identities, opinions, and grievances of those without an official platform or access to sources of power and legitimacy. Though often illicit and unofficial in nature, this symbolic form should be included in studies of nation-building as it provides a fuller picture than analyses of official symbols alone.

Yet street art in Timor-Leste differs from other cases in which graffiti is considered to be inherently subversive and illicit. The project of art commissioned by the East Timorese government in 2006 suggests that the state not only recognised the pre-existing importance of graffiti as a communicative tool, but that artists of the *Geração Foun* were willing to collaborate with the political élite, rendering their work less subversive. The 2006 project demonstrates how discourses of democratic values and development were disseminated through an alternative medium and indicates broad consensus on the redefined nature of the national *funu* at a grassroots level, as well as that of the political élite.

Nonetheless, theories of youth subcultures are useful in elucidating the tension between identifying with aspects of the dominant parent culture and simultaneously challenging it. Indeed, the marginalisation and cultural alienation that the *Geração Foun* has thus far experienced in the new nation-state have provided great incentive for the younger generation to challenge aspects of nation-building, led by members of the Generation of '75. By utilising street art as a platform for expression, the younger generation of East Timorese are able to both identify with its parent culture and challenge its limitations. The focus on text in 'pieces' of graffiti have demonstrated the ways in which language choices reflect this tension, through the employment of the lingua-franca Tetun and the more unfamiliar Portuguese, primarily associated with the older generation.

The language choices and content of the messages emitted in street art demonstrate how youth identity is rooted in the parent culture to an extent, in order to legitimise claims to membership of the national community. By emphasising the new struggle for peace and prosperity, the younger generation of East Timorese move the focus of national identification away from the resistance era as the sole source of symbolic capital. Given that the youth organizations and participation of the *Geração Foun* in the past struggle against Indonesia has been overlooked in official narratives, the desire to firmly establish their position in the contemporary, figurative fight is understandable. Any questions over the legitimacy of their claims to membership of the nation are pre-empted and, further, criticisms are made of the older generation that seem to fall short of the responsibilities felt in fight for freedom from poverty. If street art is understood as an important social tool, rather than simply a sign of subversion, then progress can be made in better understanding identity construction for the *Geração Foun* and how they view their position in the national community.

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PART IV

Conclusion

Conclusion

Nations and nationalism are as much an integral part of our everyday lives as they are to scholarly studies of politics and international relations. It is impossible to imagine the world without nations and we imagine them through the symbols that represent them: flags, monuments, national heroes, and creative symbolic forms that articulate notions of identity and nationhood. As nations exist through imaginings of common identities, histories, and heritages, symbols facilitate this process. The symbolic representation of nations and national identities is therefore a crucial component of nation-building, albeit one that is often overshadowed in scholarship by processes of state-building, institutions, and policy matters.

This study has sought to shed light on the critical role of political symbols in nation-building and national identity formation, particularly in post-colonial, post-conflict contexts. Taking case studies of symbols in Timor-Leste, it has outlined how different symbolic forms facilitate imaginings of nationhood and foster a sense of commonality and unity within national communities. Yet the symbols analysed here have also demonstrated that constructing national identities is not a straightforward process: large, diverse communities of people inevitably have differing ideas about what exactly defines their identity. This often leads to symbolic conflicts, which emerge in processes of national identity formation for a number of reasons. There may be divergent imaginings of 'true' nationhood within the community, or there may exist a

consensus on tenets of identity but disputes and contests over who owns the symbolic capital they retain. Context is also of vital importance to the potency of symbols and their meanings for nations. Old symbols can simply be replaced, or can take on new symbolic meanings with changing political circumstances. The significance of the latter is heightened in ‘young’, post-colonial or post-conflict nation-states, where contexts of violence or peace can drastically alter how people interpret and identify with key identity symbols.

This analysis of identity construction and representation in post-conflict Timor-Leste has presented numerous examples of symbolic conflicts, as well as the ability of symbols to inculcate national unity. From state-sanctioned flags and monuments to home-made memorials and grassroots pieces of graffiti, political symbols that reflect an East Timorese national identity are of crucial importance to the life of the nation. By tracing the construction of East Timorese nationalism and a collective identity in this young nation-state, we can better understand how similar processes take place in other ‘new’ nations. The selection of key political symbols examined in this book—flags, monuments, national heroes, and street art—is offered as a guide for analyses of national identity formation in other states in similar transitional circumstances. Moreover, the findings of this book can be used to inform how we view ‘older’ nations that have experienced similar processes in the past. Retrospective analyses of identity construction are possible by examining similar symbols and the contexts in which they were created. Contextualised by histories of such older nations, the symbolic meanings of such symbols reveal much in terms of state narratives of identity and official notions of nationhood from the past. Reflecting on these historical symbolic meanings, studies of contemporary nationalisms will gain a much richer understanding of how identities have evolved and developed throughout history. While this book presents one case study of a small nation, it brings together the most important symbols that are commonly used to sustain collective identification in national communities throughout the world, and provides a framework with which to analyse these symbols of identity in more depth.

The processes of nation-building and national identity construction in Timor-Leste exemplify how all national identities evolve and continually undergo a process of (re)construction, (re)interpretation, and (re)invention. In essence, an East Timorese national identity is imagined as one based on the core tenets of *funu* (struggle) and *ternu* (suffering) in the

name of self-determination. These concepts have proven flexible enough to withstand the test of time and to adapt to the changing circumstances of the national community and continually provide a locus of common identification. While Mauberism was initially a potent basis for national identification during the struggle for independence, it has not endured in the same way because of partisan associations of the past; it is integral to an historic identity but for the future generations of East Timorese to come, the more malleable concepts of struggle and suffering are more adaptable to contemporary collective values and ideals. The way in which this identity has been constructed reflects how national narratives emphasise such adaptable and universal concepts to enable a sense of unity, fraternity and common heritage among a diverse national community. Indeed, Timor-Leste has never been ethnically homogenous and numerous ethnic and language groups across the country (Anderson 2001, pp. 233–239). In order to sustain national unity, contemporary state narratives have highlighted common experiences and concepts that transcend social divisions to strike a chord with all members and evoke a sense of affinity and solidarity in the nation. The national symbols that have been created to represent the various notions of ‘East Timorese-ness’ are powerful visual signs of national identity and provide great insight into the imaginings of national communities.

The historic character of the East Timorese people is imagined as one with an exceptional capacity to withstand great trials and suffering for independence, encapsulated in the concepts of *funu* and *ternu*. As the chapters of this book have demonstrated, this character is embodied in various symbolic forms. Flags are a primary example of representative symbols across the world, and their potency is further emphasised in Timor-Leste, where flags are considered to be *lulik* (sacred) and constitute markers of authority and power in the specific cultural context. The East Timorese national flag and the Fretilin party flag are exemplars of symbols that commemorate the national past and enshrine the history of the nation in their symbolisms. Moreover, popular interpretations of these flags in a post-conflict, post-independence context affirms their flexible nature and the ways in which new meanings can continually be given to, and taken from symbols of identity according to the needs of the collective. Monuments provide a further category of national identity symbols that are flexible and open to interpretation and appropriation, giving them significant power in the maintenance of national identities. Indeed, the integrationist monuments that were ‘donated’ by the

Suharto regime and constructed to demonstrate Timor-Leste's assimilation in the Indonesian state are now imagined to retain symbolic meanings that absolutely contradict an integrationist ideology. These statues have been reinterpreted in the post-independence state through official notions of East Timorese nationalism and have subsequently been appropriated by the East Timorese nation-state as powerful markers of *funu* and *terus*.

Official narratives that are constructed round an 'occupied-occupier' paradigm thus attribute great symbolic capital to symbols and heroes that are imagined to embody and represent the identity and character of the nation. This book has developed the existing theories of national heroes by highlighting the similar role they have to symbols in national identification. Symbols give form to abstractions of a national identity and hero-figures personify or embody them, providing the national community with an exemplar and the epitome of a patriot. By examining national heroes within this particular theoretical framework, the role of hero-figures in unifying and inspiring a nation becomes clearer and contributes to a fuller analysis of national identity formation. The visual and symbolic representations of heroes and legends are crucial to sustaining popular belief in their importance to a collective identity, and their symbolic capital provides political actors with a significant source of legitimacy when appropriated and mobilised.

Through the visual representation of national heroes, or the way in which popular leaders present themselves, connections can be made to core concepts of nationalism in the popular imaginings. Like symbols, national heroes emit symbolic meanings and, in turn, are interpreted and given symbolic meanings by members of the national community. Moreover, I have demonstrated that it is useful to incorporate theories of charismatic leadership in a study of national heroes to account for popular leaders who could potentially be the celebrated national heroes of the future. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão exemplifies the way in which a contemporary leader presents himself to the nation in such a way as to embody aspects of the national character. The visual representation of Gusmão as the Falintil commander and a modern-day freedom fighter evoke ideas of the national struggle and suffering for the cause of self-determination. In this way, Xanana can be seen to embody the core tenets of *funu* and *terus*; just as Dom Boaventura is understood to be the original embodiment of an indigenous, anti-colonial fight for independence. Yet Xanana Gusmão is not solely associated with the former

national liberation movement and, in a post-conflict post-independence context, he has adapted the way in which he presents himself to coincide with the changing needs and values of the East Timorese people.

The socio-economic and political conditions of the post-independence state have directly influenced the way in which the East Timorese nation collectively identifies. The transition from a state of brutal occupation to self-determination, and the ongoing nation-building project has impacted on the process of identification and highlighted the changing needs, ideals, values and hopes of the national community. In order to sustain a national identity and traditions, repetition is essential; the repeated use of national symbols and recounting of national historical narratives (in traditional ceremonies, public holidays, school textbooks, museums and heritage sites, the media, and oral traditions) will ensure that an East Timorese national identity and its symbols are preserved (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2013, pp. 1–4). The core tenets of *funu* and *terus* will continue to be reinterpreted, as they have been in political party flags that invoke the new struggle for peace and prosperity as the fruits of true self-determination, as demonstrated at a state level in the 2012 coalition government's symbols. At a grassroots level, the reconceptualised national struggle is echoed in the street art examined in the final chapter, providing an example of unconventional political symbolism that concurs with official notions of nationalism. This chapter has highlighted the vital role of street art and graffiti in identity representation for younger generations and suggests that as such, this symbolic medium of expression should be included in studies of national identity, though it is often omitted.

As the process of state- and nation-building continues in the post-independence state, the role of symbols of identity will remain of the same critical importance. However, the way in which identity and the symbols are interpreted will change as the life of the nation and its politics in Timor-Leste evolve. It is entirely possible that there will be changes in processes of identification, as the needs and aspirations of the national community also change. With the passing of time, the older generation of resistance leaders will leave power and a younger generation of politicians will come to the fore, continuing the state- and nation-building projects that have begun. Though parliamentary election campaigns since 2012 have continued to be centred on the symbolic capital of the resistance era and its leadership, the gains in seats that have been made by political parties that represent a younger electorate, such

as the Partido Democrático and Enrich the National Unity of the Sons of Timor, or *Khunto*, indicates a shift in power may be on the horizon (Aspinall et al. 2018). Indeed, in recent years the political party Khunto has significantly expanded its support base and could become a serious contender as a primary representative of younger East Timorese voters (see Aspinall et al. 2018; Strating 2018).

A further factor to consider in the ongoing trajectory of nation-building is the migration patterns that have developed since the return to independence in 2002. In the face of numerous social divisions and political challenges, a core unifying concept is that of the homeland—the sacred *Rai Timor* (the Land of Timor). The land, imbued with spiritual potency and *lulik*, is sacralised: cosmologically as the source of spiritual potency, and politically as the goal of the revered national liberation struggle (McWilliam and Traube 2011; Traube 1986; Bovensiepen 2015). It is therefore noteworthy that many thousands of East Timorese—of a population of just over one million—have left their homeland so soon after achieving self-determination, and have even been encouraged to emigrate by the government through labour migration schemes, outlined in the National Employment Strategy (RDTL 2017). While the migration destinations specified by the government are members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), an estimated 16–19,000 East Timorese have migrated to the United Kingdom (Wigglesworth 2016; Wigglesworth and Boxer 2017). Of particular interest is the fact that there is a marked generational aspect to the migration patterns; the majority of migrant workers leaving Timor-Leste in recent years belong to the *Geração Foun* (the ‘new generation’). This raises significant questions about the success of nation-building thus far, and how these migrants engage in imaginings of identity and belonging from such a great distance from the homeland.

Regardless of space and time, the role of symbols in sustaining national imagined communities remains the same. Symbols will always be powerful, uniting diverse people across great distances in imaginings of a shared past, culture, and heritage. They have been central to the lives of nations throughout history, the emblem under and for which millions of people across the world have lived and died. Symbols and their meanings give great insight into how nations are imagined, how people identify, and what enables political unity and organisation on such a vast scale. In order to better understand nations, organisations, or any type of political

collective, it is vital that we look at their symbols and what they mean. Thus, symbols will always be the keyhole through which we can understand and see how large communities of people identify as kin.

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GLOSSARY

<i>Aman</i>	father
<i>Adat</i>	custom
<i>Aswain</i>	warrior
<i>Azul</i>	blue
<i>Bandeira</i>	flag
<i>Bem-estar</i>	wellbeing
<i>Dame</i>	peace
<i>Dezenvolvimentu</i>	development
<i>Domin</i>	love
<i>Estabilidade</i>	stability
<i>Fitun</i>	star
<i>Foho</i>	mountain
<i>Funu</i>	war, struggle, fight
<i>Kiak</i>	poverty
<i>Ki'ik</i>	small, little
<i>Kinur</i>	yellow
<i>Lisan</i>	custom
<i>Liurai</i>	traditional king
<i>Lugu</i>	traditional table
<i>Lulik</i>	taboo, sacred, spiritually potent
<i>Mate</i>	dead, death
<i>Maun, mana</i>	brother, sister
<i>Mean</i>	red

Metan black

Mukit lacking

Mutin white

Paz peace

Povu people

Rai lulik sacred land

Sa'e go up

Tun go down

Terus suffering

Uma lulik traditional house, sacred house

INDEX

A

Adat, 249

Afghanistan, 178

Africa

anti-colonial movements in, 44

UN missions in, 173, 175

Aileu, 122

Ainaro, 122

Alkatiri, Mari, 24, 46, 63, 146, 192, 214

Amaral, Xavier do, 64, 119–123

Ancestors, ancestral spirits, 73, 80, 91, 92, 98, 109, 117, 124, 128

Anderson, Benedict, 1, 9, 12, 13, 20, 37, 74, 213, 243

Angola, 45, 46

Apodeti, 19

Area Branca, 81, 82

Arte Moris, 206, 212, 214, 224, 230, 232

Asian Development Bank, 192

Associação Social Democrata Timorense (ASDT), 24, 64, 119–124

leadership, 123

origins 1974, 2000, 121, 123

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), 179, 246

Aswain

historical figure, 78

statue, 75, 76, 82, 83

Australia, 126

Australian peace-keeping forces, 213, 229

B

Badame ritual, 162

Belo, Bishop Carlos Ximenes, 81, 82, 88, 109, 122

Bhabha, Homi, 2, 9, 179

Bourdieu, Pierre, 8, 16, 17, 41, 62, 107, 110

C

Carrascalão, Mário, 146

Catholic Church, 72, 80, 81, 84, 86, 89, 98

and resistance, 72, 80, 84, 98

in Rome, 87

Catholicism, 80, 81, 83–86
and national identity, 83, 87
percentage of followers, 122

Charismatic leadership, 26, 110, 139, 244

China, 45

Civil war, 2, 19, 44

Clandestine resistance, 206

Codeswitching, 223

Cohen, Abner, 15, 51, 180

Cohen, Anthony P., 1, 15, 114

Colimau 2000, 41

Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor-Leste (CAVR), 6, 44

Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor-Leste (CNRT), 40, 58

flag, 60, 61, 173, 181–183, 193, 194, 196, 197

leadership, 138, 181–183

manifesto, 194

origins, 60, 61

Conselho Nacional de Resistência Maubere (CNRM), 183

Conselho Popular Demokrátiku (CPD)-RDTL, 41, 79

Constitution, 44, 54, 61

Cosmology, 3, 6, 80, 85, 91, 92, 98, 109, 124, 127
belief in ancestral spirits, 124
equilibrium of the cosmos, 85
land spirits, 98

Crisis, 2006, 23, 24, 63, 125, 131, 161, 193, 213, 219, 223

Cristo Rei, 81–86

Crocodile, 60
origin myth, 5, 109
symbols, 60

Cuba, 45, 156, 157

D

Death, 5, 50, 84, 85, 91, 114, 123–126, 130, 131, 156
burial rituals, 91
toll of the occupation, 5, 92, 131

Decolonization, 18, 20, 76, 139

Democracy, 22, 55, 156, 157, 172–174, 176–178, 180, 181, 186, 188, 189, 191, 193, 194, 196, 197, 203
elections, 178, 185, 189

Democratisation, 173–175, 177–179, 185, 190, 191, 194, 196, 197

Development, 3, 163, 172–180, 185–188, 191, 192, 194–197, 203, 228, 231, 233

Dili, 55–57, 64, 75, 76, 81–83, 86, 88, 120, 121, 126, 143, 151, 153, 155, 183, 205, 206, 209, 212–215, 219, 222, 226, 228–230

Dom Boaventura, 10, 26, 99, 108–110, 112–121, 123–132, 148, 244

Dreadlocks, 155, 217, 218, 231, 232

E

Economic
challenges, 90, 184, 196
development, 175, 185, 190, 192, 204, 215–217

Elections
campaigning, 119, 148
parliamentary 2002; 2007, 25, 40, 63, 64, 119, 151, 163, 181, 184, 185, 189, 192, 245
presidential 2002; 2007, 144

Employment, 24, 78, 190, 209, 216, 218, 234, 246

English (language), 183, 216, 229, 231

Enrich the National Unity of the Sons
of Timor. *See* *Khunto*

Ethnic groups, 10, 122

Ethno-cultural

heritage, 76, 92, 108, 116, 128,
129, 132, 188

identity, 113, 123, 143

European

colonialism, 76

Eastern, 178

F

*FALINTIL-Forças de Defesa
de Timor Leste* (F-FDTL), 23

Fanon, Frantz, 140

Flags

desecration, 62, 63

as *lulik* objects, 117

national flags, 45, 52, 53, 66

political party flags, 26, 172–174,
176, 183, 197, 245

Forças Armadas De Libertação

Nacional De Timor Leste

(Falintil), 7, 17, 23, 24, 49, 60,

62, 74, 76, 78, 79, 84, 89, 90,

92, 98, 112, 129, 137, 138, 145,

147, 148, 150, 151, 153, 154,

156, 158, 159, 162, 163, 181,

182, 184, 192, 208, 227, 229,

244

Foucault, Michel, 9, 11, 12, 179

Frente de Libertação de Moçambique

(FRELIMO), 45, 46

Frente de Reconstrução Nacional

de Timor-Leste – Mudança

(Frenti-Mudança)

flag, 173, 187

manifesto, 186

origins, 187

Frente Iba Timor Unidos Nafatin

(FITUN), 208

*Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste
Independente* (Fretilin)

flag, 25, 38, 39, 42, 44, 47, 50, 52,
62, 63

government, 19, 24, 55, 63, 64

leadership, 20, 39, 41

origins, 47

G

Gama, Paulino ‘Mauk Moruk’, 145

Gellner, Ernest, 8

Geracão Foun, 24, 26, 154, 203–210,

212, 215–219, 221, 225–228,

231, 233, 234, 246

Ghandi, Mahatma, 162

Governmentality, 9, 179

Graffiti, 126, 204, 209, 211, 212,

214, 218, 221, 225–228, 233,

234, 242, 245

Guerrilla, 23, 74, 78, 84, 92, 93, 129,

137, 138, 145, 153, 156, 158,

162, 181, 184

soldiers, 23

warfare, 162

Guevara, Ernesto ‘Ché’, 153–157, 161

Gusmão, Kay Rala Xanana, 21, 24–26,

52, 58, 63, 79, 116, 126, 138,

143–151, 153–165, 182–184,

213, 214, 244

H

Hall, Stuart, 210

Heroes

national heroes, 3, 26, 74, 78, 99,

107–113, 115, 118, 119, 124,

125, 131, 137, 139, 141, 147,

154, 155, 159, 164, 165, 241,

242, 244

redeemer-heroes, 140

Howard, John, 63

Hudi Laran group, 145

Human rights, 5, 90, 118, 176, 194
 abuses, 20, 83, 88
 in UN missions, 177, 194

I

Illiteracy, 26, 175, 194, 196, 220

Independence

ballot, 1999, 21, 26, 38, 50, 60, 92,
 116, 123, 138, 172, 174, 206
 declaration of, 1975, 46, 66, 173
 ‘Operation Clean Sweep’, 175
 restoration of, 2002, 21, 196
 Scorched Earth pogrom, 175

1999 independence ballot, 26, 38, 50,
 92, 116, 123, 138, 172, 174, 206

Indonesia

Bahasa Indonesia, 207, 223
 invasion, 38, 46, 48, 139, 143, 173
 militias, 48, 93

Institute of National Linguistics, 221

International

community, 37, 55, 83, 88, 95,
 178, 193, 214, 215, 229, 233
 media, 48, 83, 214
 peace-keeping, 229

International Monetary Fund (IMF),
 177, 192

Ireland, 84, 93

Islam, 81, 83

J

Jesus Christ, 72, 83–85

Justice, 88, 89, 92, 140, 162, 180,
 193
 traditional, 162
 transitional, 6

K

Khunto, 209, 246

Kingdoms (traditional), 10, 116, 128

King Jr., Martin Luther, 162

Kings (traditional), 10, 110, 115, 116,
 178. *See also* *Liurai*

Korda, Alberto, 156

L

Language, 1, 2, 4, 10, 37, 49, 61, 84,
 143, 157, 159, 177, 179, 192,
 193, 205–207, 218, 221, 223,
 225, 227, 234, 243

and the Church, 86, 89

policy, 6

Liga dos Estudantes Patriotas (LEP),
 208

Literacy, 3

and education, 3

rates, 3

Liurai, 10, 11, 110, 114–117, 121,
 123, 127, 130, 131, 178

Lobato, Nicolau, 123

Lugu, 191, 192, 194, 197

Lulik, 38, 73, 74, 78, 80, 91, 98, 117,
 129, 132, 187, 188, 243, 246

M

Manatuto, 122, 143

Mandela, Nelson, 144, 161, 162

Manufahi, 11, 113, 114, 116, 121,
 123, 127–129

kingdom, 11, 116, 128, 129

region, 116

Marley, Bob, 155, 230–233

Massacre

Liquica, 93

Santa Cruz, 94, 95

sites, 87, 89

Suai, 93

Maubere, Mauberism, 19–22, 158,
 159, 243

Memorials, 3, 25, 72, 73, 78, 79, 89,
 91–94, 96, 242

Liquica, 93

Suai, 93
Merah Putih, 48, 49, 51, 93
 Metinaro Heroes Garden, 79
 Migration, 246
 Military
 fatigues, 129, 143, 147, 153, 155, 156, 163
 forces, 126
 leaders, 143
 Militia, 51, 93
 Indonesian militias, 116
 intimidation, 206. *See also* 1999
 independence ballot
 violence, 116
 Monuments
 Aswain, 74–76, 78, 81, 86
 Cristo Rei, 81, 83
 John Paul II, 72, 86
 Santa Cruz, 83, 94, 98
Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), 46
 Mozambique, 45, 46
 Murals, 155, 211

N

Nation of Graffiti Artists (NOGA), 211
 Nepotism, 145, 165
 Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), 94, 176, 190, 215

O

Organizasaun Popular da Joventude Louriku Assuain de Timor Leste (OPJLATIL), 208

P

Pancasila, 81
 Partido Democrático (PD), 58, 173, 185, 189, 191, 246

flag, 55, 190, 191, 193, 194
 ideology, 185
 Petitioners' strike, 23
 Pope John Paul II, 72, 86–89
 Portuguese, 4, 5, 10, 20, 24, 38, 114, 116, 118, 143, 207, 221, 223–225, 227, 234
 colonialism, colonial powers, 18, 38, 42, 44, 47, 51, 52, 72, 76, 173, 187
 language, 206, 207, 223
 Post-development, 177–179
 Poverty, 26, 171, 175, 184–187, 194–196, 203, 234

Q

Qualities, 142, 159
 charismatic, 110
 leadership, 208

R

Ramos-Horta, José, 20, 50, 86, 88, 119–123, 214
 Rastafarianism, 231, 232
 flag, 231, 232
 Reggae, 231, 233
 Reconciliation, 6, 161, 162, 194, 224, 225
 Reinado, Alfredo, 23, 24, 124–130
 Religion, 49, 81, 83
 Catholicism, 80
 conversion, 81
 Resistance, 7, 11, 12, 17, 18, 21–24, 26, 38, 39, 41, 47–50, 52, 53, 58, 60, 62–66, 73, 74, 76–79, 84, 86, 88, 89, 92, 95, 98, 112, 116, 122, 137–140, 144–151, 155–161, 163–165, 179, 181–184, 192, 196, 197, 204, 206–208, 227, 234, 245

National Council of Revolutionary
Resistance (CRRN), 144
reforms to resistance movement,
183
*Resistência Nacional dos Estudantes de
Timor-Leste* (RENETIL), 208
Ritual, 2, 20, 41, 73, 91, 93, 127–
129, 187

S

Said, Edward, 10, 71
Santa Cruz
 massacre, 83, 94, 95
 memorial, 96, 208
Smith, Anthony D., 8, 10, 12, 13, 109,
110, 112, 113, 130, 157, 184
Student resistance, 17, 95, 208, 218
Suharto, General, 48, 50, 52, 56, 76,
81–83, 86, 156, 173, 244
Symbols
 symbolic conflict, 7, 11, 16–18, 23,
25, 26, 39, 41, 42, 73, 79, 89,
96, 99, 139, 185, 204, 209,
212, 218, 225, 227, 241, 242
 symbolic violence, 75, 76, 81
 theories of symbols, 16

T

Tagging, 211
Tasi Tolu, 86–89
Tetun, 4, 22, 84, 125, 221, 222, 224,
225, 227, 234
Tosh, Peter, 231

U

Uma Lulik, 60, 187, 188, 197
Unemployment, 90, 175, 196, 209,
217

União Democrática Timorense (UDT),
19

*Unidade Nacional Democrática
da Resistência Timorense*
(UNDERTIM), 62, 181, 182,
184

flag, 181, 182, 197

leadership, 62

Union flag, 189

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
(USSR), 45

United Kingdom (UK), 93, 189, 246

United Nations (UN), 52, 60,
93, 122, 144, 161, 172–180,
187–189, 191, 192, 194–196,
229

UN Security Council, 194

UN Serious Crimes Unit, 93

UN Transitional Administration of
East Timor (UNTAET), 58, 60,
61, 172, 174, 176–178, 196

V

Vatican, 87–89

Veterans, 7, 41, 78, 79, 90, 92, 96,
98, 138, 148, 153

Victims groups, 97

Association of Ex-Political Prisoners
(ASSEPOL), 94

12 November Committee, 97

W

Weapons, 117

heavy guns, 93

traditional, 117

Weber, Max, 110

Widows' groups

Mate Restu (Remains of the Dead),
94

Novi Novi (Ninety Nine), 94
Rate Lack (Without Graves), 94
Women, 176
World Bank, 176, 177, 180, 192

resistance, 17, 94–97, 208
subcultures, 204, 205, 210, 211,
216, 225, 233, 234

Y

Youth, 18, 24, 88, 95–98, 155, 204,
206, 208–210, 227, 228, 234