

Chapter 5: Challenging the moral order: Water, kinship, and war

In chapter three, we encountered oral histories of the region relating to trade and kinship exchanges with islands to the north of Baucau. According to one of the tellers, Major Ko'o Raku, the colonial period on the north east coast began with the arrival of the Portuguese, followed by a period of Dutch rule and finally the return of the Portuguese. Augmenting the inter-regional marriage exchanges and trade of gold disks, coral necklaces and swords¹, the period of Dutch rule was characterised by the trade of ceramic plates for sandalwood and beeswax².

According to Major Ko'o Raku, in contrast to the first two colonial periods, the later return of the Portuguese signalled the end of marriage exchanges between the people of Baucau and their 'outside' interlocutors from across the sea. With the threat of Portuguese military intervention and other colonial measures now in place, the swords, coral necklaces and marriage partners eventually stopped coming (cf. Correia 1944: 299-301; Belo 2011: 133-134). While the Portuguese were also intent on securing sandalwood³, this time they introduced forced labour, the payment of taxes, and the routine whipping and beating of people. They also established a formal education system. While some Timorese were educated to middle primary school, a minority, mainly the sons of the local rulers, were educated to high school level. Towards the end of the Portuguese rule (1974) a critical event took place. Major Ko'o Raku reports that the Portuguese sent seven Timorese sons overseas to study. On their return these men⁴ formed political parties⁵ and all of them became key political figures during the Indonesian occupation. The three largest of these parties, Fretilin⁶, UDT⁷ and Apodeti⁸, distributed party affiliation cards amongst the population. According to Major Ko'o Raku these new party political identities created a kind of division amongst the rural people that they had never experienced before. It divided families and challenged the pre-eminence of house based alliances based on marriage exchange relations.

As we have seen in the previous two chapters, oral histories such as this continually foreground and prioritize continuities and changes in kinship relations and alliances between houses. It is unsurprising then, as we will see below, that threats to this established moral order of exchange

(firstly by the Catholic Church and later by the colonial administration) were the catalyst for many of key momentous events recorded in local histories. It is important to stress however, that the anti-colonial and anti-Christian sentiment in these stories is not a result of the presence of outsiders per se, but of the culturally disrespectful excesses exhibited by them. In all of these stories, water and the associated hydrosocial cycle features as a part of local resistance. It is a key enabler of both war and peacemaking. As such, this chapter and those that follow show how distinctive regional narrative genres around the agency of water are adapted and developed across the colonial interface and how these narratives and associated practices continue to recalibrate relations into the present.

In this chapter I chart the interconnections between the colonial era stories of three Timorese interlocuters: the ‘magician’ Joao Lere of Wani Uma, the resistance hero Dom Boa Ventura of Manufahi and the colonial collaborator Nai Leki of Bahu. Within this historical period (circa 1512-1940s) we also chart the decline in the power of the great Kingdom of Luca and the subsequent emergence during this period of a new regional geopolitics centred on north coastal ports (see Map 5.1).

It must to be noted from the outset that ritual and political leaders of communities across the Baucau Viqueque zone date the Portuguese arrival in their communities to 1512 and that this period is frequently associated with the arrival of the Portuguese priest Padre Antonio Tavares⁹. While both this ‘discovery’ date and the historical figure of Tavares are key elements of the Western historiography of Timor (see Gunn 1999; Hägerdal 2012), there is much conjecture in particular about where this priest actually travelled during his sixteenth century sojourn from Solor to Timor (see McWilliam 2007: 225). This chapter continues the task of (re)telling these and other stories outside of the confines of western historiography, drawing from local accounts and lifeworlds further insights into these events and the high drama of local political relations.

In different ways all of the protagonists found in the stories below display one or more of the familiar tropes of characters found in ‘true tales’ across the region: the ignorant ancestor; the too smart prophet; the jilted husband and the trickster leader. Yet collectively these characters share

another important characteristic. They are all themselves either ‘outsiders’ or in close contact with outsiders, and for this reason they are themselves prone to be involved in transgressions which challenge the moral order. While in the independence era the figure of the anti-Christian and anti-colonial prophet Joao Lere is elevated as a champion of Timor’s struggle against outside domination, from the early twentieth century story in which he figures it is clear that he was, at the time, also considered by his own people to be dangerously powerful, smart, proud and, most troubling of all, addicted to radical change. His wildness had to be reined in and, for this to happen, he needed to be sacrificed. In contrast, the twentieth century ruler of Bahu, a man known as Nai Leki, was also powerful, smart and addicted to change. His trajectory though was different. He survived the encounter by building alliances with foreigners (although largely through cultivating an ability to deceive them).

The excesses of Joao Lere

While glossed as a magician, Joao Lere was a famous ritual specialist and local ruler (*liurai*) of Wani Uma who railed against the Catholic Church and the Portuguese administration. His actions led many to seek his downfall, but try as they may his death was only possible when he surrendered his own body to the authorities and gave them specific instructions detailing how to kill him. In the 1930’s Baucau’s colonial administrator, Armando Pinto Correia (1935: 108-110, 132-136), transcribed a story of Joao Lere. While the details of Joao Lere’s socio-political connections and life are only partially recorded in this version, it is clear that this is a regionally significant story. One clue to this is Joao Lere’s connection to the coastal cave and subterranean water source of Kai Hunu near Bundura [Ponte Bondura]. Associated in Correia’s account with the most sacred house in the Baucau region, Oca Ba’i (W: ‘sacred cave’) in Baha-Kai-Lale (W: ‘the hamlet in the forest’), this cave was the site of a regionally important pilgrimage involving the collection of holy water and a rainmaking ceremony (discussed further in the conclusion). In Correia’s account (in which all the local language terms are in Makasae) all of the Baucau sub-district savanna and wet rice growing communities are said to have participated in the pilgrimage.

Meanwhile, in the version of this story told to me in 2012 by the cave custodians and senior ritual and political leaders of Wani Uma, both the socio-political genealogy of Joao Lere and the extent of the community participation in this pilgrimage of holy water stretches to include people from the far east of Timor and the southern kingdom of Luca. The people of Wani Uma state that in the pre-colonial era the clans of Bundura region had jurisdiction to the west as far as Fatu Ahi (the hills above Dili) and to the east as far as Los Palos, as well as to the islands beyond. This, they say, was the time of the dark earth, when the people worshipped rocks and water. As we have seen in chapter three, the first peoples of the Baucau coastal zone intermarried with other arrivals to the region who brought with them the knowledge of gold, metalwork, irrigated rice production as well as a system of respectful exchange.

Throughout much of the colonial period, Luca was buoyed in its status as the ritual centre of the region through its alliances with the Portuguese¹⁰. Yet it later had its own power usurped by the rising influence of the trading ports and north coastal kingdoms of Vemasse and Laleia/Manatuto. The story of Joao Lere traces this period of colonial encounter, missionary activity, trade and rule in the east. Joao Lere is characterized by his own people as *matenek liu* (too clever/wise/powerful) with extraordinary powers, including the capacity to make the sea waters rise up and the earth crumble into the sea. At one point in his story, he even attempts to split the island in two leaving the area from Bundura to the far east under his control and the other half of the island to the Portuguese occupiers.

Sometimes referred to today as the anti-colonial resistance hero of the east, Joao Lere has a complicated socio-political genealogy. His father was from (or came via) Luca. His mother, who in some accounts appeared from the sky, is also said to be a female ancestor of the celebrated 1970s nationalist hero Vicente Reis (Sahe). In this and other accounts we can infer the reason for Sahe's own *matenek* (powerful knowledge) was a direct result of his connection to Joao Lere, whose own writings (recorded first on the walls of caves and later in a book) he is said to have taken from its keeping place in a Wani Uma sacred house in the 1970s (see Figure 5.1). Like Joao Lere, Sahe's mission was to free the Timorese from imposed foreign rule. After Sahe's death in the early Indonesian resistance era, the independence hero of modern Timor, Xanana

Gusmao is said to have accumulated powerful knowledge through his access to a secret case of Sahe's books which he read during the long years of his resistance and study in the Timorese jungle (Niner 2009: 69). While all three of these men, Joao Lere, Sahe and Xanana received a formal education from Catholic missions, in the case of Joao Lere and Sahe these schools were located across the sea (in Flores and India for Lere and in Portugal for Sahe). It was to be Xanana, educated as well in the jungles of Timor, that ultimately triumphed in repelling the foreigners¹¹. Below is a summary of the version of Joao Lere's story told to me by the Wani Uma ritual leader and 'historian of the dark earth', Moses Nai Usu:

His father came we think from Luca. His name was No Mori. He was in Luca hunting birds with a blowpipe. When his golden arrow pierced a bird it flew off with the arrow to the peaks of Mundo Perdido. He followed it to there but it flew down to Leki Loi Watu [on the Baucau plateau]. Again he followed it, but it flew off through Hare Ite before arriving in Baha Kai Lale [between Caisidu and Wani Uma]. He followed it once more and in Baha Kai Lale he encountered a woman called Maria weaving cloth (*tais*).

No Mori asked the woman if she had seen a bird pierced by an arrow. At first she said she had not, but No Mori said to her '*Noi*, you must lie to me. If you tell me the truth, I will only keep the arrow, you can keep the bird to cook.' Then Maria admitted she had found a bird pierced by a golden arrow and had put it in the house.

She fetched the bird and arrow and No Mori gave her the bird to cook. Later No Mori asked Maria to go inside to fetch him a drink of water. Then No Mori secretly placed a cigarette inside the bamboo hollow of Maria's cotton reel.

After he had drunk the water, No Mori announced he must leave. He returned back through Leki Loi Watu [W: 'Leki Loi's rock'] where he looked back and saw that Maria had begun to weave the cloth again. When she did this the cigarette fell from the bamboo hollow.

She said, 'I have found something sweet smelling'. She decided to light it with her fire flint and as she did so lightning suddenly struck in the sky.

A week or so after this she realized she was pregnant. All we know was she smoked a cigarette and became pregnant.

When the baby was born she gave him the name Kai Ho'o Wau Bubo Leki Loi Wau Bubo. The child was a huge eater. When he was born he cried and straight away ate ten pots of rice. Whenever he cried, he would eat ten pots of rice. It was always like this.

Eventually his [maternal] grandfather Kai Dau Naha Dau also assisted Maria in the task of feeding the child, but the food supplies were still not enough.

He grew up eating all of his uncle's food, yet his real father took no responsibility for the child. When he was grown he said to his uncles, 'In gratitude to all my family, now I must feed you'. He began to cook and placed a chicken in a pot and later divided this into many pots. But when it was placed in the other pots the chicken meat transformed into the meat of pigs, goats and buffalo.

After this he went off to school in Larantuka [Flores]. In the morning he would leave the house for school and return in the afternoon. He would travel to school by crocodile. When he had finished his schooling, he and his uncles went to the fields to make swidden and fencing.

At this point his mother said to his uncles that they must kill him because he eats too much. His uncles agreed and tried to kill him by felling trees on him but he simply carried them off on his shoulders.

When they returned home that afternoon his mother asked 'Did you kill that child?' His uncles replied 'we killed him but he didn't die'. Next they tried to kill him with a large rock but the child, whose magic was so strong, simply caught the rock. The child who was also known as Degu Tina (W: 'dark cooking') was unable to be killed. Because of this they decided to send him off to school again, this time to India. He set off to school (travelling by eagle to India) but was quickly home again already knowing everything. This child was also known as Joao Lere.

By the time Joao Lere had reached the peak of his revealed and acquired knowledge and power (*matenek*), the Portuguese had arrived in Timor. They and Joao Lere were set to oppose each other. The remainder of this story relayed to me in 2012 concurs in many respects with the one told to Correia in the early twentieth century. In order to demonstrate his prowess and control over the land and the sea, the young Joao Lere decided to divide the land by calling forth the waters from the sea. His mother warned him against these actions, which involved the forbidden act of opening a sacred western door to the sea in the Kai Hunu cave (known as *Odamata Losi-Tasi*). So instead, he decided to open the door to the east. When he did this, he found a tobacco pipe (which was also manifest as a golden snake) belonging to his ‘magician’ uncle who was away in the far east in Tutuala. With the assistance of a pair of giant bellows (W: *tuha*), Joao Lere light the pipe and began to smoke it, as he did so fire from the force of the bellows began to spread across the area. His uncle in Tutuala saw the smoke rising from Mamau-Tuha (the ‘place of the bellows’) close to the Kai Hunu cave. He leaped across the land from Tutuala to Laga to Dasu Buinau [a hill and ‘place of divining justice’ in Seisal] finally alighting near Bundura where the fire was raging out of control. He quelled the fires, but given the proven recklessness of the young Joao Lere, his uncle returned to Tutuala with him under his care. It was in Tutuala that Joao Lere was discovered by a priest who was returning to Dili and ordered the young man to carry his many possessions to a nearby port. While the priest set out first on horseback, by the time he had arrived at the port Joao Lere and the bags were already there. Joao Lere had used his magic to move the items through the air, but he hid these powers from the priest telling him a team of porters had carried them. Next the priest set off for Vemasse but again when he arrived there, Joao Lere and his possessions had again arrived ahead of him. This happened as well on the next stage of the journey to Fatu Ahi (between the ports of Hera and Dili). By the time he reached Fatu Ahi the priest realized the extent of Joao Lere’s magical powers (*matenek*). Returning to Portugal, he relayed this story and discussed Joao Lere’s threat to Portuguese power. The priest then returned to Timor as a Bishop and a plan was made to kill Joao Lere. The colonial authorities seized him, tied him up and threw him from a boat into the middle of the sea. But before they got back to shore, Joao Lere was there still alive. After this they tried many times to kill him, but he would never die.

In the end Joao Lere told the authorities that if they wanted to kill him they needed to bring some black palm fiber, rice stalks and a salt basket from Wai Wono (near Bundura) to the port town of Manatuto. He then instructed them to put these together on top of a flat rock. Following this, at four o'clock in the afternoon he sat atop the rock playing a bamboo flute. He instructed them to set him alight the fibers and as the fire burned he continued to play the flute (calling forth his *dai* or ancestral spirit). He played until the evening and then suddenly the smoke of the fire rose in a single column and he disappeared. All that was left on the rock was one large goat dropping. After his death Joao Lere's (magic) basket was carried by the wind from Manatuto all the way to Kai Hunu, where it turned into a rock known as Watu Tege on a nearby coastal shelf platform (see Figure 5.2). The wind signaled its imminent arrival to his mother who ran to the shore and began to sing a song:

Loi Kere Kuru Lale

Loi Kere Kuru Lale

He Watu Tege, Bali Watu Tege

I am waiting for the basket, waiting for the basket

Watu Tege Bunini

The owner of the basket

Kii-Leki Kuru-An-Leki-Kuru.

Kii-Leki Kuru-An-Leki-Kuru.

According to the people of Wani Uma it was Joao Lere's own uncles who had told the Portuguese that they must kill him. They feared his reckless and excessive powers and told the colonial authorities that if they did not kill him he would come to rule the land and drive out the Portuguese. They locate these events in the time of Padre Antonio Taveiro (Tavares) who they say arrived in 1512 (as noted above, the historical record tells us that he was the first missionary who arrived in Timor from Solor in 1556. See McWilliam 2007: 225, 233). But in their telling of Joao Lere's life story these events span a long historical period which includes the time of the Dutch and a time of 'civil war'. Along the way Joao Lere and his various namesakes were firstly pitted against a priest, then a bishop and then the Portuguese government. While all of these outsiders are also present in the version of the story told to Correia in the 1930s, in this telling Joao Lere is characterized as a threat to the power of the rival king of the port of Vemasse and it is he who urges the Portuguese Governor to kill Joao Lere¹². Downplaying such power dynamics

between local rulers, today the people of Wani Uma assert that it was the coming of *agama* (I: religion) that killed Joao Lere in order that this religion could rule Timor¹³. Indeed the hilltop site in Manatuto where Joao Lere was killed now contains a chapel dedicated to Santu Antonio (many other *lulik* sites in the region are also now dedicated to a Catholic saint). Despite this colonial Catholic transformation, when people from Baucau familiar with the Joao Lere story pass by the site of his death near the main road in Manatuto they still pay their respects by placing an object (a rock or a cigarette) in their mouth and throwing it on the ground in the direction of the site.

Meanwhile the site near remote Bundura where Joao Lere's uncle alighted as he leaped back from Tutuala to put out the fires is known as Dai Kele Fatin (W: 'the foreigner's footprint'). While Joao Lere was said by Pinto Correia (1935) to be descended from Timorese and foreign parentage, the elders of Wani Uma state that this site is known as the foreigner's footprint to disguise its real meaning and power. Like Joao Lere, his uncle was a powerful 'magician' from Wani Uma house of Wata Huu Ana¹⁴ and his influence stretched as far as Tutuala where his footprints are also found. Meanwhile they say another footprint connected to Joao Lere can be found in Lifao (the first colonial capital in Oecusse).

According to Major Ko'o Raku's version of the Joao Lere story, Joao Lere was the son of a man that came mysteriously from across the sea (he specifies this to be Larantuka) by way of We Biku We Hali through Luca to Matebian and finally Baucau. Joao Lere's father arrived from across the sea with a group of eight contemporaries who were equally *matenek*¹⁵. As a result of their superior *matenek* (cleverness/wisdom/power) all were eventually killed by the Portuguese. The source of this group's *matenek* and great power was '*natureza*' (W: *namu degu, namu rema, ria luli*; M. *mu'a gamu, mu'a usa, mu'a falun*) or the dark world most commonly associated with lands from across (or under) the sea. This powerful lineage drawn from *natureza* and the sea is also signified by the fact that after Joao Lere allowed himself to be killed, he returned to his wife's side in the form of a snake (*talibere*). His wife, however, then shrieked in fright, leading Joao Lere to disappear forever from this world. In this account, Joao Lere was the last in a long line of powerful rulers who could metamorphize into their *dai* (in this case, *talibere* the ancestral

snake). Killed by the Portuguese, their dark earth power was usurped by that of a new nominally Christian moral order. Yet like his *dai* in the hydrosocial cycle, Joao Lere (*lere*=to clear) symbolized the path of life and death (see conclusion). In death, this legacy was honored by the construction of a powerful sacred house in Baha Kai Lale linked to the coastal cave of Kai Hunu whose underground waters are, like Joao Lere, connected to Luca (a centre with unrivalled ritual communication with the sea).

Meanwhile, as we saw above, it was also Joao Lere's sacred house complex which housed his book of writings (written in Chinese, Arabic, Malay, French, Dutch and Portuguese). It was from reading these books that the nationalist hero Vicente Reis (Sahe) gained his real *matenek* (cleverness, wisdom and power). In this sense Joao Lere also opened another path: the path for others to cultivate their *matenek*, to combine the darkness of the past with light of the new, and ultimately achieve Timor's independence.

The fall of Luca and the rise of Vemasse

According to Antonio Vicente Marques Soares (pers. comm. 2006; cf. Soares n.d., Soares 2003: 45-53), a Timorese historian and elder from Uma Tolu, Lacluta in Viqueque district, prior to the colonial era the island of Timor was divided into three kingdoms. These comprised the apical ritual centre of We Biku We Hali on the south west coast near the current international border (see Map 5.1), Sombai centred in Punjan (Kupang) in the west and Luca on the south east coast. The jurisdiction of the latter stretched from the far east to Maubara in Liquica and included the islands of Wetar, Alor, Kisar and Leti (all of which the Portuguese later traded with the Dutch).¹⁶ Luca and We Hali had strong historical, political and ritual links and according to Soares this culminated in a colonial era accord between the two in 1712. At the River Masin Babulu (literally the salt of Babulu kingdom) which runs along the present day border, both rulers faced each other in the river and took a sacred oath. This oath proclaimed that from now on Luca would govern the (Portuguese) east side of the island and We Hali would govern the (Dutch) west side. When there were incidents of *karau nakfera* (ET: 'the rampaging buffalo'), a metaphor for the kingdoms being in serious conflict and crossing boundaries, it was agreed that

the two kingdoms would come together to broker peace and stability. In 2012, I was told this story in narrative verse by the ritual leader (*lia na'in*) of the ruling house of Luca. In this story the kingdom of Luca is synonymous/linked with We Biku and Luca's ritual pair the kingdom of Viqueque (once known as Ai-Sahe) is synonymous/linked with We Hali (for the full narrative see Appendix 2).

Almost 150 years before the formal colonial division of the island in 1859, this agreement effectively anticipated East and West Timor. However, Soares also states that it was only in 1702, a year after the Portuguese established their first seat of government in Lifao, that the local rulers of the east were called there to make an oath accepting Portuguese rule. This was followed by another oath making ceremony in the central eastern kingdom of Soibada in 1703 (Soares 2003: 89; see Map 5.1). The ruler's pledged to govern under the umbrella of the Portuguese flag and the colonial government pledged to respect Timorese traditions, laws and customs. In the centuries that followed, while the Timorese people continued to adhere to a belief in the divine power of their rulers, inevitably with the extension of colonial power and presence beyond Lifao and later Dili, these regional indigenous kingdoms began to be 'corrupted' and lose both their power and autonomy (and, as we have seen, their *matenek* rulers). By 1832 Luca and We Hali were embroiled in a war which led to demise of We Hali (Soares 2003: 56).

As specific alliances were forged and broken between rulers and the colonial powers, indigenous systems of exchange and alliance increasingly became aligned with 'tribute' payments to 'foreign' rulers (cf. Forman 1978). Oral histories recount how these products, including rice, maize, beeswax candles, woven cloth and palm fibers were important in the indigenous and colonial systems of tribute, exchange and power relations. In these exchanges, kingdoms such as Luca returned to their 'vassals' the symbols of the right to rule such as sacred gold disks (*belak*), headdress (*kaebauk*), sacralised betel nut (*buá malus*), sacralised waters and, eventually, the Portuguese sceptre (*rota*). Indeed, according to Forman (1978), this merging of indigenous and foreign systems of exchange and alliance was an integral element of the political and moral transition to Portuguese rule. Forman also argues that there was by the late nineteenth century a 'dovetailing' of the indigenous (Makasae) asymmetrical alliance system with 'the distribution of

rank and title in the Portuguese colonial administration’, to the extent that ‘native exchange ideology afforded a sense of legitimacy to the form of hierarchy to which became attached to it’ (1978: 110)¹⁷. In exchange these rulers were expected to provide protection for their ‘loyal’ subjects.

Meanwhile Baucau, a place of minor political importance until the early 1900s, was prior to this time under the rule of Luca. As we have also seen in chapter four, according to the oral histories at some point Luca lost their power and the retreated back across the mountains in shame.¹⁸ Another oral history told in the Baucau village of Bahu recalls the fate of a despotic ruler called Dom Bastion (Sebastiao is a name synonymous in the east with colonial era rulers from Luca). Around the same time as the colonial capital was moved from Lifao to Dili (1769), this ruler’s interference with a succession of young women in Baucau led to the local population’s taking the extraordinary decision to bury him alive. A trap was set and he fell to end his days buried with his slaves deep in an underground crevice south west of Wai Lia in central Baucau.

Following the formal divisioning of island Timor between the Dutch and the Portuguese in 1859, in 1862 Governor Alfonso da Castro divided Portuguese Timor into 11 districts. While the formal administrative boundaries were new, according to Soares, the boundaries were drawn up in consultation with political and ritual leaders across the east of the island and largely followed the existing sacred border agreements between the kingdoms and sub-kingdoms. One such agreement was said to have occurred early in the colonial period between the houses of Loi Leki in Wailili and the emerging ‘autonomous’ kingdom of Vemasse. This story centers on a spring called Wai Lotu (which is today connected to the five branch houses of Loi Leki) and provides a local account of the arrival of Portuguese rule (in the form of a sceptre (*rota*) which they say they received from Vemasse in 1512). While both Wailili and Vemasse had received ruling sacra in the past from Luca, the people of Vemasse were now in possession of sacra (*rota*) given to them directly by the Portuguese in Lifao. As a result of these changing political dynamics, the Wailili rulers from the houses of Loi Leki house were called to the coast to make an agreement about the division of political authority under (symbolic) Portuguese rule. Following a ritual which proved the ‘stupidity’ of the indigenes of Loi Leki (and hence the political superiority of the rulers of

Vemasse) the houses of Loi Leki carried the *rota* from Vemasse east to other kingdoms as far away as Baguia.¹⁹ This sacred oath created two new houses—Uma Meti (the ruling house of the sea) in Vemasse and Uma Lari (the secondary house of the mountains) in Wailili. As with the sacred oath made between the springs of Wai Husu-Wai Lewa and Wa Lili-Wai Wa (see chapter four), from this sacred agreement the people of the salty waters of Vemasse (ET: *we masi(n)*=salty water) and the spring of Wai Lotu (W: ‘small water’) in Wailili exchanged ritual names. Until this day certain houses from Vemasse are said by the elders of Loi Leki to have the rights to the fruits of the land around Wai Lotu and in the past to have come to offer annual sacrifices to the ancestors of the spring.

Dom Boa Ventura and the waters of Baucau

By the time the Portuguese Governor Afonso de Castro took his decision in 1862 to organise the territory into districts, Baucau was within the territory of Vemasse and was recognized as a kingdom within that district. Timor’s famous resistance era Bishop, Dom Carlos Belo (himself a son of Baucau), has written a book documenting colonial era local rulers of Timor and records the first king of the kingdom of Baucau as Dom Manuel Caetano Delegado Ximenes. Appointed by the Portuguese in 1884, Dom Ximenes hailed from the Jurisdiction of Laleia (França 1897: 235, cited in Belo 2011: 131). He swore allegiance to the ‘all the governors in this district of Timor’ and to ‘maintain the respect of my kingdom for the Catholic faith and to pay the *finta* (tax) that is ordered and give men [*auxílio*] for war and workers for public duties upon request’ (Belo 2011: 131-132).

In 1891 the Portuguese Bento da França described Baucau as a kingdom of 2000 persons (*almas*=souls) and 250 Christians (França 1897: 34-35, cited in Belo 2011: 330). Belo (2011: 133) records a second king of Baucau Dom Francisco da Costa Freitas (a son of the king of Vemasse) who was appointed in 1900 by the governor José Celestino da Silva. This king ruled in Baucau from a house near the spring of Wai Lia. The house, still known as Uma Liurai (‘the Ruler’s House’), was also the site of the first chapel in Baucau town. In his *Dicionário Corográfico* [1903: 18], Rafael das Dores offers the following description of Baucau:

The seat of a military command center, on the north coast of the island and to the east of Dilly, being a suco of Vemace, it was some time ago elevated to the status of kingdom, but remained a very insignificant one at that. There is a hamlet (*povoação*) of the same name on the northern flanks of the great mountain at a high elevation above sea level, with abundant water and a wonderful climate, such that some governors resided there for long periods of time, and some administrators went there to recover from illness or to get fresh air, which has developed the area, having a comfortable house of residence for the governors, a church and a parish, and a fort with a small barracks. If on the coast, from where one ascends via a precipitous track which is almost vertical in parts, there were a good anchorage, the place would be more frequented by visitors, but because the disembarkation is most difficult and even dangerous, this part will never be appropriately taken advantage of for a sanatorium, unless a regular road is built that links it to Dilly. Just a few small hamlets make up this tiny kingdom, in each one of which there are perhaps a dozen souls, and it seems to me that it will revert to the kingdom that it used to be a part of. It produces vegetables, and some tobacco, but only enough to cover local consumption (cited in Belo 2011: 331).

A third ruler of the kingdom appointed in 1905 is recorded as being Dom Manuel dos Reis da Costa, and was from a house of Bahu. Given the title lieutenant colonel, he resided at the coastal hamlet of Hare Lai Duro (Belo 2011: 133). By this time, as the Portuguese presence had expanded, many ruling houses had been pushed out and relocated to the fringes of the town²⁰. The coastal area of Hare Lai Duro was popular site of re-location as it also enabled local houses to avail themselves of the benefits of the busy colonial era inter-regional trade. However, Belo (2011: 133) writes that the colonial authorities soon began to take objection to the inter-island trade, in particular that of ongoing marital relations with the Dutch (and Protestant) controlled island of Kisar. As a result, this third ruler of Baucau was imprisoned by Governor Celestino who also gave orders that the ports of Baucau be closed to embarkations from the island of Kisar (Belo 2011: 133-134). In these accounts we can see a clear correlation with Major Ko'o Raku's narrative (see above) which blames the now severed relations with Kisar on the lack of

Portuguese respect for local fertility-giver fertility-taker traditions of exchange and reciprocity. A colonial connection between Kisar and Baucau was re-established in the 1920s (cf. Correia 1944: 299-301), but this exchange no longer had the depth of connection established through previous inter island fertility-giver fertility-taker relationships²¹.

It is clear from historical accounts that from the time of ‘first contact’ in the sixteenth century, shifting alliances and even insurrection between indigenous and colonial rulers was the norm across island Timor (Hägerdal 2012; Péliissier 1996; Gunn 1999; Ramos Horta 1996: 19). Yet by the late nineteenth century the ferocity and extent of these rebellions by many local kingdoms in the east toward their Portuguese masters was increasing apace. Elsewhere in the district, Belo (2011: 273-274) reports that the people of Quelicai in the mountains of Matebian were the last to be ‘pacified’. Battles involving troops loyal to the Portuguese from Vemasse, Baucau and Ossu quelled rebellions in Quelicai in 1892, 1904 and 1912 (Belo 2011: 273-274). Historians in general suggest that the cause of these increased insurrections and heightened resistance was an ever harsher Portuguese taxation regime, particularly the doubling of a head tax. Meanwhile some other historical accounts also draw attention to an emergent anti-colonial even nascent nationalist movement, inspired as well by alliances with other outsiders, including the Chinese (cf. Gunn 1999: 175-190; Péliissier 1996; Soares 2003: 88; Ramos Horta 1996:19). The most famous of these insurrections against colonial rule is known as the Manufahi rebellions. Taking place in a series of uprisings from 1880, the insurrections ended in 1912 after the defeat of the local ruler Dom Boa Ventura. Today in the new nation of Timor Leste, Dom Boa Ventura is officially regarded as Timor’s first nationalist hero.

By the early twentieth century the rulers of Baucau were aligned with the Portuguese. *Moradores* or second line troops of Baucau had already engaged in battles to pacify those elsewhere who resisted Portuguese rule (Belo 2011)²². As we will also see below, according to Major Ko’o Raku by the turn of the twentieth century the indigenes of Baucau town realized that if they were to rule the region they needed to collaborate with the *malae mutin* (‘white foreigners’, referring here to the Portuguese). Meanwhile, many of the remote mountain kingdoms of the Baucau district opposed the Portuguese and wanted to drive them from Timor. Dom Joao Vicente Paulo,

the first ruler of Baucau's ancient village of Boile to receive the *rota* from the Portuguese (cf. Belo 2011: 138; da Costa *et al* 2006: 43) played a key role in organizing the *moradores* to carry out attacks on the hostile mountain kingdoms. These battles, which included taking part in the Manufahi rebellions, continued for decades, until the people of Baucau town and their allies finally triumphed in a battle against the kingdom of Berecoli. According to Belo (2011: 274) this final pacification was brokered in the 1930(s) by Nai Leki or Major Carlos da Costa, a traditional ruler from Ro'ulu in Bahu and by then Portuguese Administrator of the sub- district of Quelicai.

Yet in contrast to stories of tax rebellions or incipient nationalism, in more localized indigenous tellings the Dom Boa Ventura series of rebellions is expressed somewhat differently. According to Major Ko'o Raku, the Boa Ventura insurrection was finally triggered, as with many Timorese wars, by the betrayal of a marital alliance.²³ Taxation and nationalism do not figure in this account, which occurred after a visit to the house of Dom Boa Ventura by the Administrator from Dili. A faithful party to local compacts with the Portuguese colonists, Dom Boa Ventura had organized his subjects to grow cotton and other crops. At this time he was hosting a visit by the Administrator who had come to inspect the region. However, while Dom Boa Ventura was out during daylight hours overseeing the fields, this man repeatedly entered the private rooms of the house and engaged in sexual relations with Dom Boa Ventura's wife. Alerted to the happenings, on the Dom's return the Administrator was encircled by a large party of men as he emerged from the bedroom. The Administrator's penis was cut off and put on a plate, after which it was delivered by a messenger to Dili and presented to his wife. Alarmed, the Dili Administrator's wife sent immediately for support from the Administrator of Baucau who rallied together the *moradores* of Baucau's second line regiment. These troops came together as a force known as '*Companhia Loidua*' and were under the command of Joao Paulo Vicente. Along with the village of Loidua, it drew together warriors from the villages of Bucoli, Wani Uma, Tirilolo, Caisidu, Caibada, Buruma, Sialale (Bundura), Boile, Macadai, Ro'ulu, Ana Ulu, Maukali, Diwake, Buibau and Samalari. While in 2010, I was told by Major Ko'o Raku that these troops went willingly to support the Portuguese in Manufahi, three years later he qualified this by stating that the expedition had set out on the premise of assisting the Portuguese to locate the Dom who had somehow become lost. It was not until they arrived in Manufahi that they realized

they had been lied to by their Portuguese masters. By then it was too late to withdraw and the battle had begun (As we will see below, this seemingly revised account can be understood in the context of the state organized 100 year anniversary celebration in 2012 which commemorated the uprising of the nationalist hero Dom Boa Ventura).

Whatever their intention in setting out for Manufahi, the oral histories of this period in Baucau recount that the loyal troops of '*Compania Loidua*' were successful in their campaign, returning to Baucau with many enemy heads. These were subsequently buried in a forested area not far from the centre of Baucau town (cf. Belo 2011: 136). Some members of '*Compania Loidua*' returned to Baucau in the possession of slaves: vanquished men, women and children of Manufahi. The descendents of these people subsequently settled in local villages.

In 2012 the independent nation of Timor Leste held a 100 year anniversary celebration to commemorate the Dom Boa Ventura uprising. It was expected that each district of the new nation would send a delegation. A few days the day prior to this event, Major Ko'o Raku was hurriedly called to the Baucau District Administrator's office and asked if he could attend as the senior ritual representative of the district. Due to its pivotal role supporting the Portuguese in the Manufahi uprisings, Baucau had much unfinished business with the people of Manufahi and it was perhaps because of this that no other ritual leader from the district was brave enough to lead the delegation. This is Major Ko'o Raku's account of what transpired:

I was called to the new town and asked if I would go to Same [Manufahi] (see Map 5.1). I said I would, but first we needed to sacrifice a white chicken and pray to *gituba ginana* (the springs or 'other worldly' portals from where the water flows forth). We did this and read the liver of the chicken. The reading was not good. I asked the District Administrator to find and bring me another chicken. We repeated the sacrifice and this time I prayed to the ancestors of Tirilolo, Bahu and Caibada. The liver reading was still bad. I ask him to look for another chicken. This time I prayed to the ancestors of Fatumaka Leten and Fatumaka Kraik [including the villages of Wailili, Gariuai, Loidua, Buibau and Samalari]. From this point the liver readings began to improve. [I was told he

also called out the name of the place in Baucau where the decapitated heads of the vanquished had been buried].

I called out in these prayers that our ancestors had committed sins, that we were now going to Same to redress this and make peace. Only after I had spoken these words, did I receive the positive reading from the chicken liver. I then made another offering to the ancestors with the corn and we were we able to leave for Same.

In the end it was a good result. No one in our party died either in Same or on the way. This was lucky because a prayer recited by another ritual leader who went from Baucau was not good. When we arrived in Same he called out the names of the three mountains Ramelau, Cabalaki (near Same) and Matebian. He called out that they were in a younger sibling-older sibling relationship. But this was the wrong prayer, he didn't even call out the name of Baucau. We needed first to acknowledge Baucau's role in the war, in particular the names of the springs from where our warriors received their power and to call out the names of the villages from where these warriors came. That night the other ritual leader from Baucau who went with us [himself an independence era Administrator within the district] became sick, he lost the feeling in half of his body. I gave him some [traditional] medicine and told him that the cause of his ailment was that his prayers had not been done correctly; they had not been addressed to the correct door, the springs or *gituba ginana*.

Major Ko'o Raku explained that when he arrived in Manufahi he called out in his prayers to the *gituba ginana*, the springs of Wai Husu-Wai Lewa (which as we have seen are connected by sacred oath to the springs of Wai Lili-Wai Wa and through this Fatumaka Leten and Fatumaka Kraik). When in 1912 *Compania Loidua* had set out for Manufahi they had first made offerings and prayed to these springs and asked that these ancestral waters give them the power to overcome their adversaries. They had carried some of this water with them into battle. In 2012, Major Ko'o Raku and his party had also carried with them a bamboo length filled with water drawn from the springs of Wai Husu-Wai Lewa. Once in Manufahi they had carried out a ritual

offering ceremony and had roasted a goat and a rooster over the fire. They had prayed and said that if the acts of their ancestors were wrong then they were there to ask for forgiveness to cleanse these sins, and compensate the descendents of the fallen with these offerings and the sacred water. The next day at the official ceremony ground Major Ko'o Raku made an offering of two coral necklaces (M: *gaba*) and a golden breast plate at the feet of the newly erected statue of Dom Boa Ventura. With these two ceremonies, he concluded, he had 'paid' for the sins of Baucau's warriors. When they returned to Baucau they did so via the Manufahi river where they ritually washed the sins of their ancestors down to the sea. It was only after this ceremony that Baucau was able to once again enter into a sibling relationship with the people of Cabalaki and Manufahi.

The delegation stayed until the end of the formal proceedings and returned home via the south coast and Viqueque. The direction of this return journey was chosen in order to pay their respects to those kingdoms from the eastern region who had fought together with Dom Boa Ventura—eight leaders of 1007 men from Berecoli, Laga, Bagaia and Quelicai. Major Ko'o Raku explained that 'we don't know what happened to them. Some were taken to be killed or imprisoned by the *malae mutin* (Portuguese). We don't know'.

Nai Leki's triumph

By 1914, after centuries of local alliance making with and uprising against their foreign rule, the Portuguese used the occasion of the defeat of Dom Boa Ventura to decisively intervene and install a new generation of leaders at the helm of 'kingdoms' across the island. By this stage, many higher level kingdoms had effectively devolved power to the level of the village and, as remains the case today, village or *suco* heads were commonly referred to as *liurai*—rulers or kings. These new leaders needed to fulfill two criteria: they were obliged to take an oath of allegiance to the Portuguese and they had to come from a groomed and educated local elite (who were usually associated with a ruling house). This new class of rulers became known locally as *Liurai Kalsa* ('the kings in trousers'). In many cases, these new rulers deposed the *Liurai Lipa* ('the kings in sarongs'). At the same time, as noted in chapter two, the arrival of Portuguese into

the region also triggered a process whereby many ruling houses voluntarily forfeited aspects of their leadership role to others. While the former ruling houses retreated with their ritual knowledge back into the darkness, the newly created ‘political houses’ were obliged for their part to stand up alongside and speak to the foreigners. Even when the process of power transfer between houses was consensual, rearranging ruling lineages (and with it rights to land and resources) was always a transgressive act. In the cases where these transgressions were not consensual, they remain as underlying tensions in the governance of many rural villages. In some instances, of course, it was the sons of the *liurai lipa* who became the *liurai kalsa*. As we will see below in these cases, without recourse to an alternative lineage, the present day effects of these processes on custom and ritual life are even more disruptive.

In Baucau in the early twentieth century a son of one of the ruling houses of Bahu, Nai Leki (later to become Major Carlos da Costa Ximenes), was drafted into Portuguese administrative ranks. During his career he served in several administrative roles across the district, including the prestigious post of Administrator of the mountainous *posto* or sub-district of Quelicai in the 1930s. In 1934 it is recorded that he accompanied the Baucau Administrator Armando Pinto Correia on an official visit to Portugal (Correia 1935: 256; Belo 2011: 134). He died in 1948, a few years after much of Baucau town had been destroyed by World War Two aerial bombing. It was Nai Leki, along with other indigenous leaders of early twentieth century Baucau, who was said to have enticed the Portuguese in to establish a town by the ancestral spring of Wai Lewa. By the time of Nai Leki’s death in 1948, Baucau was a ‘Portuguese town’ with stately buildings and promenades, an emergent culture of its own, and a lively economy driven largely by the activities of the resident Chinese traders who had set up shop around Wai Lewa (see Figure 5.3).

In 1930 the district of Baucau is recorded to have had 76, 482 inhabitants of which 16 were from Portugal, 3 from other colonies, 21 from ‘other localities’, while 148 were ‘foreigners’ (Figueiredo 2004). ‘Foreigners’ refers to the Chinese residents, mostly from Macau, some of whom, according to their descendents, had arrived in the Baucau region in the nineteenth century. Correia (1944) records that there was in the town a class of women called ‘*nonnas*’ who were either of Chinese descent or somehow associated with the Portuguese administration. Other

girls who would come in from outlying areas to be educated and would also be initiated into this ‘town culture’ which included highly coveted skills of Portuguese cookery, cake decorating and needlework. It was in this refined milieu that Nai Leki announced on his death bed that his people, from Bahu’s Ro’ulu hamlet, should now adopt Portuguese ways and leave behind them the traditions of the past. The apical Ro’ulu sacred houses, Uma Liurai and Uma Loi Leki, had been destroyed during the Japanese occupation. Despite their ritual power and significance for Baucau, the present day ritual leaders of Ro’ulu say they feel bound by Nai Leki’s request and at the time of this interview in 2012 these houses remained un-reconstructed.

In Major Ko’o Raku’s telling of this history at some point during these early twentieth century counter-rebellion campaigns, the *malae mutin* (Portuguese) in Baucau were so low in morale that they retreated back to Portugal to regroup. When they did so they took with them Nai Leki or Major Carlos da Costa. On their return to Baucau, these officials and Major Carlos visited the Portuguese outpost of Macau²⁴. In Macau, Major Carlos made a sacred agreement between himself as the ruler of Bahu and the Portuguese he had met in Macau. Introducing himself as a native of a place called Posto Wai Lewa (the sub-district of Wai Lewa), he explained to them that, ‘At my spring I have a fruit tree (*ai-tobal*) whose fruit falls to the ground as silver and gold’. This tale was intended to entice these *malae* to visit the region and augment the Portuguese settlement of the town. The story worked and they too made the long journey from Macau to become a part of the permanent and by now significant *malae* population.²⁵

The sacred agreement made during this visit to Macau had also been a way of cementing the relations between Nai Leki and his hosts. As we have seen in other intra-local contexts such oath-making was formalized through an exchange of names. Likewise in this instance, Posto Wai Lewa exchanged names with Macau and became Waukau. A Waima’a poem recording this exchange is called ‘*Kulu ana de ana Waukau*’ (A little breadfruit born to the land of Waukau):

Kulu ana de ana Waukau-Makau

The little breadfruit is born of Waukau-Makau

Kulu ana de ana Makau-Waukau

The little breadfruit is born of Makau-Wakau

The metaphor is one of a single breadfruit tree with grafted branches producing two separate lineages. The relation between Portuguese Macau and Waukau was now one of siblings and the Portuguese were said to have later changed the name of Waukau to Baucau²⁶. By the 1930s Major Carlos or Nai Leki had become the most important indigene in the Portuguese administration of the Baucau district and, as we saw above, in his role as *Chefe de Posto* in Quelicai he is credited with pacifying the district. Yet despite joining the ranks of the local Lusophone elite he was known to carry with him wherever he went a particular *lulik* (sacred) object: a torn piece of cloth which had belonged to the great magician Joao Lere (Correia 1935: 136). An anecdote which suggests that Nai Leki's own cleverness (*matenek*) was a critical factor in ensuring the Portuguese development of Baucau (indeed by the 1930s the area was already becoming known as Timor's second 'city'). Yet this cleverness came at a cost to his people: the ways of the dark earth were to be left behind, with his people requested to move forward into the future following only the path of the *malae mutin*.

Discussion

Forever striving 'to place themselves in historical context, tapping into diverse kinds of memory sources in a self-defining act' many of the stories told in this chapter resonate with indigenous narrative strategies elsewhere (Abercrombie 1998: 10-11). At the same time, in their encounters with colonial outsiders, the Timorese desire for power and knowledge is clearly marked by a preference for relationship making. In these indigenous worlds, outsiders are seen as both the harbingers of new knowledge and as central for the exchange of goods and the building of relations. It is the excesses and transgressions of these outsiders and their frequent failure to live up to their characterization as 'potential affines' (Gow 2001: 307) that leads inevitably to a breakdown in these relations. For example in his intensely embodied betrayal, Dom Boa Ventura is portrayed as a loyal party to the alliance, pushed to retaliate by the excesses of an ultimately disrespectful colonial regime. Joao Lere meanwhile epitomized the fearsome power of *dai* (which, as we saw in chapter two, can also mean *malae* or foreigners) and their true home in the dark earth, and ultimately this power too was excessive. Yet Joao Lere's cleverness, wisdom and

power (*matenek*) sourced from the sea and *natureza*, was in his death also able to be appropriated by Nai Leki, Sahe and through him the independence leader Xanana²⁷.

The stories of Joao Lere's magic, the Manufahi Wars and Nai Leki's wooing of the *malae mutin* all feature the power and unpredictable agency of water. While in Joao Lere's case the waters of the 'other world' accessible through the Kai Hunu cave had the fearsome potential to rise up and repel the Portuguese, they also became a source of blessing for pilgrims from across the region. This recognition of the other worldly power of water was, as we have seen in earlier chapters, at the heart of Luca's ritual compact with sea and Joao Lere was himself a son of Luca. Yet like Joao Lere's demise, Luca was eventually repelled from the region, triggering as well a 'retreat' of the waters which had previously gushed forth from Baucau's springs. It is also clear that the ancestral power of these springs, while depleted, still remained. Nai Leki was able to successfully portray these waters as a source of 'other worldly' magic and wealth and drew the *malae mutin* into an alliance with the indigenous rulers of Baucau. In doing so he took a risk and became a servant to a type of 'trade' with the *malae* (W: *dai*) which propelled him and his people some way into the light (cf. Gow 2001: 307). Similarly these same waters were the source of power for the warriors of Baucau who defeated Dom Boa Ventura and the resistant kingdoms of Matebian. Both of these actions ensured a prominent role for Baucau in Timor's future. Yet at the same time as this alliance of local houses with a new class of *ema matenek* ('clever and powerful people') brought with it a change in governance arrangements with ongoing ramifications, there also remains a firm sense of obligation and indebtedness to the ancestral domains which made this all possible.

References

- Abercrombie, T. (1998) *Pathways of Memory and Power*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Adnan A. (2009) *Portugis dan Spanyol di Maluku*. Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu
- Belo, D. (2011) *Os Antigos Reinos de Timor-Leste*, Baucau: Edição Tipografia Diocesana Baucau.

Full version published in Palmer, L. 2015 *Water Politics and Spiritual Ecology: Custom, environmental governance and development*, Routledge, London and New York.

Cardoso, L. (2000) *The Crossing: A story of East Timor*, London: Granta.

Correia, A. (1935) *Gentio de Timor*, Lisbon: Agência-Geral das Colónias.

——(1944) *Timor de Lés a Lés*, Lisbon: Agência Geral das Colónias.

da Costa, C. da Costa Guterres, A. & Lopes, J. (eds) (2006) *Exploring Makassae Culture*, Baucau: Publicacoes Matebian-Grafica Diocesana Baucau.

Dores, R. (1903) *Apontamentos para um Dicionário Chorográfico de Timor: memoria*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional.

Figueiredo, F. (2004) ‘Timor: a presença Portuguesa (1769-1945)’, unpublished MA thesis, University of Porto.

Forman, S. (1978) ‘East Timor: Exchange and political hierarchy at the time of the European discoveries’ in K. Hutterer (ed.) ‘Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia: Perspectives from prehistory, history and ethnography’, *Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia No 13*, The University of Michigan: 97-112.

França, B. (1897) *Macaue Seus Habitants, Relações com Timor*, Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional.

Gunn, G. (1999) *Timor Loro Sae: 500 years*, Macau: Livros do Oriente.

Hägerdal, H. (2012) *Lords of the Land, Lords of the Sea: Conflict and adaption in early colonial Timor, 1600-1800*, Leiden: KITLV Press.

——(2013) ‘Cycles of Queenship on Timor: A response to Douglas Kammen’, *Archipel* 84: 237-251.

McWilliam, A. (2007) ‘Looking for Ade: A contribution to Timorese historiography’, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 163(2/3): 221-238.

Niner, S. (2009) *Xanana: Leader of the struggle for independent Timor-Leste*, North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing

Pélissier, R. (1996) *Timor en Guerre: Le Crocodile et les Portugais (1847-1913)*, Paris: Pélissier.

Ramos-Horta, J. (1987) *Funu: The Unfinished Saga of East Timor*, Trenton: The Red Sea Press

Full version published in Palmer, L. 2015 *Water Politics and Spiritual Ecology: Custom, environmental governance and development*, Routledge, London and New York.

Soares, A.V. M. (2003) *Pulau Timor: Sebuah Sumbangan Untuk Sejarahnya*, Baucau: Edicao Tipografia Diocesana Baucau.

Soares, A.V.M. (n.d) *Hanek Matan Au Kenuk Tis no Saen Rai Lamak Tasan*, unpublished manuscript.

Spillett, P. (1999) 'The Pre-colonial History of the Island of Timor Together with Some Notes on the Makassan Influence in the Island', unpublished manuscript, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin.

Traube, E. (2007) Unpaid Wages: Local narratives and the imagination of the nation, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 8(1): 9-25.

¹ While Major Ko'o Raku asserts that this trade began in the dark earth period, he also suggests that it was contemporaneous with the Dutch presence along the north coast (for another account of this era, see McWilliam 2007). The 16th century is noted for the heightened presence of Makassan seafarers along the north coast but it is possible these stories may also refer to a much earlier contact period between people from island Timor and elsewhere in the archipelago (see chapter 3).

² Hägerdal (2013: 241) mentions Dutch treaties with the Waima'a and the Kingdom of Ade in present day Vemasse. Other historians record fragments of these stories (Gunn 1999; Hägerdal 2012; Soares 2003; Belo 2011; Spillett 1999).

³ Observing the booming international spice trade in the early 16th century a Portuguese official in Malacca called Tome Pires famously wrote that God had created Timor for sandalwood, Banda for nutmeg and the Moluccas for cloves (Adnan 2009: 355).

⁴ Asserted by Major Ko'o Raku to have been Vicente Reis (Sahe), Mari Alkatiri, Ramos Horta, Rogerio Lobato, Abilio de Aruajo, Fransisco Lopes and Xavier Amaral.

⁵ Major Ko'o Raku records these as Fretilin, UDT, Apodeti, Travalista and Kota.

⁶ *Frente Revolucionaria do Timor Leste Independente*

⁷ *Uniao Democratica Timorens*

⁸ *Associacao Popular Democratica Timor*

⁹ Stories of this priest (often asserted to be a Bishop) occur in local narratives across the east. In most accounts he is said to have had, or tricked people into believing he had, power over the sea or nature (see also Hicks 2004: 6;

Spillett 1999: 289-306). The historical record tells us that Tavares was the first missionary who arrived in Timor from Solor in 1556 (see McWilliam 2007: 225, 233).

¹⁰ Although this alliance was at times fickle and plagued by revolts (see Gunn 1999; Belo 2011; Hägerdal 2012). See also endnote 16 in chapter two.

¹¹ The story of Joao Lere resonates with Traube's (2007) account of a Mambai narrative tradition featuring a Christ like figure and prophet of the light known as Tat Felis. Felis arrives in the area with local missionaries and is persecuted by local rulers. Traube's Felis has a similar story of illegitimate parentage as Joao Lere (Felix's father Joseph also disappears) and like Joao Lere he survives repeated murder attempts. Yet in the Felix narrative, Timor's first president, Xavier Amaral in 1974, took on a name Mau Bere (which belonged to Felix) without knowing its owner and hence without formalising the exchange. It was this transgressive act which triggered the civil war and the Indonesian invasion. Ultimately the Mambai people suffered and died to pay back with their own bodies the debt for Felix's own betrayal and suffering. Unlike Felix, a prophet of the light, the source of Joao Lere's *matenek* is located in the depths of the dark earth.

¹² Key centres mentioned in the Joao Lere narrative were all colonial trading ports Hera, Manatuto, Laleia and Vemassee (the latter was also known in the early colonial period as Ade). The historical sources recount that between the 1500 and 1700s the people of Vemassee were already engaged in trade with Dutch, Chinese, Macassans and were beginning to establish relations with the Portuguese. Trade wars were common place (Gunn 1999; Belo 2011; Hägerdal 2012; McWilliam 2007).

¹³ Indeed the Kingdom of Vemassee was to become closely aligned with the Portuguese and the Catholic Church. A chapel was built in Edan (Ade) in 1748-1752 (pers comm. Soares 2012) followed by one in Vemassee in 1775 (Soares 2003: 46). The latter was a lavish affair built by Governor Caetano Lemos Telo de Menezes to maintain good relations with the *Liurai* (rulers) of Vemassee and Baucau (Soares 2003: 46). According to Soares, Edan (Ade) was established in the late sixteenth century after the Portuguese outpost in Solor was attacked and some residents moved to settle in Edan. Edan is a Galoli word meaning where the salt and fresh water meet (pers comm. Soares 2012).

¹⁴ The present day custodians of Joao Lere's sacra.

¹⁵ The others are specified to be all *liurai* known as Dom Lere, Dom Paulo, Dom Buibere, Dom Girimau, Dom Jeremias, Dom Joao, Dom Lifao and Dom Alariku.

¹⁶ Alor paid tribute to Likusan (Liquica) until late 1800s (Gunn 1999: 150).

¹⁷ These ranks and titles included *Dom, Dona, Brigadeiro, Coronel, Tenente Coronel, Capitao, Major, Ajudante* and *Chefe*.

¹⁸ In the late 1700s the colonial record tells us that Luca lost its jurisdiction over Venilale as a consequence of a failed rebellion against the Portuguese known as the ‘War of the Madmen’ (Belo 2011: 336). Luca itself had oscillated in support of the Church, alternatively allowing baptisms at other times (it is claimed) ordering or carrying out the murders of priests (see Belo 2011: 310; Gunn 1999: 76; Hägerdal 2012: 31-32; Soares 2003: 56; Spillett 1999: 289-306).

¹⁹ In this story, a man and a dog were taken from Wai Lotu to Vemasse where they were decapitated in order to determine towards which party their heads would roll (the rulers of Wailili or Vemasse). As each party took their position at opposite poles from the site of the decapitations the Liurai of Vemasse chose the low ground. The heads duly rolled towards him and he earned the right to rule. Wailili tellers of this story laugh raucously at the apparent stupidity or backwardness of their forebears.

²⁰ Correia (1935: 272) notes that within twenty years the Timorese elite in Baucau lost most of their ‘prestige, fortune, and authority’.

²¹ Later in 1937 Jose dos Reis da Costa the Portuguese educated son of the imprisoned King from Hare Lai Duro was appointed the new King of Baucau. In 1933, he was invited by the Administrator Pinto Correia to join the colonial entourage to visit Vonrelli, the capital of Kisar (Belo 2011: 134). He died, and with only an uneducated son to succeed him, no further kings were appointed in Baucau (Belo: 2011: 135).

²² Correia (1935: 58) writes that ‘[t]he Timorese, especially those from Baucau, reveal a strong predilection for militarism. *Sucos* [villages] of *moradores* surround the town of Baucau’.

²³ Likewise Luis Cardoso (2001: 5) ‘unofficial narrative’ of Dom Boa Ventura told to him by his father in the 1960s recalls that the Boa Ventura rebellion was instigated by the actions of a Portuguese military commander who had become entranced by the ‘fair skinned’ wife of Boa Ventura. Not being able to bear the thought of her being married to a ‘native’ he set out to save her from such transgression. Boa Ventura then retaliated.

²⁴ Until the 1890s Baucau and other districts were administered through Macau. In 1934 Nai Leki travelled with Baucau Administrator Armando Pinto Correia and a Timorese delegation to an expo in Portugal (Correia 1935: 256).

²⁵ Major Ko’o Raku also relates the story of a leader called Noko Loi from Defa Wasi in Baguia who similarly tricked the *malae* into settling in Baguia by telling tales of the gold associated with its spring.

²⁶ This account of the origins of the name of Wau Kau is disputed by others.

²⁷ According to the elders of Wani Uma, a ritual specialist from Joao Lere’s house prophesized the Indonesian invasion in 1974 and it was this that led Sahe to take Joao Lere’s book.