Epilogue of Empire:
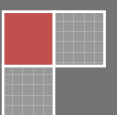## East-Timor and the Portuguese Postcolonial Catharsis

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EPILOGUE OF EMPIRE: East Timor and the Portuguese post-colonial catharsis[1].

ABSTRACT:

The social movement of solidarity with East Timor that occurred in Lisbon in September 1999 was the first major political demonstration since the fall of the dictatorship in 1974. Solidarity with East Timor demonstrated the importance of the emotional and cultural ties created by language and religion. Those ties have a clear colonial history and are now being re-constructed as the core of a Portuguese postcolonial identity focused on the idea of Lusophony. East Timor, as a residual colony that was occupied by Indonesia after the Portuguese revolution of 1974 built its nationalism with resource to language (Portuguese) and religion (Catholicism) as diacritical signs vis-a-vis Indonesia. These signs are the cultural patrimony of a local creole elite and are exaggerated in Portuguese perceptions of East Timor. The colonial and postcolonial ironies of this case of mutual constitution of identity are analyzed[2].

INTRODUCTION

On the 30th of August 1999, East Timorese cast their ballots in a referendum that took place under the auspices of the UN and was based on a signed agreement between Portugal and Indonesia. At stake was the acceptance or rejection of a proposal for special autonomy within Indonesia, the eventual rejection of which would surely bring on a process leading to real independence for East Timor. On September 4th, in simultaneous televised appearances the secretary general of the UN, Kofi Annan and the head of UNAMET (UN mission in East Timor) in Dili, announced the results of what they considered to be a legitimate voting exercise: approximately 21% in favor and 79% against. The following day the Indonesian army and the pro-Indonesian-integration militia began a systematic destruction of the territory. Part of the population fled to the mountains, others to voluntary or forced refuge in West Timor, while others were killed

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[1] '(…) purification (…) 1. Purgation, esp. of the bowels 2. The purifying of the emotions or relieving of emotional tensions, esp. by art: applied originally by Aristotle to the purging of pity or terror by viewing a tragedy 3. Psychiatry: the alleviation of fears, problems, and complexes by bringing them to consciousness or giving them expression (…)' (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1982).

[2] I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers who have contributed with suggestions that were crucial for improving the original version of the present paper. A previous version of this paper (in Portuguese) was published as a chapter in my book on 'race', culture, and the politics of identity (Vale de Almeida 2000).

outright. This situation speared a civic movement in Portugal of a proportion unseen since the revolutionary activities of 1974-75 following the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship. The movement had an explicit objective: to force the Security Council of the UN and especially the United States, to intervene in East Timor so as to guarantee the legitimate institution of the results of the referendum and to put an end to violence. The characteristics of this movement – from the point of view of its implicit context and of its process – make it an exceptional case for reflecting on the Portuguese postcolonial moment.

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC REPORTAGE OF THE EVENTS

What happened in Portugal in September 1999? We can identify the first events of the movement in a kind of ethnographic reportage. By this I mean a description of events that is marked by my participation in them as a citizen, without the conscious purpose of using the ethnographic methodology or as part of a research project. This is the reason why this article should not be seen either as an academic paper or as an experimental text, but rather as an essay written by an anthropologist who pays attention to the politics of representation in his own society. When the pro-integration terror began in East Timor I immediately felt the same revolt and indignation as millions of other citizens. The first reading was obvious: how was it possible not to accept the results of a referendum (sanctioned by the international community) in which the East Timorese had so unequivocally opted for independence? Democratic legitimacy was put on the line, and this in relation to what was seen, in Portugal, as a poor, illiterate, and suffering people: the moral superiority of democracy was thrown in our – we, its western inventors – faces by those we judged so many times as incapable of even understanding it. On the other hand, I felt repulsed by the violence that was used by the occupation army and by the militias. Finally, I was surprised at myself because I had always been cautious in my support for the 'Timorese cause,' because it seemed (in Portugal and for its protagonists) to snack of colonial nostalgia.

The first event that I remember – that which fixed my support for the civic movement - was the 'three minutes of silence' on the 8th of September, an initiative that was called for by several organizations and announced on the radio stations. I went outside a few minutes before the set time expecting nothing to happen. But my skepticism (and maybe even cynicism) were countered: at exactly three o'clock, in a neighborhood which was not central, in which one would not expect a public

performance of any significance, the traffic stopped and people got out of their cars. The stores around closed and people came out onto the sidewalk. Everyone was still. Someone shouted 'Fascist!' to a car that did not stop. Above the skyline of buildings I noticed that traffic crossing the '25 de Abril Bridge' was also paralyzed. As I stood silent on the sidewalk, I remembered images I had seen of Holocaust Day in Israel where citizens do the very same. But above all, I felt a new emotion: I identified myself with all of the strangers around me who were doing what I was. 'Communitas' was taking hold[3].

The second episode was a human chain on the same day. A group of youth proposed a human chain to link the embassies of the permanent countries of the UN Security Council. I was still skeptical: The distance between the US and French embassies is great and even more so with the detours necessary to link the Russian, British and Chinese embassies. The total route was ten kilometers. As I live near the French embassy, that is where I headed. To my amazement, the surrounding area was packed with people and the radios were announcing that not only was the chain complete but in many places it was two, three, four people thick. Later, television images taken by helicopter confirmed this.

The third founding episode was the 'dress in white' day. A radio station made an appeal that a least one white article of clothing be worn on that day or white banners be hung from the windows and that cars use a white ribbon. On the day, I dressed in a white pair of pants and shirt. I went out to the street and looked – as other passers-by did -- to find that many had done the same. Not only was there a white streak of clothing visible on the street, there were also many windows draped with white sheets or bedspreads. Cars not only displayed white ribbons but also were decorated with little homemade looking signs on A-4 paper inscribed with ringing phrases like 'Timor Lives', 'Save Timor', and 'Viva Timor Loro Sae'. In a building along side of the American embassy, long rolls of computer paper were hanging down out of windows 15 or more stories.

A forth episode, which I did not participate in, was a demonstration in Madrid on the 12th of September. As Portugal did not have diplomatic relations with Indonesia,

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[3] In his discussion of liminality, Turner says: 'I prefer the Latin term *communitas* to "community", to distinguish this modality of social relationship from an "area of common living". The distinction between structure and communitas is not simply the familiar one between "secular" and "sacred", or that, for example, between politics and religion' (1969:96). This 'communitas', he says, '…emerges recognizably in the liminal period, … society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals (…)' (1969:96).

the closest Indonesian embassy was in the Spanish capital. At the suggestion of the mayors of the region of the city of Oporto (Portugal's second largest city) a demonstration was called for in front of the Indonesian embassy, buses were rented and the Railway Company made a train available. Taking advantage of the freedom of circulation within the European Union, this demonstration took place, therefore, outside the national territory. The fact that the Indonesian embassy be located exactly in the capital city of the symbolic rival of Portugal can only be an object of speculation….

The fifth episode was the reception of the Bishop Ximenes Belo on the 10th of September. The Bishop of Dili stopped in Lisbon on his way to the Vatican. The purpose of his visit was to celebrate Mass in the church of the congregation where he had studied, but the route from the airport to the church became the scene of a massive demonstration of welcome and concern. That this would be the case had been foreseen. The Bishop traveled in an open car, accompanied by security guards and police who cleared the way. What had not been expected was the speed and spontaneity with which a human chain formed along the entire route. One minute the street was empty, the next, it was full of people coming out from their homes, offices, or out from stores and buses.

The same day it was learned that B. J. Habibie, the Indonesian president, had accepted the intervention of an international peacekeeping force in East Timor. The forces would start arriving in Dili on the 18th or 19th of the month. From that moment on the movement started to progressively dwindle until a few days before the Portuguese elections on October 10th – and coinciding with the death of the national icon, Amália Rodrigues, the 'Fado' singer—the subject of East Timor was reduced once again to the back pages of the newspapers[4].

STRUCTURE AND MEANING OF THE EVENTS

The form of these manifestations had three recurring and overlapping aspects: organized gatherings and demonstrations, spontaneous performances, and the catalyzing role played by the media. As to the first, two prime locations were rapidly established, the United States Embassy and the area around the delegation of the United Nations. During these days, the groups of demonstrators went back and forth between the two

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[4] Fado is a traditional popular urban singing style that was highly supported and promoted by Salazar's dictatorial regime (1926-1974). It has been interpreted by the left-wing intelligentsia as a cultural product which reproduces Portuguese cultural notions of nostalgia, acceptance of fate and the valuing of suffering. Marginalized after the 1974-1975 revolution, Fado has made its way back into the center stage of representations of the national character and cultural authenticity in the 1990s.

locations, whenever there wasn't a demonstration that linked both. In the case of the American embassy, its location was evident and literal; the location of the United Nations delegation required (for me) a more sophisticated symbolism. As it happens the delegation of the UN is simply a suite rented at the Sheraton Hotel -- Lisbon's tallest building. Nothing on the exterior of the building signals its presence, it was never known which window the office lay behind, and no one ever appeared at that window. What I mean to say here is that the demonstrations took place in front of the 'virtual' United Nation delegation headquarters but in reality they took place in front of the Sheraton Hotel – a recognizable symbol of the globalization of American capitalism. Furthermore, the space in front of the hotel is far from a proper square but rather a tangle of intersections. It doesn't have a name other that that given to it by demonstrators on improvised signs: Timor Loro Sae Square. The appropriation of urban space took place through an act of topological creation[5].

From early on this 'square' became the center of events. At any moment of the day there were people there, increasing in number as the afternoons turned to dusk. A pattern developed: to begin the evenings here and later to move on to the American embassy. In front of the Sheraton, a camp-out was taking place where some staged a hunger strike and others left their tokens of grief: posters, paintings on the ground, lit candles, and crosses. Out of this chaos on the sidewalk an authentic altar was created. Public figures and representatives of organized groups came by, even people such as me who went knowing that they would meet someone they knew or a friend, end up staying longer than they planned, canceling appointments, and getting home late. On the adjacent avenue, drivers got in the habit of honking car horns. At certain moments groups of bikers would come by in noisy demonstrations. Suddenly, as if coming out of nowhere, small demonstrations would congregate in the square. At crosscurrents, other groups leaving the square flooded into the avenue and fouled up the traffic, at which point drivers, rather than respond, would explode with a supportive honking of horns. They would then disappear. Where to? No one knew. Spontaneity and unpredictability became the dominant tone, perhaps only surpassed by the surprising social composition of the participants: people from the right and from the left, Catholics and non-religious, many more women than might be expected, many children and youth. In addition, it was frequently noted that it was the first time that many who were active had taken to

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[5]It was also proposed that United States Avenue be renamed Timor Loro Sae Avenue.

the streets; many were participating in the first demonstrations of their lives. Even people in the habit of only going about town by car, honked at the symbolic points in the city or where ever they might meet a demonstration in progress. The feeling that people where out in the streets, that they had 'taken to the streets' was accentuated by the fact that during these days, as so many others I met acquaintances from long ago, high school friends not seen for some twenty years—and all expressing the same surprise at finding each other unexpectedly, out on the street.

The demonstrations included spontaneous performances, but these also took place in other contexts. Wearing the color white went on beyond the 'dress in white' day. It became the color *de rigueur* for any event in which East Timor was the theme; hanging white banners in windows went on for many days; white lapel ribbons, emulating the red ones used to show support for the fight against AIDS, appeared; and cars sported the previously mentioned signs. The outlines of human bodies where traced on the ground at the locations where demonstrations took place. Candles were left burning and people offered themselves or their children as symbolic corpses to be outlined as if sacrificing and sanctifying them in the act. The tradition of mural painting, which had been dormant since 1976 (the year of 'normalization', i.e. that the 1974-1975 revolution ended), was also revived.

Around the country events multiplied: launching miniature sailboats in the rivers and sea, opening bank accounts to collect aid funds for humanitarian purposes and for the reconstruction of East Timor. Along with these events, the municipal government of Lisbon covered all the principal monuments of the city -- in black -- altering the everyday aspect of the city, instilling mourning in the points of collective memory. The political powers thus allied themselves with the demonstrators.

The role of the mass media in the mobilization of the people reached unimagined proportions. One feature of this mobilization must be highlighted: the intensive focus on information regarding East Timor. This aspect raises two further questions: the role of the media in creating events and the attitude of Portuguese self-esteem (common to practically the whole of the movement) in fueling the mobilization. The mobilization for East Timor was not as much the result of television, as one might have expected in a contemporary context. Rather it was radio that played a more evocative role (by way of voice and language), proving the greater capacity of this medium to mobilize the listeners' imagination. Radio, geared as it is to the urban context and the automobile, provided news and information more rapidly than

television, spreading quickly via cars and transistor radios. The privately owned station TSF was transformed into a virtual political committee. The appeal for the 'three minutes of silence' or the 'dress in white day' was broadcast via TSF. Setting aside the news about other subjects and even canceling commercial spots, its broadcasts were dedicated exclusively to the situation in East Timor and to the national mobilization in Portugal. An incantation was instituted which lasted until the 10th of October: before the news and every half an hour a voice announced 'it's ten o'clock in Continental Portugal and in Madeira, an hour earlier in the Azores and five p.m. in Dili'; an everyday informative phrase thus became a statement. The ambiguity of this statement (including East Timor in Portugal, but doing so to express support for that country's struggle) encapsulates the ambiguity of the whole process, be it in the significance of civic mobilization or in the more general framework of the question of East Timor for the post-colonial reconfiguration of Portugal. The boundary between solidarity with East Timor and its inclusion in a transnational 'Portugueseness' bordering on colonial nostalgia was never determined. But this is a fundamental question to which I turn in the last part of this text.

There were also mobilizing vehicles that had not been used in Portugal on such a massive scale before, particularly the Internet. Of the many initiatives, including the circulation of petitions during demonstrations, media appeals for funds to be donated and those made by all sorts of organizations proposing that a day's wages be turned over, those petitions promoting international solidarity that circulated by way of the net were, by far, the greatest in number. I remember, for example, the day in which Portugal Telecom had to increase the number of lines it made available for all of the free of charge messages to the United Nations so as not to have its services jammed. On national sites it was very easy to find direct links to the White House and other institutions.

In the meantime, the Portuguese legislative elections of October 10th and their respective campaigns were drawing near. From the beginning a behavior code and an interpretation of reality regarding East Timor were established. On the one hand, it was said that electoral and party advantages could not be gained from the events in and about East Timor. On the other hand, the message was that there was a 'national consensus' that surpassed any political differences. As for the first issue, the high point was certainly when the opposition party leader of the PSD (the opposition right to center party), made the request that the election date be pushed back. The President,

who made it very clear that the cause for East Timor would be kept 'pure', refused the request. And, inversely, he said that it should not be corrupted by politics, suggesting perhaps the 'impure' nature of politics itself.

This trope of 'national consensus' was by in large publicized by the organs of political power and civic institutions leaving the opposition parties no choice but to subscribe to it. National consensus also intensified the media's focus on East Timor and the civic movement. Citizens themselves felt the effects. For example, many others and myself felt uncomfortable when the Portuguese national anthem was sung at demonstrations or the Indonesian people were demonized and calls were made for Portuguese military intervention, but we felt unable to protest.

By virtue of the urgency of the circumstances, politicians and dignitaries broke protocol in a display of emotion -- from the tears of the President of the Republic to the televised looks of revolt and irritation on the faces and in the stances of those diplomats sent to New York to pressure the UN Security Council. Perhaps the epitome was the figure of Ana Gomes, from the Bureau of Portuguese Interests in Indonesia, whom the Portuguese got used to seeing on TV, irritated, angry, and emotional. There, in the belly of the enemy, she stood defiant against him. She was the concentrated image of a morally intransigent femaleness. She showed great tenderness and intimacy with pro-independence leader Xanana Gusmão, when she visited him in prison and welcomed him on the day of his release, September 7th.

The whole of the movement, by its very character as a mission to generate consensus, concentrated on the demand that the United Nations intervene in East Timor and on the accusation of passivity by the 'international community' and especially the United States, but also by the other permanent members of the Security Council. The Indonesian political and military leaders where demonized: B. J. Habibie, Ali Alatas, and Wiranto. Clinton was also turned into a dishonorable figure and ridiculed through the invocation of the Lewinski affair. Comparisons were made between the situation in East Timor and the relative illegitimacy of the intervention in Kosovo. My interpretation of the events is that what was at stake - more than the demand for intervention, the questioning of the 'new world order', or the demonstration of a strong affective bond of solidarity for the East Timorese - was, rather, a national catharsis around issues of colonialization, decolonialization, and the reconfiguration of national identity through new processes of participatory politics.

A few questions remain to be addressed. In the first place, who initiated these events? Although much of the answer is contained in the above description, it is worth remembering that the explicit actors calling these events were always civic associations, NGOs, trade unions, and student associations. The Roman Catholic Church, always associated with an important segment of the cause for East Timor, kept a lower profile than expected. Governmental organs were surpassed by civilian initiatives, and political parties were careful not to become protagonists, although some days before and after the elections there were speculations about who would profit from the mobilization. It could be said that -- the large dose of spontaneity that is inherent to any effervescent situation apart -- there was a driving capacity by the media and groundwork by organizations and activists that were engaged in non-partisan forms of association.

Finally, what symbolic resources were mobilized? Apart from those already mentioned, the symbolism of suffering was used much more than that of aggression: crosses, blood or red paint, candles, vigils and mourning. The image of Xanana Gusmão was consolidated as an *avatar* of Che Guevara or as a second Nelson Mandela. This could be seen in the iconography produced in stickers, t-shirts and other kinds of political merchandising. East Timorese symbols – especially the flag – were appropriated. In terms of music, however, it was above all the song 'Por Timor' (For Timor) by the Portuguese band 'Trovante', written on the occasion of the Santa Cruz Massacre in 1991, that became an authentic East Timorese hymn 'Made in Portugal' rather than a song originating form East Timor itself.

One symbol perhaps dominated: the new designation for East Timor, 'Timor Loro Sae'. This was the appropriation of an expression used by Xanana Gusmão after his release from prison in Jakarta. Anticipating the results of the referendum and the constitution of an independent East Timor, Xanana Gusmão said that the new nation would be called Timor Loro Sae, meaning in the native Tetum language, 'Timor of the Rising Sun' (i.e., Eastern). Not only did the expression not become current amongst the East Timorese resistance forces or the East Timorese Diaspora, there also appear to be disagreements as to its future use in East Timor. However, in the media the term was picked up and spread like a virus. It became a politically correct expression and an indicator of adherence to the cause. It replaced the more prosaic and commonly used 'East Timor' and avoided the term of colonial times, 'Timor', as a general category that designated the whole island, not just its eastern part.

I conclude this part by admitting to a frustration: that of not being able to bring to this text the hundreds of pages of text and photos from the press, the hundreds of hours of television and radio reporting, and all of the sites on the Internet having to do with the events surrounding East Timor. But for the anthropologist doing an ethnographic reportage without recourse to intersubjectivity, what comes into play here is the ambiguity of the discourses acted out during these events. They revealed a fascination with the Lusophone aspects of the East Timorese, with their Catholicism, their supposed adoration for Portugal, thus purifying the Portuguese from their colonial complexes. Apart from the genuine solidarity, from the moral lesson exemplified in the East Timorese, apart even from the opportunity this movement gave to citizens to express their discontent with globalization, national politics and the absence of participation in it, the question remains: why East Timor (and not Angola, for example)? What place does East Timor occupy in the Portuguese imaginary? What 'Timor' is this - beyond and despite East Timor – that the Portuguese have been constructing? On April 25th 1974 the Portuguese became free from a dictatorship and accepted the independence of the colonies. What is happening now, 25 years later?

EAST TIMOR, INDONESIA AND PORTUGAL: COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL ENTANGLEMENTS

A presentation of the context of the September 1999 events is more productive if it transgresses the traditional regional criteria in Anthropology: Indonesia, East Timor, Portugal (and the 'new international order') must be analyzed together. The island of Timor – comprising East and West Timor – lies in the Indonesian archipelago, an area that has been exposed to European expansion since the beginning of the 16th century, with the Portuguese and the Dutch as main protagonists in the dispute for the control over local commerce for three hundred years. According to Nancy Lutz (1995), the real local power was in the hands of a mestizo class called Topasses, or 'Black Portuguese', who played an important social role in the communities of the island of Flores and in East Timor.

The weakness of Portuguese colonialism and the distance between East Timor and the metropolis meant that the Portuguese never effectively colonized Timor. As a consequence of the process of concentrating resources in other colonies, the island was marginalized. Thus, in 1859, the Portuguese general headquarters was moved to East Timor when Solor and Flores were sold to the Dutch. Thanks largely to the introduction

of coffee as an export cash crop in 1815, only very gradually, during the 19th and 20th centuries, Portugal gained control of the colony. East Timor, however, has a history of rebellion against Portuguese rule, as testified by uprisings in 1870-1892 and a rebellion in 1959. The construction of the notion of a special bond between East Timor and Portugal during the 1999 events in Lisbon was only possible on the basis of selective forgetting (of both these rebellions and the anti-colonial movement) -- a common procedure in the construction of collective memory.

Portuguese presence, with an ineffective colonial administration, depended in large measure on the influence of the Church. In the Dutch controlled section of the archipelago, the colonial power capitalized on the centrality of the island of Java and its ancient empires and was later confronted with a national independence movement that started in the beginning of the century, until independence was declared in 1945. A new nation and regional power (Indonesia) emerged in the presence of a small colony of a country practicing a surrogate and then backward, resistant colonialism[6]. The political project of the Indonesian independence leader, Soekarno, was the unification of the archipelago. The principal cultural instrument used was linguistic: the implementation of Bahasa Indonesia and the eradication of Dutch.

After the conference of Non-Alligned Countries in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955, Portugal was obliged to change its colonial policy in order to become a member of the United Nations. This was done by changing the designation 'colonies' to 'overseas provinces' and by adopting the rhetoric that the empire was a unified national and multicultural community – a fact that marked the beginning of the influence and political impact of Gilberto Freyre's theories of 'Lusotropicalism'[7].

Soekarno's power depended on a balance between the influential communist party and the military caste – the latter being the base of the unity of the new state, as in many other new ex-colonized nations. Soeharto – commander of the Strategic Army Reserve - launched a coup in 1965 and established the New Order. This new, anti-

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[6] By surrogate colonialism I mean the location of Portuguese colonialism within the international economy and the hegemonic role played by Britain. By backward and resistant, I mean that Portuguese colonialism after the demise of the British Empire was kept alive as a political project tied to the maintenance of the Portuguese dictatorship and isolationism.

[7] Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, author of The Masters and the Slaves (1947), developed a theory according to which Portuguese expansion and colonialism was of an exceptional nature, in that it promoted miscegenation and the creation of a new hybrid society in the tropical lands. His ideas were appropriated by the official propaganda of the dictatorial and colonial Portuguese regime throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

communist regime was based on the introduction of army officers into civil service posts, thus creating a militarization of the administration.

In 1965, Portugal was not only subjected to an authoritarian regime, and international anti-colonialist pressures, it was also engaged in war on three fronts: Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. Goa, Damão and Diu (then "Portuguese India") had already become part of India. Portuguese colonialism ended with the overthrow of the Salazar-Caetano dictatorship in 1974. Opposition to colonialism, dictatorship, underdevelopment and international isolation were the main motivations for the pro-democracy military coup of April 25, 1974, led by young military officers who were fighting in the colonial wars. According to Costa Pinto (1999), East Timor represented the most extreme case of the crossroads of Portuguese decolonialization. A small territory of a merely symbolic importance to Portugal, East Timor did not know the full-fledged war of independence that African colonies did.

Three East Timorese political parties arose. The first, UDT, defended the idea of a progressive autonomy in the framework of a Portuguese language community. The ASDT / FRETILIN party defended independence, with a transition period of 3 to 8 years. And finally, the APODETI party defended integration with Indonesia with some form of autonomy for East Timor. To all effects, in 1975 Portugal reaffirmed East Timor's right to self-determination. On November 28th 1975, with an Indonesian invasion imminent, FRETILIN issued the Unilateral Declaration of East Timor's Independence. The Portuguese authorities, with a weak military force, had already moved to the island of Ataúro on August 27th because of the conflicts. The Indonesian army invaded in December 1975 (Oliveira 1996:161-65). The formal integration was concluded in July of 1976. Portugal recognized neither the independence nor the Indonesian occupation. Until the referendum in 1999, the UN recognized Portugal as the 'administrating power of a non-autonomous territory', since an internationally recognized decolonialization process had not occurred.

The Indonesian invasion was carried out under the pretext of avoiding the spread of a communist threat in the region. In the framework of international relations at the time, Indonesia was a strong ally of the United States, who supported the invasion, along with other governments and the Portuguese government's tacit recognition. Also at the time, not only were the Portuguese former colonies anti-American threats, as was, in its revolutionary jubilation, the former metropole itself. Without a doubt, however, the oil wells and the potential for liquid natural gas in the Timor Gap also played an

important role, especially for Australia, the other party who found the Indonesian invasion convenient. After the Indonesian invasion, three important developments took place: the growth of an East Timorese resistance (on the aftermath of the anti-colonial movement), inside and outside the territory, along with a strengthening of East Timorese nationalism; a crisis in the Indonesian regime; and the creation of an East Timorese agenda in the post-revolutionary Portuguese politics and society.

The Indonesian occupation and the physical near annihilation of the resistance ended up uniting the East Timorese political forces. Throughout the period 1975-1980, Indonesian military campaigns were massive, as were forced moves and hunger. This is the period that has been narrated in the Portuguese public opinion and the media as the period of genocide. Besides the guerilla warfare in the mountains, the resistance built support outside the territory and with the help of a network of elite East Timorese in Diaspora, they articulated their position convincingly with NGOs, political lobbies, the media and diplomats, thus swaying public opinion in their favor. They also organized a third, less explicit front, together with collaborators with the Indonesian regime, who would eventually break with the occupiers during the crisis that would overthrow Soeharto.

In May 1998 Indonesia went into a full-scale crisis. The fall of the Berlin wall, the new international order, and the crisis in capitalistic growth in Southeast Asia brought about a new situation. It was one in which the United States could call for the democratization of the military regimes it had supported. Australia, the preferred ally of Indonesia, had recently engaged in a burgeoning role as a regional power, and was thus gradually withdrawing its support. B. J. Habibie replaced Soeharto, initiating the nation's transition to a democratic regime, a transition that is not yet complete.

In Portugal 1976 marked the end of the revolution and the beginning of 'democratic normalization', with a return to market economy and the preparation for adhesion to the European Union. In the context of the global restructuring of capitalism, the independence of the colonies did not decrease opportunities for Portuguese private and public investment, at the same time that financial aid for infrastructure development was injected into Portugal from the EU. Simultaneously, the old colonial rhetoric, now rephrased as universalism, non-racist humanism, miscegenation and 'cultural encounter', continued to be a structuring element of Portuguese official and common sense narratives of identity and self-representation.

Meanwhile the East Timorese question remained the subject of quite ridden national debates. Conservative factions always underlined the 'irresponsible' nature of the Portuguese decolonialization, which led to the disaster of Indonesian occupation, and the more left-wing factions could do little more than romanticize the mountain guerrilla warriors. Support for the East Timorese cause came above all from sectors linked to the Church.

OF LANGUAGE AND RELIGION: NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE EX-COLONY AND THE EX-METROPOLE.

It was the massacre in the Santa Cruz cemetery in 1991 that marked the turning point for the East Timorese question, bringing it front and center, for Portugal and the world. In November of that year, Indonesian soldiers opened fire on a peaceful demonstration in Dili, killing several people, mostly students, in the church of the Santa Cruz cemetery. The fact that UK journalist Max Stahl filmed the events unleashed a process of international mobilization, which culminated in Ramos-Horta (of the CNRT, Timorese National resistance Council) and Bishop Ximenes Belo winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 as representatives of the people of East Timor. In Portugal, the images of people in despair as they prayed in what was interpreted as being Portuguese[8] won an almost religious status, and planted the seed for a form of affective identification. In the Portuguese eyes, East Timor was represented as Catholic and Lusophone (Portuguese speaking), contrary to the evidence that the use of Portuguese is by no means widespread in the territory.

A social and cultural characterization of the principal actors in this process is key to understanding its post-colonial character. Since the 1960s a small, educated elite group with nationalist (or regionalist) aspirations started to express its ideas in the catholic East Timorese press. This elite was in large measure a product of catholic schools and especially the seminaries of Dare (near Dili) and S. José (in Macao). Some administrators and bureaucrats, as well as some rural property owners became important leaders for both UDT and ASDT / FRETILIN. The Church constituted, on the one hand, the principal Portuguese presence of a continuous sort, and at the same time, given its transnational nature, a link between the territory and the rest of the world as well as to the culture of letters. Due to the fragility of Portuguese colonialism, local education was

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[8] But could easily have been Tetum, the language of Catholic liturgy in East Timor.

in the hands of the Church. After the Indonesian invasion, influences within the Church in the United States and Europe were able to safeguard the autonomy of the East Timorese Church and not integrate it with the Indonesian one, as the Vatican wanted. This may have allowed for the creation of an authentic national church.

Images of East Timorese praying, and doing so supposedly in Portuguese, were motivating tropes for the affective bonding of the Portuguese to the East Timorese cause. The issue of Lusophony has arisen in the Portuguese post-colonial and post adhesion to the European Union period as a grand theme for reconfiguring identity. This process is nothing if not ambiguous in its oscillation between neo-colonialist indicators, and a multinational political project against a hegemonic American process of neo-liberal global capitalism. The Portuguese media – especially during the September 1999 civic mobilization period – insisted *ad nauseam* on forms of linguistic identification. They equally insisted on finding, in East Timor, testimonials to a special affection toward Portugal.

This idea was opportunely reinforced by the coincidence that the leaders of the East Timorese resistance inside and out of the territory were part of the Lusophone elite from colonial times. Although speculative, the question of 'racial' identification, given the mestizo phenotype of these leaders cannot be ruled out either. Being the mouthpieces of the movement they easily captured Lusophonic sympathies. But they were a minority and the Indonesian government actually used this image to discredit them, in a similar way that the selective perception of the Portuguese media used it for the opposite purpose. What is, however, the real dimension of the linguistic question? I wish to link this question to that of the emergence of East Timorese nationalism: both issues are marked by an originality that I classify as post-colonial[9].

Lutz (1995) shows the ethnolinguistic complexity of East Timor: 12 mutually incomprehensible local languages, four of them Australian and eight non-Australian, which can be divided into 35 dialects and sub-dialects. Tetum functions as a lingua franca of sorts. During the colonial period Portuguese was the official language and a pre-requisite for citizenship according to a policy of 'assimilation'. Following the colonial categories, in 1950 the population (in a sum total of 442,378) was made up of 568 Europeans, 2,022 Mestizo, 3,128 Chinese, 212 other non-indigenous (from Goa etc.); 1,541 'civilized indigenous' and 434,907 'non-civilized indigenous' persons

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[9] In the sense that it is posterior to colonialism and to the failure of national liberation movements (such as the Indonesian) based on an anti-colonial logic.

(Weatherbee 1966:684). To sum up, less than 1% of the population was 'civilized', mestizo and Lusophone. In East Timor the social order was 'typically Iberian' (Anderson 1993): beneath the Portuguese directors, there were the Chinese merchants, the mestizos (of local, Arab, African and Portuguese origin) and a large diverse group of native ethnolinguistic communities.

In the resistance or as intermediaries to the Indonesian occupiers, it was precisely the above-mentioned small elite that emerged as representatives for an independent East Timor. According to Lutz, in the 1974-76 period, FRETILIN, drawing on the Paulo Freire's model, encouraged a Tetum literacy campaign, the leaders of which were, nevertheless, primarily Portuguese speakers. On his October 1999 stopover in Lisbon, Xanana Gusmão said he composed poems in Portuguese for that was 'the language in which I feel', and admitting to not having always mastered the Tetum language.

One should not forget, however, that Tetum was used before the Indonesian invasion as a form of resistance to Portuguese colonialism and that the leadership of the independence movements went beyond the 'assimilado'[10] elite. As a matter of fact, Portuguese colonialism promoted a bilingual policy, with Portuguese targeted at 'assimilados', leaving the field open for Tetum as the language of the folk – a situation that provided the foundation for the Church's further popularizing Tetum as the language of liturgy. Thus a situation of diglossia could be a good description for East Timor. One in which Portuguese was for the 'assimilados', Tetum for the 'gentios' or heathen (see Ferguson 1985).

After the Indonesian invasion, Portuguese was abolished and Bahasa Indonesia implemented. On the subject, Lutz suggests that this was done not so much out of nationalist concerns, or even due to a focusing on criteria of citizenship, as during colonial times, but more as a measure of control, the reflection of a Foucaultian kind of governmentality. In fact, Indonesia built schools at an accelerated pace. Indonesia used the argument of national development, contrasting its politics to Portuguese neglect, as the justification for the benefits of integration – an argument that even the Portuguese acknowledged. In this process, the Church protested against 'Indonesianization'. Given the prohibition of Portuguese, in 1981 the Church got approval from the Vatican to give

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[10] 'Assimilados' (literally 'assimilated') were colonial natives who spoke Portuguese, practiced Catholicism and could work in the administration. They were seen by the colonial regime as the ultimate product of a process of 'civilization'.

Mass in Tetum. Lutz defends the idea – which is seconded by official Indonesian documents – that the teaching of Bahasa Indonesia was directed by security concerns. Portuguese would be a challenge to governmentality. It would represent a secret language, and thus an everyday form of resistance, 'a weapon for the weak', in the sense that Scott (1985) gives it. Benedict Anderson's (1993) argument moves in a similar direction but asks the bigger question: how did East Timorese nationalism arise?

The question is provocative. In Portugal, the common sense notion was that East Timorese nationalism came about on its own, an intrinsic essence to being East Timorese characterized by being Lusophone and Lusophile. In reality, in the first years of Indonesian occupation, Portugal could be accused of having simply abandoned East Timor. But starting from the 1980s the East Timorese 'fever' in Portugal coincided with a growing and more articulate East Timorese nationalism. Anderson – who observed the facts from the Indonesian side – said the problem was how to integrate East Timor into the national narrative. This national narrative stipulated how Indonesia was to incorporate the many ethnolinguistic and religious groups passed down from the Dutch East Indies. Unity would be secured by the historic experience and by mythology, especially around the fight against the Dutch and the myth of pre-colonial states, particularly as exemplified by the Javanese Majapahit of the 14th and 15th centuries[11].

East Timor constituted a problem: it didn't have a history of struggle against the Dutch, nor solid contacts with the Indonesians (given the isolation in which East Timor was kept by the Portuguese and the preference given to intra-imperial links especially with Goa, Macao, and Mozambique). The alternative, a bio-ethnic essentialism, was not put into play, as it might not bode well for relations with the Philippines and Malaysia. According to Anderson, this could be why the Indonesians themselves were incapable of imagining the East Timorese as Indonesians. But policy in occupied East Timor was state and army directed, not based upon stereotypes prevalent in the Indonesian population. The argument of East Timorese 'ingratitude' – which was to become a rhetorical standard in Indonesian official rhetoric – replicated the previous argument made by the Dutch in relation to the Indonesians themselves. The accusation of treason or betrayal was not leveled against the East Timorese as it was against other regional Indonesian dissidents.

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[11]See Geertz 1980, on Indonesian political mythology.

Indonesian nationalism arose at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century just as expansion in the teaching of Dutch, local press and development projects were getting underway (Anderson 1993). Thus, the Indonesian nationalist leaders learned their own nativeness through the eyes of their colonizers. It was in the Dutch language that they understood what a colonial system was as well as what its possible overthrow might be. Anderson argues that something similar could have been the case for East Timor. If nationalism, according to him, was almost non-existent in 1974, the situation changed dramatically after the Indonesian occupation. According to Anderson, we come upon the ironic logic of colonialism: a profound feeling of community emerges from the eye of the colonial state (in this case Indonesia), and with the expansion of that new state, new schools and development projects.

In addition, the definition of Indonesia that emerged from the anti-Communist massacres of 1965-66 was also seen as part of a fight against atheism. The obligation of every Indonesian to select one of the world religions was stipulated. According to Anderson (and, I add, to the contrary of what the Portuguese commonly believe) in 1975 a majority of the East Timorese practiced indigenous religions, the Catholic population having more than doubled only in the last 17 years. Beyond the fact that the Church chose to use the Tetum language, which had nationalizing effects, the Church also offered protection by the very logic of the Indonesian State itself. In addition, Catholicism reinforced an expression of common suffering among the people[12]. For Anderson this is what substituted for the nationalism of print capitalism[13], lacking in East Timor.

Parallel to this, another colonial irony can be pointed to: if for the Indonesian intellectuals the language of the colonizer is what permitted communication within the colony and access to modernity, in East Timor, the dissemination of literacy in Bahasa Indonesia permitted the new generations to get in touch with the world beyond Indonesia. It can be added that it was from this generation that the resistance had its largest recruiting base (it was always with unacknowledged discomfort that young East Timorese refugees were shown on television arriving in Lisbon unable to speak any Portuguese; in the reporting done in September 1999, newscasters always sought comments from older people who spoke some Portuguese).

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[12] A similar process occurred in 19th century Ireland. This may help explain the force of the pro-Timorese movement in Ireland, the largest second to Portugal's. The identification between national identity and Catholicism is obvious, as well as the transnational connections the latter can trigger.
[13] See Anderson (1983).

At the end of October of 1999, the CNRT decided that Portuguese would be the official language of the country and Tetum the 'national language'. The decision was hard, since a great number of youths do not speak Portuguese. A similar polemic occured when a new currency was adopted: portuguese diplomacy 'lost the battle' of the Escudo and the Euro, and the U.S. dollar was adopted. CNRT's decision to adopt Portuguese as the official language was very unpopular, widening gaps between generations, men and women, rural and urban populations. One could say that it put back in place colonial divides, given the small numbers of Portuguese speakers when compared to those of Tetum or Bahasa Indonesia speakers. However, this must be understood taking into consideration that Bahasa Indonesia was probably the 'enemy' language that historically interceded and that the leaders wanted to marginalize (see Crockford 2000).

BACK TO LISBON, BACK TO EMPIRE?

The civic movement in Lisbon was not a univocal one. This is noticeable from the start by its non-partisan character, in the confluence of 'the people', be they Catholic or agnostic, from the right or the left. The creation of a 'national consensus' permitted that, side by side (and not necessarily incompatibly) demonstrations took place that were staged to attract international solidarity and yet had a subtext of colonial nostalgia. The religious identification can be seen simultaneously as an emotive force for the creation of transnational solidarity and, once again, as a reflexive form of making a Lusocentric and potentially nationalistic discourse. The international context of the new world order allowed for arguments from 'the left' – anti-global capitalism – and from 'the right' – nationalist – to coincide. But, common to all, was the question of how to resolve the place of the memory of colonialism in the construction of a national identity, the traumatic place of decolonialization (liberating and progressive but recognizably poorly executed) and the place of being Lusophone in the framework of globalization and of a country that reconfigures itself simultaneously as central – as part of the European Union - and peripheral to this emerging power.

What the events in East Timor, in Indonesia and Portugal reveal is a threefold postcolonial irony that can be added to the colonial ironies pointed out by Anderson: 1) nationalism in the former colony (East Timor) uses the culture of the colonizer as a mobilizing symbol for action (anti-colonial feelings notwithstanding); 2) a new Third World nation (Indonesia) becomes a regional power and invades another colony,

encountering thus the limits of its own national narrative; 3) the former colonizing nation also reconfigures its identity in the midst of ambiguous nostalgia as being in solidarity with 'the outpost of the Empire' which it had neglected the most.

The former colonial power becomes the principal defender of the former colony's struggle for independence. This was possible because, in between, a new colonizer (Indonesia) interceded, allowing the Portuguese to reconstruct a memory of colonial times by means of the selective forgetting of colonialism. For anthropologists worried about the weaknesses of the emergent post-colonial paradigm, this case – with its focus on affect, language, religion and symbols and these in direct association with political events marked by injustice, violence and nationalism – points to the complex issue of studying the mutual constitution of colonizers and colonized, ex-colonizers and ex-colonized.

The area of post-colonial studies has been marked by a concentration on topics around hybridism and the dependency of post-colonial societies on the representations of the 'natives' by the colonizers, for their self-construction. But little has been done in some areas that seem important to me: a) the reconfiguration of the former colonial metropolis after the independence of their colonies; b) the comparison between the diverse colonial experiences (and subsequent post-colonial experiences). In this comparison the singularities of Portuguese expansion and colonialism could render more sophisticated the discussion of post-modern identities and at the same time (and it is here that the contribution of post-colonial studies is important), 'modernize' the eternally parochial discussion on Portuguese exceptionalism; c) the empirical and ethnographic study of processes of identity reconfiguration conditioned by political economy and relations of power, without subscribing to the primacy of representation and discourse.

The central question raised by the events portrayed at the beginning is why East Timor (and not Angola, for example)? What place does it occupy in the Portuguese collective imagination? We have seen that religion and language were central in Portuguese identification with the East Timorese cause. This identification denied, however, counterevidence, the presence of the voice of the East Timorese, that of the active cultural makers of East Timorese national identity, and elided the confrontational aspects of colonialism. Along the events of September 1999, the Portuguese *imagined* East Timor. Its small size, its distance, the existence of a big, dictatorial and Muslim enemy (Indonesia), the denunciation of an unjust international order in which the strong

(the United States) fail to protect the weak, were the elements for the narrative of the construction of a mythical place. Any narrative of East Timor made in Portugal, is a narrative of Portugal, its colonial experience and post-colonial reconfiguration.

The events of September 1999 in Portugal also allowed for a catharsis of all those feelings of guilt toward processes of colonialization and decolonialization that left a wake of devastation and war in many Portuguese ex-colonies. As a psychodrama of the reconfiguration of post-colonial identity, the events had the right stuff at the right time – the stuff with which the nation could start to ask itself about the validity of making its collective project that of joining affluent European society as a 'poor cousin' and of the validity of the old identity discourses (inseparable from an expansionist and colonialist narrative) as the alternative. The Portuguese state has been implementing a politics of representation and identity that focuses on language (Lusophony) as the unifying factor for both the Portuguese Diaspora and the ex-colonies. Empire seems, thus, to have been replaced by Language. Whether the Portuguese subscribed to this politics or not, remains to be seen in further developments, but the September 1999 events constitute a strange omen.

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