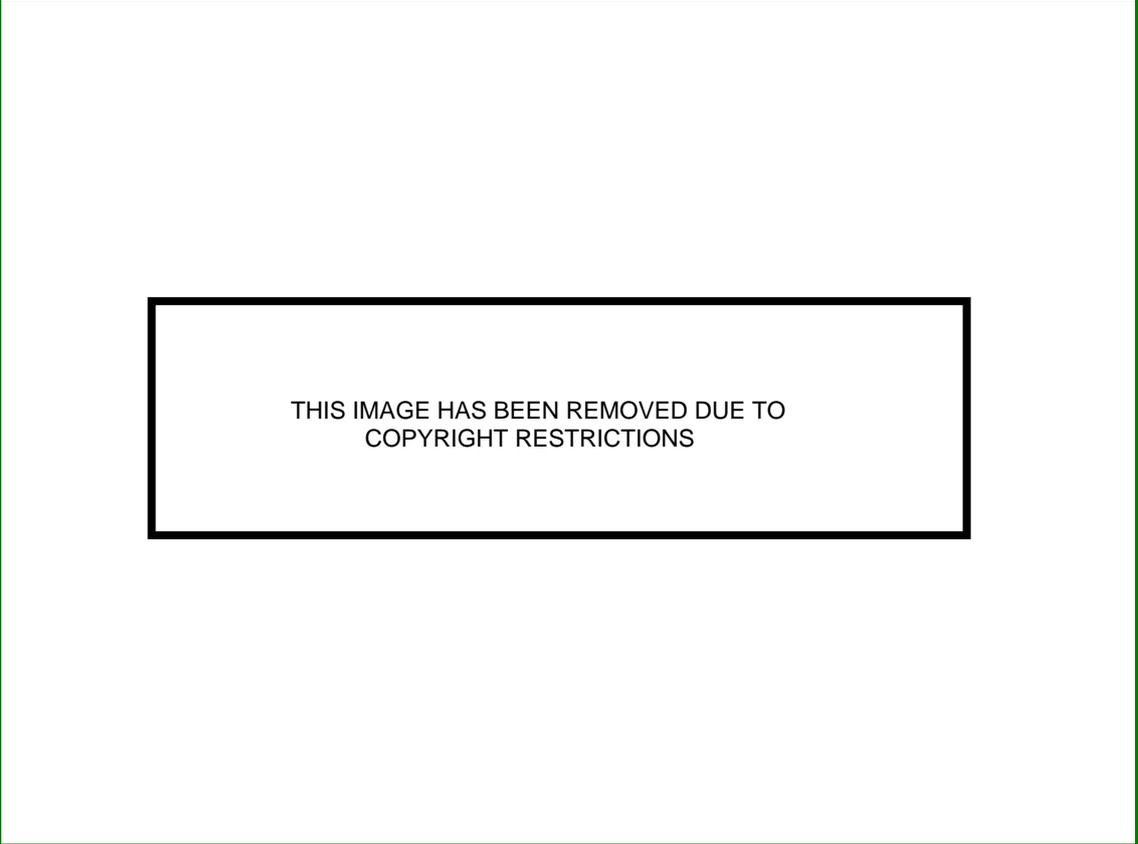


**PLACES OF SUFFERING AND PATHWAYS TO HEALING:
POST-CONFLICT LIFE IN BIDAU, EAST TIMOR**



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Thesis submitted by

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November 2004

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Anthropology, Archaeology & Sociology
James Cook University

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ABSTRACT

In the prelude to and aftermath of the plebiscite on 30 August 1999, in which 78.5% of East Timorese voters rejected autonomy within Indonesia and chose independence for their country, violent conflict raged throughout the country. This thesis concerns Bidau, which is an urban village located in Dili, the capital of East Timor. My central argument is that Bidau residents have been agents in their own recovery following the destruction of 1999. I stress that in seeking to understand what will assist with post-conflict recovery, we need to pay more attention to the social worlds of people affected by violence, rather than applying an individual trauma model. Accordingly, I investigate the various forms of suffering that residents experienced, including the fears of further violence, the different sicknesses, the grieving for deceased relatives and friends, the economic struggles, and the disruptions to life cycle rituals in Bidau. These diverse forms of suffering and their impacts became evident to me over twenty-six months of fieldwork in the period from 4 November 2000 to October 2003.

In describing the diversity of the people who reside in the village, I distinguish three categories of residents – Portuguese Period Settlers, Indonesian Period Settlers and Post-ballot Residents – and also distinguish people from the Makassae ethnolinguistic group, who make up a quarter of the population, and span the three periods of settlement, arriving in Bidau from 1973 onwards. I explore the connections that enabled Bidau individuals and groups to find places of safety during the most violent months of 1999 and show how people who returned or moved to Bidau once order was restored relied on kin networks and other social affiliations to rebuild their lives. I argue that embeddedness in groups and guarantees of social support that Timorese customs offer facilitate and promote healing, as do some religious beliefs and practices.

Participation in significant rituals, especially wedding and mortuary rites is central to the lives of Bidau residents and entails reciprocal obligations, especially between wife-givers and wife-takers. In my analysis of a delayed wedding and various mortuary rituals, I show the ability and determination of East Timorese to organise such rituals despite all they have suffered. These rituals expand social networks of support and have the potential to make and strengthen alliances. An exegesis of a lamentation performed for a recently deceased grandmother shows the complexities of the social and material obligations that East Timorese custom requires.

By examining rituals in three settings – public space, the private space inside houses, and the intermediate space of verandas and gardens – I show the significance of the spatial dimensions of rituals and other practices and how these are closely related to the social processes of the household and the architectural space of the house. The reconstruction of the physical environment, especially repairs to residents' private homes, was a critical part of the processes of recovery, as houses were needed not just for shelter, but also because they helped define ritual spaces and enabled householders to define permeable borders. Bidau residents, through their participation in rituals and other activities in shifting social spaces, created and recreated their dynamic and supportive social order.

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DECLARATION ON ETHICS

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (1999), the *Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (1997), the *James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics, Standard Practices and Guidelines* (2001), and the *James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (2001). The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (approval number H1069).

Signature

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Early experiences can shape our future direction and interests. For me, a significant event was my attendances at ANZAC day marches at an early age. My grandfather Ernest G. Field was a gunner with the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade in the First World War. I can recall my grandfather proudly wearing his war medals and taking my sisters and me to these rituals before I was nine years old. Afterwards, he would take us to an ice cream parlour and treat us to passionfruit ice cream. Honouring those who had died in war and watching the processions of those who participated in the street parade intrigued me, and when I was older, I continued to attend these ceremonies, beginning with the dawn service held on the 25 April each year, the date that commemorates this event. The day was not only an occasion for remembering those who had died in past wars, but was also one that celebrated new life and held special significance for me, because it is my birth date. In his latter years, my grandfather became an irritable man, and his personality changed considerably. Then there was no talk of post-traumatic stress disorder. I am not sure what contributed to his personality change, as I was young when he died, but I know that the war left him scarred, as having a bomb explode near him affected his hearing.

I was also affected by my grandmother's destiny. I remember her as a very refined woman who kept abreast of current events and youth fashions, thereby able to discuss our childhood fads. My grandmother's health deteriorated and my grandfather made a decision to place her in a nursing home, as he was unable to care for her. My grandmother cried every Sunday when we visited, and although she was cared for in a respectable facility, it was only years later when I worked as a social worker in palliative care that I realised what a difficult experience it was for my grandmother to leave her home. The *Sweet Honey in the Rock* song "No Mirrors in My Nana's House"

encapsulates the beauty of my grandmother – the beauty in everything was in her eyes. My grandparents, my ancestors, handed down to me values and traditions I have come to treasure.

Years later, during the early 1990s, I worked with refugees being the Co-ordinator who set up the first Asylum Seekers Centre in Australia in Surry Hills, Sydney. This was my first encounter with East Timorese asylum seekers (refugee applicants) who fled from the Dili massacre. My experience in this position developed my understanding of people who fled violent regimes and who experienced post-traumatic stress disorder. I was able to witness how social support in a community based setting assisted people overcome extremely difficult experiences. In addition to working in the refugee area, I later worked in the area of palliative care, being in charge of a social work department at a hospice. This provided me with privileged moments as I shared intimate experiences in some people's final days. Working in this setting provided opportunities to reflect on the meaning of life and death and re-evaluate my own priorities.

My life changed direction. I married. I moved to a new city. I purchased a house. I continued to work part-time in the palliative care area and started to write about issues that I felt passionate about – different cultures and death rituals. This change of direction led me to further study and to fieldwork in East Timor. Writing a dissertation for me has been very much about process and reflection. It is not an undertaking I could have done alone. Many people have assisted me along the way. Most importantly has been my husband, Francis Elvey, who lovingly supported me while I was studying. Not only has Frank been supportive of my studies, but also as my closest companion, he was able to listen deeply to experiences that I found challenging, exhilarating and unnerving. Moving to East Timor to be with me, he shared some of my happiest times and darkest

moments. Frank patiently remained working in East Timor for a year when I returned to live on campus at James Cook University to write this thesis. He was also most helpful in proofreading drafts of my work and offering insightful suggestions.

Some friends require special acknowledgement. Amongst these are my dear friends Jane Fowler and Jack Jagtenberg who provided much support by offering rest periods with them in Sydney as well as regular contact and support parcels when I was living in East Timor. Jane was instrumental in providing advice on the analysis of my data for the household interviews, and I acknowledge Jack's generous and patient assistance with the technical production of maps and diagrams.

I would also like to acknowledge the support and friendship of Helen McCabe who was completing a dissertation in philosophy at the same time in Sydney, but always had the time to exchange ideas, debate issues and keep in touch, even when the communications system in East Timor proved to be difficult and expensive.

I thank my supervisors, Dr Rosita Henry and Dr Douglas Miles, for their encouragement and assistance during my candidature. I appreciated the Postgraduate Work in Progress Seminars at James Cook University organised by Rosita and attended by Doug and Rohan Bastin, and my work benefited from their comments and the participation and intellectual exchange in these seminars by Wendy Hillman, Darlene McNaughton, Celmara Pocock, Sally Babidge and Jane Harrington. During the early months of my candidature, I appreciated the assistance of Kirsty Bell, with whom I shared an office. Other postgraduate students, including Mick Morrison, John Edgar and Melissa Carter, provided companionship and coffee breaks during our busy schedules. I value the friendship of Wendy Hillman who was very generous in searching through my filing cabinet on several occasions when I needed to locate material while I was in Dili. Thanks also to the secretarial support of Louise Lennon and Audrey Logan and

technical assistance of Robert Palmer from the School of Anthropology, Archaeology and Sociology. I acknowledge the financial assistance James Cook University provided with a grant under the Doctoral Merit Research Scheme in 2001, a grant under the Doctoral Research Scheme in 2003 and a Completion Scholarship in 2004. I was fortunate during my final year to live on campus at University Hall, which provided me with the opportunity to focus entirely on my work in a beautiful tropical setting with abundant birds, wallabies and other wildlife. I would like to thank the staff of University Hall for making my stay comfortable, in particular, Margaret Dousset for her support, and the Dale family of Jacqui, Grant, Oliver and Elliot with whom I shared many conversations and evening meals. I am grateful for the companionship, humour and consideration of Ursula Kolkolo and Jenny Gorton who were great housemates.

I am appreciative of the insights and valuable assistance provided by Professor James Fox, who acted as a supervisor when I was at the Australian National University as a recipient of a National Visiting Scholarship for two months during 2002. I would like to thank Professor Derrick Silove, Director, Psychiatry Research and Teaching Unit, The University of New South Wales and Zachary Steel, Clinical Psychologist, Psychiatry Research and Teaching Unit, The University of New South Wales who both offered suggestions and helpful comments on my work in its early stages.

I developed close friendships with East Timorese students studying at James Cook University during 2001, and they offered much support to me when I lived in East Timor. Amongst them was Acholy, whose family incorporated Frank and myself into their family life and with whom the bonds of friendship deepened. The core family consisted of Maria Maia, Antonio dos Reis, Acholy, José, Julio, Dionisio, Augustino, Florentina, Nica Fatima, Nando, Nafania, Luis, Eduarda, Antonino, Ella and Zania. We attended many celebrations with them, and Sunday afternoons were not complete unless

we spent time at their home. We witnessed many additions to their family and were pleased to accept the privilege and responsibility of being godparents for Nafania.

The Missionary Dominican Sisters of the Rosary in Bidau Motaklaran offered me warm hospitality and generously welcomed me as part of their household during my initial stay with them during November 2000. I enjoyed many festivities and shared many meals at their house during my fieldwork. I continue to value their ongoing friendship. Dominican sisters in Australia have been my friends and supporters for many years, including Annette Dooley, Judy Lawson and Elizabeth Landon who have been instrumental in encouraging my intellectual pursuits and have fostered my interests in seeking knowledge and ongoing education. Fr. Herman Deus was my first Tetun teacher, and I thank him for his help and encouragement to learn this language.

Thanks also to Dionisio Babo Soares and Tim Armstrong who both offered an official response to a paper I presented at Universidade Dili on 14 October 2003. Humour is important when writing a dissertation, and I would like to thank Mary Patience for reminding me of this. I valued her friendship when she was in East Timor and was pleased we were able to continue our friendship when she left. Mary had every confidence in this thesis reaching its fruition, and her good humour and encouragement was very much appreciated.

It is not possible to acknowledge the many wonderful people who enriched my life during my visits to East Timor, and I endeavoured to thank people along the way. However, many friends and colleagues in East Timor and Australia who offered help and support in different ways deserve special acknowledgement. They include: Deborah Warren-Smith, Matias Gomas, David Ganter, Isabel Guterres, Susanne DeCrane, Louise Maher, Maria and Michael Maher, Fernando Pires, Kym Easton, Margaret and Terry Jenkins, Judi Galvin, Paul Collins and Marilyn Hatton, Rob Stevens and Tamara

Stojanovic, Heidi Michaels, José Teixeira, Helder Santos, Yeni, Sico, Adelia and Alfonso.

Importantly, I would like to acknowledge the many residents of Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru who willingly participated in my research and welcomed me into their homes on many occasions. You have provided more than answers to my many questions by accepting me and allowing me to participate in your everyday living. I have not named you personally to protect your privacy.

GLOSSARY

I = Indonesian. P = Portuguese. The remaining foreign terms are Tetun words.

<i>affine</i>	A relationship through marriage ties. It may include the relationship between corporate groups linked by marriage between their members.
<i>agnate</i>	A person related by patrilineal descent.
<i>Aitarak</i>	Thorn. The main militia group operating in Dili during 1999, led by Eurico Guterres.
<i>aldeia</i>	Sub-village. I have translated this term as village section.
<i>bebak</i>	'Palapa': stalk of palm-leaves used to build walls of Timorese houses; <i>bebak tali-metan</i> gamuti stalk(s).
<i>benze</i>	To bless; blessing
<i>barlake</i>	Bridewealth
<i>Besi Merah Putih</i> (I)	Red and White Iron. The militia group based in Liquica led by Manuel de Sousa.
<i>consanguine</i>	In kinship studies, a relationship by blood, that is, a relative by birth.
<i>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah</i> (I)	The provincial level of the Indonesian Representative Assembly
<i>Falintil</i>	<i>Forças Armadas de Timor Leste</i> (P) (East Timor National Liberation Army)
<i>festa</i>	Festive celebration, party; usually used to refer to the celebration for a wedding
<i>fetosaa</i>	Wife-taking lineage; wife-takers
<i>Fretilin</i>	<i>Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Independente</i> (P), (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor)
<i>hatama sasán</i>	Gathering of wife-givers and wife-takers to collect contributions in the way of live chickens, pigs, goats, vegetables, other foodstuffs and drinks for a wedding party. This gathering is usually held at the home of the wife-givers a few days prior to a wedding.

InterFET	International Forces in East Timor led by Australia
<i>kios</i> (I)	Small stall, kiosk
<i>Kopassus</i>	Indonesian Special Forces Command
<i>liurai</i>	King, ruler of a Timorese kingdom
<i>lulik</i>	Ancestral spirit, sacred object, totem, holy
<i>mikrolet</i> (I)	Small mini-bus. These vehicles are the most common forms of public transport around Dili and to districts such as Liquica, Aileu and Manatuto. Larger buses commute between Dili and Lospalos and Dili and Maliana.
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
<i>oratóriu</i>	Wooden cabinet similar in style to a tabernacle containing religious statues, crucifix, holy pictures, etc.
PKF	Peace Keeping Force
POLDA	<i>Polisi Daerah</i> (I) (regional police station in Lampu Merah, Dili)
Polres	<i>Polisi Regimen Daerah</i> (I) (police station in Mercado Lama, Dili)
PRADET	Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor
SGI	<i>Satgas Intel; Satuan Tugas Intellijen</i> , or Combined Intelligence Task Force, directed by Kopassus. Sometimes referred to as Intel.
<i>tais</i>	Traditional woven textile. Different districts have various designs.
<i>Tetun</i>	Previously the lingua franca of East Timor. According to the Constitution, Tetun and Portuguese are the official languages in the Democratic Republic of East Timor
<i>Tim Saka</i>	Paramilitary group operating in Baukau
TNI	<i>Tentara Nasional Indonesia</i> (I) (Indonesian National Army)
UNAMET	United Nations Assistance Mission in East Timor
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor

UNMISET	United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor
<i>umalulik</i>	Traditional sacred house
<i>umane</i>	Wife-giving lineage; wife-givers
<i>xefe-suku</i>	Village chief

ORTHOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This thesis contains many Tetun¹ words, which are italicized, spelt and deployed as foreign terms. Tetun has been the lingua franca of East Timor for many centuries. It is one of the languages most commonly spoken in Bidau. There are two types of Tetun spoken in East Timor. The form spoken in Dili is known as Tetun Prasa, Tetun Dili or just Tetun. Tetun Terik is the other form spoken in a number of rural districts, along both sides of the border with West Timor and in rural districts along the south coast. Tetun Dili has many loan words from Portuguese and Bahasa Indonesia. Tetun and Portuguese are the national languages of East Timor. For the spelling of Tetun words, I have relied on the 2001 version of the Standard Tetun-English dictionary produced by Geoffrey Hull and the *Matadalan Ortográfiku Ba Tetun-Prasa* compiled by the Instituto Nacional de Linguística (2002). I have noted after a foreign term (T) for Tetun, (P) for Portuguese, (I) for Bahasa Indonesia and (M) for Makassae. Some words used by residents in Bidau were not contained in the dictionary. For the spelling of terms from the Makassae language, I have used the spelling provided by inhabitants from Birunbiru.

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