

# **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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## 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).

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## 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.

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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.

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## 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 Tetun<sup>1</sup> 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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**Figure 1. Map of East Timor**

## INTRODUCTION

There were no birds in Dili.<sup>1</sup> I was not sure whether people had eaten them in a desperate search for food or whether they too had fled following the atrocities after the 1999 UN-sponsored referendum. I found out later that hunting birds in East Timor (Timor-Leste)<sup>2</sup> was a popular practice, not only for the pleasure of hunting, but also for consumption.<sup>3</sup> In oral traditions, birds such as the *nuri*, *sasi* and *tolu* are often described in ritual speech.<sup>4</sup> Middelkoop (1963) recorded a number of narratives with references to the *nuri* bird. He provides an explanation for one such reference in the ritual for the dead: “When one of these days the bird screams it is my soul announcing my death, so that I have been released from rope and stocks, I have pulled them off, both rope and stocks” (Middelkoop 1963:128).

When I arrived in East Timor on Saturday, 4 November 2000, it was as if Dili, the capital city, had also been through death. While traumatic events during 1999 had left the physical environment severely damaged and the East Timorese suffering from horrendous ordeals, the city and its citizens were also being released from rope and stocks, though this was a slow and painful process.

This thesis concerns Bidau, which is an urban village located in Dili. My attention focuses on the ways in which the residents of this village have been able to live with the suffering they experienced during and following the violent conflict that erupted throughout East Timor in 1999. In the prelude to and aftermath of the plebiscite in which East Timorese rejected autonomy within Indonesia, thus showing their desire to be an independent nation, the residents experienced suffering in many different contexts. The diverse forms and impacts of this suffering became evident to me over twenty-six months of fieldwork from November 2000 to October 2003.

I explore the connections that were paramount for enabling 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 peace was restored in the country, 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 have facilitated and promoted healing, as have various religious beliefs and practices. As Humphrey (2002:9) writes, “the emphasis on ‘healing’ of traumatised victims and societies must be understood as making life sufferable once again, not overwhelmed and isolated by fear and horror.” In line with Hahn (1995:7), who provides a broad definition of healing “as the redress of sickness,” I analyse the healing in Bidau as a broad process that encompasses the everyday relations and activities in which Bidau residents engage to repair the social fabric after conflict.

I distinguish three categories of residents who reside in the village – Portuguese Period Settlers (settlers prior to 7 December 1975), Indonesian Period Settlers (settlers from 8 December 1975 to 30 August 1999) and Post-ballot Residents (people who came to Bidau from 1 September 1999 onwards). A quarter of the people residing in Bidau are from the Makassae ethnolinguistic group, and their origin villages are located in a rural district I pseudonymously call Birunbiru.<sup>5</sup> Makassae from Birunbiru spanned the three timeframes for settlement, arriving in Bidau from 1973. As well as using the pseudonym Birunbiru, I decided, after much deliberation, to use pseudonyms for all people referred to in this work.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to looking at different categories of residents, I examine practices and rituals<sup>7</sup> in three settings – public space, the private space inside houses and the intermediate space of verandas and gardens – as a way of analysing how activities contribute to healing. I identify social practices that have a spatial dimension and

consider the significance of this spatial dimension in the repair of the social order. Many anthropologists who have debated issues concerning space and place have drawn on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962).<sup>8</sup> In East Timor, Elizabeth Traube (1986:59, 160-161) has described the significance of the ordering of space by directional co-ordinates, both for ritual space and the house structure. In Bidau, I noted that directional co-ordinates in relation to space do not appear to be overtly significant, yet people do organise their social relations spatially in relation to their houses. After 1999, Bidau residents reconstituted and reshaped public, private and intermediate spaces according to what they required for everyday activities and ritual life. The permeable boundaries they constructed as they rebuilt houses and fences enabled them to distinguish between insiders and outsiders and redefine the spaces needed for the ritual life that was central to their recovery and well-being.

### **Field site**

My fieldwork site, which I refer to as Bidau throughout this thesis, covered the two village sections called Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru. During Indonesian rule, Bidau Motaklaran, Bidau Tokobaru (and another section Bidau Massau) were governed at *suku* (T) (village) level by the Bidau Santa Ana<sup>9</sup> village administration led by the *xefe-suku* (T) (village chief). Bidau Lecidere is another *suku* located in the vicinity, but separated from Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru by a main road. The administration of these villages changed under the United Nations administration that commenced in late 1999 and following the appointment of an East Timorese government after independence on 20 May 2002.

Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru are situated within a 15 minute walk from the *Parlamento Nacional* (P) building and the main national government offices along the coastal road heading east towards Cape Fatucama. Residents occupy houses built on



18 hectares of land between two canals, which discharge accumulated debris into the sea during torrential rains.<sup>10</sup> The property flanked by these canals stretches inland from the coastal road to the Dili National Hospital (see Figure 3).

Anderson (1991:6) explains the difficulties of defining any community and argues that “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness but by the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson 1991:6). The residents living in Bidau do not comprise a single homogeneous bounded community, but rather a number of communities, which are by no means static and which stretch beyond the physical bounds of Bidau. As Massey (1994:153) notes, “the instances of places housing single ‘communities’ in the sense of coherent social groups” has probably been quite rare. There are differences in how Bidau residents move through the village sections, their networks of kin, friends and neighbours and the broader connections they make or imagine between themselves. Some older Bidau residents who settled during the Portuguese administration consider their households to be the core population and the foundation for the integration of all households in Bidau, with later arrivals linked to them through various social ties. Birunbiru residents think of community more in terms of their own ethnolinguistic group, stretching from Bidau to their origin villages in Birunbiru. Some residents who regularly participate in public religious rituals envisage Bidau as a community that can mobilise as a congregation for processions through the streets and at the local grotto on significant religious occasions.

As Massey (1994:154-155) identifies, networks of social relations stretching geographically beyond the local give rise to a sense of place “which is extroverted” and not restricted to the “internalized history” of a particular location. Thus, the sense of place for Bidau residents is bigger than the confines of Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau

Tokobaru. The cemetery of the residents is located in Bidau Santa Ana, and they share it with residents of surrounding areas. Their cockfighting pit is in Bidau Lecidere. The markets and shops they use are elsewhere in Dili, as are their churches, places of work, many of the kin they visit and some of the homes where they participate in wedding and funeral ceremonies. Some residents return regularly to their origin villages in rural areas to assist with agricultural production, attend special events and engage in ritual activity held at *umaluliks* (T) (traditional sacred houses). This is especially the case for the Makassae from Birunbiru district. Bidau residents, through their extensive social relations, movement and communications, are also linked to the wider world, including such places as Indonesia, Australia, Portugal, England and Ireland.

### **Research methodology**

This thesis explores new ground as an ethnography of an urban village in post-conflict East Timor. There has been no major ethnographic work completed on any villages in the city of Dili. There has been some work done on the Makassae ethnolinguistic group, notably by two anthropologists, Shepard Forman and Toby Lazarowitz, who have written in detail about the Makassae and who both worked in rural districts. However, neither conducted research in the sub-district from which the majority of Makassae speaking settlers of Bidau originate. A member of the Makassae group, Justino Guterres, has done some research on the Makassae in Birunbiru as part of a study of Makassae in several districts, but his research did not include villages from which most Bidau Makassae residents have come.

This ethnography gives voice to the residents of Bidau, many of whom told me that they wanted people in Australia and elsewhere to know how much they had suffered. In telling their stories, I faced the ethical dilemmas that confront researchers when dealing with sensitive material and the responsibility of presenting information in

a way that will not betray confidences or cause harm (Mason 1996; Silverman 2000; O'Toole 2002).

It is important to recognise the agency of the subjects studied. Bidau residents, according to their various capacities, were very much agents in their recovery and the reconstruction of the village sections. Throughout the thesis, I include narratives and experiences of many residents to show the variations in their potency and opportunities as well as the difficulties they encounter. As Moore (1999:15) highlights, "... anthropological theory now tries to locate the agency of the anthropologist within the same frame as the agency of others, and thus to develop new forms of social engagement that ensure a radical departure from the earlier situations of anthropologists speaking for others." Anthropologists have also pointed out that acts of violence sometimes render some people as passive and unable to express themselves. Lutz *et al.* (1999:104) state, "We will also have to examine our fetishizations of "agency": some people, in some places and times, cannot act as agents in anything more than the nominal sense." This point is applicable to some people in Bidau. However, by presenting concerns of Bidau residents and the problems they discuss and my participation in, observations of, and analysis of their special ceremonies and everyday living, I endeavour to represent in this thesis issues that are also relevant for silent voices.

Scheper-Hughes (1992:29) suggests that discussion about fieldwork should consider the ethnographer as the "clerk of the records," that the task is to document key events in the history of a community, to record the personal history of members, including their genealogies, while attending various rituals, such as births, marriages and deaths. This approach to recording main events is especially significant in a country that has had much of its documented history destroyed during periods of upheaval.

Prior to my first visit to East Timor in November 2000, I undertook a short course in Bahasa Indonesia at James Cook University, which provided me with basic skills to greet people, catch taxis and purchase items in shops. Although Bidau residents did not pose objections to communicating in Indonesian, they were keen for me to learn Tetun, and their encouragement influenced my decision to take Tetun lessons.

For my first visit to East Timor in November 2000, I stayed with the Missionary Dominican Sisters of the Rosary in Bidau Motaklaran.<sup>11</sup> During this period, I travelled to various locations throughout East Timor to consider sites for conducting fieldwork. These trips included visits to Gleno, Ermera, Baukau, Aileu, Suai, Liquica and Balibo. The purpose of the visits to Gleno, Ermera, Baukau and Aileu was to see the extent of physical destruction in the country, assess resources needed for fieldwork (e.g. transport and accommodation) and, if possible, talk with local residents and community leaders about my research. For a trip to Suai, Covalima district, I accompanied two Filipino doctors who worked for the International Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (IRCT). This organisation was implementing an emergency psychosocial recovery program “*O Regresso á Alegria*” (Return to Happiness) for children and their families who had experienced traumatic events. I visited Ave Maria Church where Mahidi and Laksaur militia with support from *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI) (I) (Indonesian National Army) and Brimob (Mobile Brigade) personnel had killed at least 200 people, including three priests, on 6 September 1999 (Dunn 2002:75).<sup>12</sup> In Liquica, I met with Fr. Yosef Daslan, an Indonesian priest originally from Flores, and discussed with him the possibility of conducting research in Liquica. He had lived in Liquica for six years and was the assistant priest when people were massacred at the church on 6 April 1999. In Balibo, Bobonaro district, I visited the house where five journalists, (two Australians,

two British and one New Zealander), had been killed by Indonesian soldiers on 16 October 1975.<sup>13</sup>

As well as these journeys to various rural districts, I visited several organisations in Dili, including the National University, the office of Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor (PRADET) and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs). I attended many rituals, including a memorial service at Santa Cruz cemetery on 12 November 2000 and a procession to *Kristu Rei* (T) (Christ the King) on 26 November 2000, held to celebrate the feast of Christ the King.<sup>14</sup> I also attended a rally held in *Lapangan Pramuka* (I) (scouts field) in central Dili on 28 November 2000, to mark the anniversary of East Timor's short-lived independence when Fretilin (*Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Independente*, Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) took control of the country in 1975.

After much consideration of possible field sites and discussions with residents in Bidau Motaklaran who had welcomed me, I decided on Bidau as one fieldwork site.<sup>15</sup> I also initially decided on the town of Liquica as a second field site and returned there in January 2001 for further meetings with Fr. Yosef. For eight months in 2001, I travelled to this town by *mikrolet* (I) (minibus) one day per week to meet with various groups and collect data, including interviews with women from the widows' group *Rate Laek* (T) (without graves).<sup>16</sup> While my research in Liquica contributed to my knowledge about the impact of the 1999 conflict on East Timorese, I later decided to concentrate my thesis solely on the village of Bidau. Nevertheless, visits to Liquica and other rural districts broadened my knowledge about social suffering and celebratory events in East Timorese culture and informed my study of Bidau.

During my fieldwork, I shared a house with an East Timorese family in Bidau Motaklaran, renting two rooms. This was my base for participant observation, and while

living there, I participated in village life and many rituals, including weddings, funerals and religious processions. From 22 January 2001 until 24 July 2001, in order to facilitate ethnographic fieldwork, I conducted a population study of 148 households out of the 153 households in Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru.<sup>17</sup> For the purposes of this study, the term “household” refers to a group of people living in the one house, not necessarily related by kinship or marriage. I interviewed one member of each household, a total of 73 men and 75 women. I asked the members of households to self-select the person for interview.<sup>18</sup> I conducted the interviews with the assistance of interpreters, mostly using Tetun or Makassae. A few respondents requested that the interview be in Indonesian.

In these interviews, I carried out a genealogical survey of each household and attempted to document the impact of the atrocities of 1999. The format for the interview was in two parts. Part A related to the composition of the household and listed the number of occupants in current residence, their ages, places of birth, relationship to interviewee and occupations. In this section, I also recorded the daily activities, financial situation, education levels, recreational interests and religious beliefs and practices as reported by the interviewee. Part B related to issues of loss and difficulties the interviewee experienced due to the 1999 conflict. In this section, I recorded deaths of family members in the conflict, disappearances of people without their family having any information about their fate, destruction to property, the place of refuge where the interviewee went when violence erupted, interviewees’ strategies for coping with their losses, their hopes for East Timor and their personal plans for their own futures. During the initial stages of fieldwork, I also conducted a number of more in depth life history interviews in order to gain a deeper understanding about residents’ experiences of living in Bidau.

In 2001, I interviewed twelve teachers at the local primary school and five teachers at the nearby secondary school to investigate how the conflict had disrupted education. I collected additional data from students at the National University, where in 2001, I twice interviewed a class of 50 English language students about disruption to their education. During the second meeting, in order to increase my understanding of the effects of trauma on the East Timorese population, I administered the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire to 43 students from the class.<sup>19</sup> In addition, for eight months, I worked as a volunteer one day a week with a trauma counselling service among young offenders at Bekora Prison and later in rural communities.

The timing of my fieldwork is important in that I commenced my interviews in Bidau on 22 January 2001, 16 months after widespread destruction in the country. At that time, residents wanted to talk about their hardships, which was not the case a couple of years later, by which time residents wanted to talk about the future rather than the past.

At the end of my fieldwork, I held a meeting in the garden of the house in which I resided. This meeting, on Sunday, 12 October 2003, was to present the key findings of my research to residents of Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru and to give them an opportunity to respond. During this meeting, which included a powerpoint presentation beamed onto a screen in the garden, I was also able to check with residents some points that required further clarification. An invitation was also extended to residents, as well as various non-governmental organisations, to attend the Universidade Dili on Tuesday, 14 October 2003, where I presented a paper, “Places of Suffering and Pathways to Healing: Post-Conflict Life in Bidau, East Timor”, the purpose of which was to facilitate discussion and critique of my research.

## **Situating this thesis within the literature**

### *Large-scale violence, trauma and suffering*

This thesis is about an urban village in East Timor that was undergoing reconstruction after the 1999 conflict. Initially, I intended to work with diverse groups to investigate mass trauma and bereavement resulting from violent social and political turmoil. Thus, my study extended beyond the village of Bidau to include research with university students and the group *Rate Laek* in Liquica. However, I became aware that a broader framework was required to include material about the everyday lives, practices and rituals of research participants, as I was only obtaining snapshots of people's experiences. Therefore, I refocused my study on the local everyday world of residents in Bidau where I lived for more than two years. My research centred on Bidau residents who were in the process of rebuilding their environment and lives after severe disruption and as their new nation was emerging. As Kleinman and Kleinman (1991:277) state, "ethnographers enter the stream of social experience at a particular time and place, so accordingly their description will be a cross-sectional slice through the complexity of on-going priorities and a part of the temporal flow of changing structures of relevance."

While my research is the result of anthropological fieldwork, no discipline stands alone, and by advancing an interdisciplinary dialogue between anthropology and psychology, my work aims to achieve a broader understanding of the complexities of violence and suffering in Bidau. Various anthropologists have written extensively about violence in different settings (Comaroff 1985; Tambiah 1986; Taussig 1987; Kapferer 1988; Feldman 1991; Scheper-Hughes 1992; Daniel 1996). In recent years, despite past differences between the disciplines of anthropology and psychology, there has been a move towards an interdisciplinary approach to studying large-scale violence and the



aftermath of multiple traumas upon populations. Suárez-Orozco *et al.* (2000:11) advocate an interdisciplinary dialogue between psychoanalysis and anthropology arguing that such an undertaking can be rewarding despite the different intellectual traditions and professional cultures. The essays contained in their book highlight the complexities of large-scale violence and trauma, which cannot be explained in a single approach or attributed to a single origin of human violence (Suárez-Orozco *et al.* 2000:9). In their introduction, Suárez-Orozco *et al.* (2000:14-21) trace the therapeutic approaches to massive trauma including that adopted by the physician and anthropologist W.H.R. Rivers to treat “combat neurosis” after the first World War, the treatment of massive trauma after World War Two and the term “post-traumatic stress disorder,” which became a standard concept after the Vietnam War in the 1980s.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was officially recognised in 1980 when it was included in the psychiatric nosology in the third edition of the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III)*. However, psychiatric knowledge of the disorder had been identified as early as the 1860s when John Erichsen, a physician, recognised symptoms while examining victims of railway accidents (Young 1995:5). The diagnostic criteria for PTSD were revised in DSM-III-R in 1987 and again in 1994 with the publication of DSM-IV. Young (1995:117, 287-290) provides a summary of the classification and revisions of PTSD.

There has been much emphasis on the manifestation of trauma in individuals, and therefore the focus on psychological mechanisms has taken precedence over studies on massive trauma, which pay attention to the social and cultural processes. Suárez-Orozco *et al.* (2000:20) note that “PTSD has become a blanket term for a wide array of conditions.” Criticisms have been levelled at the use of the term PTSD, which does not distinguish “whether the trauma was inflicted on an individual or group, through natural

disaster, conventional warfare, state terror, or interpersonal acts of violence” (Suárez-Orozco *et al.* 2000:20-21). The cause of the trauma is significant for how people respond. As Summerfield (1998:34) argues, “War-affected populations are largely directing their attention not inwards, to ‘trauma’, but outwards, to their devastated social world.”

In Bidau, residents did not focus on trauma, which for many was a foreign concept, but on normalising everyday life and life cycle rituals after severe disruption. Alex Agenti-Pillen (2003) raises issues about the disruption of the social fabric, which is often not considered when addressing concerns about possible future conflicts. She is also critical of the international humanitarian discourse in Sri Lanka that employs the translation of trauma terms and expressions into high Sinhala, the language of the political elite. Such concepts are not routinely used by members of rural communities who speak colloquial Sinhala (Agenti-Pillen 2003).

This thesis provides a different perspective to that found in other studies on the impact of the violence in East Timor. Modvig<sup>20</sup> *et al.* (2000) and Zwi *et al.* (2002) focused on the psychological impact of the violence and on psychosocial recovery. Modvig *et al.* (2000) claim that one-third of approximately 750,000 residents surveyed by the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) during 2000 had symptoms of PTSD. In their study they found that more than half (58.9%) of the respondents lost their houses due to the violence throughout 1999 and some respondents considered losing their homes and going without food as the most terrifying experience of their lives.<sup>21</sup> Their study also identified that East Timorese turn primarily to family members, the church and the local community for support. I likewise found that in Bidau, the loss of homes preoccupied the majority of residents and that they too relied

on family, church and neighbours for support, and few residents reported symptoms of PTSD.

Zwi *et al.* (2002) document reflections of a workshop on mental health services provided by PRADET, an organisation that responded to the needs of people who were mentally ill in a country where no mental health services had previously existed. It aimed to promote general psychosocial recovery of the population and develop the skills of local workers in mental health care. PRADET was a consortium of Australian agencies led by the Psychiatry Research and Teaching Unit, University of New South Wales, and funded by the Australian Government's AusAID program. It later worked with the Ministry of Health to form the first National Mental Health Service in East Timor. Although such mental health services were becoming available, Bidau residents generally looked to their own resources to handle mental health issues, and those who did have symptoms of PTSD rejected offers of a referral to a trauma counselling centre.

As a number of organisations, including IRCT and PRADET, had begun to introduce the term "trauma" and set up counselling programs for PTSD in the country, it was important to investigate whether this was an appropriate cultural concept to understand people's reactions to violent upheaval. In a post-conflict country, health professionals trained in line with Western medical models expect to find high levels of traumatised people. What I found in Bidau was that a focus on individual trauma was not useful, as it can detract from the importance of the social worlds of survivors and the social resources available for recovery. Janoff-Bulman (1992), Jenkins (1996), Summerfield (1997) and Bracken (2002) are among an increasing number of people who also emphasise the importance of the social aspects of people's lives and criticise the individual trauma model in cross-cultural situations. In line with this position, I argue that we need to pay more attention to social exchanges in order to understand how

people recover from traumatic events. In Bidau, sociability is vibrant in many everyday activities, during religious processions and in the rich ritual life of wedding celebrations and mortuary rites.

Studies of peoples that have experienced widespread suffering due to systemic violence – such as Jewish, Cambodian, Rwandan and Afghani communities – provide a backdrop for a study of East Timorese sufferings. Summerfield (1998:9) notes there have been 160 wars and armed conflicts in the Third World since 1945, and these pre-date the 1999 conflict in East Timor and subsequent wars. Violent conflicts in West Papua, Maluku, Kalimantan Barat and Aceh provide part of the regional context.<sup>22</sup> However, despite the prevalence of war and resulting sufferings, the term “violence” can have many connotations, and its interpretation and impact can vary across cultures. “The languages, metaphors, and images in which violence is communicated and represented may vary enormously” (Gilsenan 2002:102). Anthropology insists on interpreting violence and conflict in all the detail of social and cultural contexts. “Violence and conflict have to be historically situated in the full complexity of very different forms ... they are formative of sociopolitical relations on the widest as well as the smallest scales” (Gilsenan 2002:102). In this thesis, I explore what violence means for Bidau residents.

While my research has focused on the impact of the 1999 conflict on Bidau residents, it is not a single event, but a series of violent events spanning many decades, that is etched into the memories of East Timorese. Carolyn Nordstrom (1994:11) argues “violence is not a ‘thing’ or an ‘event’ unchanging and monolithic, that is variously employed to achieve certain ends, but a practice that transforms society as it takes place.” She advocates that “rather than looking at violence in discrete parts – as structures, or actions, or policies – a more sophisticated understanding lies with the

intersection of practices, structures and symbols within cultural systems” (Nordstrom 1994:11). This is particularly relevant for a country such as East Timor. Past violent practices and behaviour, such as headhunting, clan fighting, invasions and occupations, have transformed East Timorese society. During the last century alone, people in East Timor have suffered because of the rebellion of Manufahi<sup>23</sup> in 1912, the Japanese invasion from 1942 to 1945, the Indonesian invasion in 1975, the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991, the 1999 post-referendum violence and more recent fears of violence in relation to internal and external security.

Looking at the aftermath of violence is not only about counting victims, but requires analysis of how death, injury to person and destruction of property affect survivors. While people in Bidau recounted distressing deaths of 1999, the point made by Robert Cribb (2001) is relevant. He argues that to focus on the statistics of mass deaths may not be that helpful as an entry point into understanding the aftermath of catastrophic events in East Timor, as it does not take into account the circumstances and extent of people’s suffering.<sup>24</sup> Cribb also raises questions and problems in relation to the statistics estimated of people killed in Indonesia (1965-1966) and East Timor (1975-1980). Almost a third of the population of the territory, 200,000, is the most common estimate of the number of East Timorese who perished as a result of the Indonesian occupation (Cribb 2001:88); however, Cribb contests the accuracy of this number. He suggests that the figure is more likely to be closer to 50,000 killed by Indonesian forces with perhaps another 50,000 dying from “hunger, privation and general hardship caused directly by the Indonesian occupation” (Cribb 2001:82). He discusses the moral issue of stating numbers to comprehend mass killings and states that numbers based on fragile assumptions should be presented tentatively, often prefixed by “perhaps,” and we

should bear in mind the serious moral consequences of being wrong (Cribb 2001:94-95).

Just as Bidau residents made known to me their personal hardships, on a broader scale, many East Timorese survivors of the atrocities during the Indonesian occupation related their stories to the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste (*Comissão De Acolhimento, Verdade E Reconciliação De Timor Leste*) (P) (CAVR). Despite debates about the cost and effectiveness of truth commissions, CAVR's work has made a valuable contribution towards community reconciliation, truth seeking and documentation of human rights violations in East Timor. CAVR's final report, when available, will include testimonies from many victims, information obtained from the public hearings conducted by the Commission and details from reports such as those from Amnesty International (1985) and other organisations that have documented violations of human rights in East Timor. Through its work, the Commission has been incorporating the social memory of events previously unrecorded into the official history of East Timor.

An issue that has received attention is whether it is legitimate to use the term genocide to characterise the human rights abuses in East Timor during the Indonesian administration. The psychiatrist, Derrick Silove (2000) explores the theoretical foundations for a claim of genocide in East Timor and the allegations of complicity in crimes against humanity by major western powers, including Australia. Such human rights issues, while not an immediate concern for Bidau residents when I met with them, may continue to shape debates in East Timor about justice in relation to past crimes against humanity. Sources that provide valuable information about the conflict during 1999 include Taylor (1999), Kohen (1999), Fox, James J. *et al.* (2000) and McDonald *et al.* (2002). In addition to these sources, several journalists, including Martinkus (2001),

Cristalis (2002), Greenlees *et al.* (2002) and Nicol (2002), have published books focusing on the 1999 violence and destruction throughout the country.

As well as exploring periods of disorder, it is important to identify the strengths that East Timorese draw on to re-establish themselves and rebuild the country during peaceful times. Post-conflict reconstruction in East Timor after 1999 has been a gradual process of rebuilding the physical and social environment. Kathleen Adams (2003) documents the transformation of Dili from a “scarred” city to one of appeal for danger-zone tourists. How Bidau residents went about repairing their dwellings provides insights into how they started to rebuild their lives. My thesis follows a series of narrative paths criss-crossing and winding between the physical structures of Bidau and through people’s lives.

### *Recovery through ritual*

The central argument of this thesis is that a lively sociality bolstered the bonds of social solidarity and this enabled Bidau residents to rebuild their lives after the conflict of 1999. Through participation in rituals and everyday activities and the redefining of social spaces, residents created multiple paths to healing as they reconstructed their social order. In line with Émile Durkheim’s finding that in response to disruptions, individuals focus on collective goals rather than on their individual needs, residents in Bidau rallied together for the first few years after 1999.<sup>25</sup> As Durkheim (1952:208) argues:

great social disturbances and great popular wars rouse collective sentiments, stimulate partisan spirit and patriotism, political and national faith, alike, and concentrating activity toward a single end, at least temporarily cause a stronger integration of society. The salutary influence which we have just shown to exist is due not to the crisis but to the struggles it occasions. As they force men to close ranks and confront the common danger, the individual thinks less of himself and more of the common cause.

When residents returned to Bidau from late September 1999, they were supportive of one another in a temporarily expanded public space. Some households incorporated people whose properties had been destroyed, residents shared food and resources with their kin and neighbours, and those staging marriage and mortuary rituals widely distributed invitations. The sociality of Bidau residents was also evident in religious ceremonies, sporting events for youth, and various everyday activities.

Durkheim's notions of collective feeling and collective effervescence shed light on the remaking of the Bidau social order in the critical years after 1999. Durkheim writes:

In certain historical periods, under the influence of some great collective upheaval, social interactions become more frequent and more active. Individuals seek each other out and assemble more often. The result is a general effervescence characteristic of revolutionary or creative epochs. Now, this hyperactivity has the effect of generally stimulating individual energies. People live differently and more intensely than in normal times. (2001:158)

In Bidau, having been released from oppressive forces, residents took to the streets often, shouting out to friends, conversing, praying together, assembling to engage in rituals such as processions, church services, and sporting events. They wore tracks through the rubble, creating multiple pathways between houses. Bidau was a noisy, highly interactive place. The people of Bidau were actively remaking their social world, and their rituals were a key part of this.

As Durkheim (2001:287) states, "rites are, above all, the means by which the social group periodically reaffirms itself." Considering the severe disruption caused by the 1999 conflict, it was crucial that Bidau residents re-engaged in rituals as soon as they were able. Arnold van Gennep (1960:3) argues that certain rituals can help reduce societal disorder. This is especially true of rites of passage, through a process of separation, transition and incorporation (van Gennep 1960:11). Catherine Bell



(1997:37), describing van Gennep's functionalist interpretation of rituals, writes: "Rituals are the means for changing and reconstituting groups in an orderly and sanctioned manner that maintains the integrity of the system." In Bidau, groups that were part of the remaking of the social order included kinship groups, household groups, religious groups, and youth groups. Van Gennep stresses that: "For groups, as well as for individuals, life itself means to separate and to be reunited, to change form and condition, to die and to be reborn." (1960:189). The violence had forcibly dispersed groups in Bidau. Some of their members had died, others did not return, but the groups themselves reformed and accepted new members. Each group staged rituals that strengthened the incorporation of its members within the group and legitimated the changes that had taken place in the group.

Weddings and funerals were particularly important in post-conflict Bidau. These life-cycle rituals involve kin groups, friends and neighbours. Central to the lives of Bidau residents are the forms of exchange instituted on marriage and continuing for mortuary rites. These bind groups over time and are the mechanisms for forming and strengthening alliance relationships and extending social networks. Marriage not only unites two individuals, but also connects their respective lineages and joins them in a united kin group. Communal feasts held as part of wedding celebrations and funerary rituals unite kin, friends and neighbours in social exchange. Such rites of eating and drinking together, as rites of incorporation, create a physical union between the participants (van Gennep 1960:29).

Life-passage rituals not only contributed to the rebuilding of community and a sense of social cohesion, they also contributed more directly to individual healing in Bidau. Bell (1997:37) argues that van Gennep "tried to suggest the importance of rites of passage to the psychological well-being of individuals, not just the structural-

functional well-being of the community as a whole.” Delays to rites of passage, such as marriages, mortuary rituals, and transitions between levels of education, contributed to suffering in Bidau, including anxiety about not being able to do what was socially expected. When, after 1999, the prescribed rituals could be performed, the suffering of the main participants in the rituals was reduced, as they became more closely integrated into the social body, expanded their social networks and reduced their anxiety.

The rebuilding of the social order entailed the redefining and reshaping of social spaces. A key concern for residents was to rebuild their homes; by doing so, they not only repaired their physical accommodation, but also reorganised the spaces so necessary for their rich ritual life. A temporarily enlarged public space opened up many opportunities for social interactions. In time, the reordering of public space, the private space inside houses, and the intermediate space of verandas and gardens redefined the physical and social boundaries necessary for conducting rituals. What van Gennep (1960:18) refers to as a “symbolic and spatial area of transition” was evident in Bidau. Thus, gates and archways were thresholds in religious processions, as were front doors for the commencement of marriage negotiations.

#### *Support and solidarity through kinship networks*

Bidau, as an urban neighbourhood in the city of Dili, is home to East Timorese from many different ethnolinguistic groups. However, in this complex blend of people and traditions, most people identified themselves as Tetun, Mambai or Makassae. These groups have been studied by David Hicks (Tetun), Elizabeth Traube (Mambai), Shepard Forman (Makassae), Toby Lazarowitz (Makassae) and Jacinto Guterres (Makassae). I have drawn on their research, especially when analysing marriage and funeral rituals, and in doing so have noted differences due to the different context in which I carried out my study. The major fieldwork for these anthropological studies was conducted prior to

1975 in rural settings. By contrast, I encountered these groups in an urban environment in a post-conflict setting. Anthropological research in eastern Indonesia is also very relevant. Professor James Fox has been a major contributor to research in this region (Fox 1973;1977;1993;1997).

In Bidau, descent is patrilineal (i.e., descent is traced from an ancestor down through a series of male links) and people follow virilocal residence (i.e., a married couple reside with the husband's group), though there are exceptions to this rule. For example, a few married couples resided with the wife's family. Due to the opportunities for different ethnolinguistic groups to interact in the city, many marriages contracted in Bidau during my field research were exogamous. After the 1999 conflict, many Bidau households changed, at least temporarily. As residents who had fled returned to rebuild destroyed houses and newcomers sought shelter in abandoned ones, the composition of households altered. Thus, in post-conflict Bidau, there were households consisting of a nuclear family and extended kin, others of up to three families, and some of people with no kin relationship. In this context, traditional kinship obligations remained very important, but how they could be fulfilled depended on the resources available, including support from friends and neighbours.

#### *Tetun networks*

David Hicks' (1976) book *Tetun Ghosts and Kin: Fieldwork in an Indonesian Community* is based on fieldwork conducted in 1966 and 1967. Hicks (1976:51-55) mainly worked in Viqueque amongst villages whose inhabitants spoke Tetun, though he devoted a brief section of his book to a comparison of Tetun and Makassae people. He identifies how ritual brings together many different aspects of that community's culture – religious beliefs, kinship practices, literature, ecology, even the architecture of the

house – and unites them in a comprehensive system (Hicks 1976:2). Other works that Hicks published on East Timor relate to myth and ritual.

Hicks (1990:15) employed the terms “clan” and “lineage” to describe the Tetun groups he studied in Viqueque, while he pointed out that elsewhere in Timor the term *uma* (T) or “house” has been applied to describe origin groups. According to Hicks (1990:23), a household may consist of a residential group rather than a kinship unit, for it may be composed of agnates, affines and adopted members. A man’s principal ties are with members of his household, and males of his hamlet, lineage and clan (Hicks 1990:23). Similar to what Hicks reports, Tetun, Mambai and Makassae residents in Bidau told me that upon the death of a father, the eldest son receives the most desirable property, and the youngest son receives the house, as his brothers are expected to marry before he does and then reside in their own houses. Any other sons share out the remainder of the inheritance among themselves.

Hicks (1990:19) claims that “asymmetric alliance is almost ubiquitous on Timor,” but points out that the Tetun people of Viqueque had “evolved away from an earlier asymmetric system.” At the same time, they retained the term *fetosá-umane* for the asymmetric transfer of women (Hicks 1990:20). The term *fetosá-umane* was still used in Bidau; however, it was mostly older residents who were familiar with the expression and the complicated web of obligations associated with marriages.

Bridewealth was a central part of marriage negotiations in post-conflict Bidau and agnates had key responsibilities, though what was emphasised was their willingness to contribute rather than their specific contributions, as these had to be negotiated in view of people’s changed circumstances after the losses they had suffered. Regarding bridewealth, and what agnates give and receive, Hicks (1990:24) writes:

Raising bridewealth is the most jurally important duty of lineage agnates. All the groom’s future agnates contribute, the largest portions being

given by the father, father's brothers and married elder brothers. When a daughter marries, the bridewealth is redistributed inside a narrower range. The father's brothers will receive shares if the bridewealth is more than the obligatory 'three pieces of meat', but the father always receives this prestation.

Bridewealth negotiated for Tetun marriages in Bidau generally followed this pattern of contribution and distribution. However, Bidau residents did not use the expression 'three pieces of meat,' even though for the Tetun marriages studied by Hicks (1976:83; 1990:19) the 'three pieces of meat' was a ritual part of the bridewealth and always consisted of a buffalo, a horse, and a pig. Nevertheless, in Bidau, buffalos and pigs, but not horses, continued to be major components of bridewealth, though sometimes the actual prestations were in cash. Hicks (1987:51) makes the point that a young man is not permitted to make contributions towards his own bridewealth, but this is not the case for Tetun marriages in Bidau.

In the parts of Viqueque district where Hicks conducted his fieldwork, it was the responsibility of agnates to assist with duties such as building a house, repairing garden fences and threshing rice. However, on occasions, affines could also be required to assist. Hicks observed that from the late 1960s this pattern changed, and money was used as an incentive to pay people, especially more distant agnates, to assist with such tasks. In post-conflict Bidau, agnates and affines who lived in the city helped with house building, as did friends and neighbours.

As Hicks (1990:32) has observed, we are not dealing here with strict rules and regulations to which people must conform, but rather strong preferences and expectations as to what can and cannot be done. Hicks notes that his informants "often failed to reach a consensus about what were the rules underlying correct behaviour," even though they generally agreed about what was not permitted (Hicks 1990:32). In Bidau, too, it was not possible to identify specific rules, though informants clearly

expressed preferences and had strong views on what should be done. For example, it was difficult to demand support from kin who lived in other districts and were thus a considerable distance away, yet it was considered an insult if they did not assist. One informant mentioned that some of the traditions for marriages in Dili were being lost, but he emphasised that the payment of bridewealth was still essential. This informant discussed the importance of agnates contributing towards bridewealth, explaining that it showed respect towards the man getting married and honoured his family. Agreeing to paying bridewealth has also be seen as acceptance of and honouring the woman and her family.

#### *Mambai networks*

Traube's (1986) study *Cosmology and Social Life: Ritual Exchange among the Mambai of East Timor* is one of the most significant works on East Timor during the Portuguese administration. Her study, built on field research in Aileu district from late 1972 to 1974 prior to the Indonesian invasion, focuses on ritual practices that Mambai regard as vital to their way of life. Traube's comprehensive analysis of Mambai marriage and funeral rites proved helpful for analysing a wedding involving Mambai, which I discuss in Chapter 5, and Mambai funeral rites in Chapters 6 and 7. In these chapters, I provide details of the exchanges that were negotiated for marriage and funeral rituals.

Traube (1986:13) stresses that social organisation in Mambai society is ritual organisation. Mambai regard ritual practices as central to their lives, and Traube points out that it is through such practices that they recreate their social order. The concept of the "house" for Mambai denotes not only a physical structure where rituals are performed, but also an affiliated group (Traube 1986:70). Traube (1986:66) identifies a connection between common origin and cooperation:

House groups are composed of people who recognize a common source or origin place, to which they return only on specified ritual occasions. The idea of common origins provides the basis for ritual cooperation in the present.

Mambai in Bidau had their origin places in Ermera, Aileu and Manufahi districts. Many were from Ermera and were related through either agnatic descent or marriage. Their cooperation with each other was very evident, whereas I did not find close associations between Mambai groups whose origin places were in different districts.

Traube found that for the Mambai the “preferred and most common form of marriage entails virilocal residence and the ritual incorporation of the wife into the husband’s house” (Traube 1986:88). This was true in Bidau, though there were cases of uxorilocal residence.

The Mambai practiced asymmetric alliance, and as Traube highlights: “Reciprocal but unequal exchanges of gifts and services distinguish the parties in an alliance as wife-givers and wife-takers (*umaena nor maen-heua*) and mark the former as superior in status” (Traube 1986:81). A key feature of Mambai marriages in the past was that Mambai preferred marriages that followed rules established by previous marriages. The preferred marriage for a man was to “a woman from a category that includes the mother’s brother’s daughter,” and the prescribed marriage for a woman was to “a man from a category that includes the father’s sister’s son” (Traube 1986:81-82). In Bidau, it was not essential that Mambai followed such rules for marriage. However, as with traditional systems for marriage the main marriage that I analyse in Chapter 5 was an exogamous marriage. The kin groups of the couple were both Mambai and were from different descent groups.

For the Mambai studied by Traube, the husband and his closest agnates pay bridewealth, and the payments on marriage were usually modest, with more costly prestations being given later for mortuary ceremonies (Traube 1986:88-89). In Bidau,

however, not only the prestations for mortuary ceremonies, but also the payments on marriage, could be very costly. Moreover, while there were similarities with Traube's description of gift exchange between the wife-givers and wife-takers, there were also differences.

The delay built into ritual exchange helps build up strong alliances. Several theorists, including Traube, have drawn on the work of Marcel Mauss to emphasise the delay that is required between the giving of prestations and counter-prestations. Mauss states: "In any society it is in the nature of the gift in the end to being its own reward.... Time has to pass before a counter-prestation can be made" (Mauss 1967 [1954]:34). As Traube (1986:90) argues:

From a sociological perspective, the purpose of the interval between marital exchanges and mortuary exchanges is the alliance relationship itself, secured through the total circulation of women, goods, and ritual services. Reciprocal obligations to attend death ceremonies held by marital allies are a form of delayed payment, imposed on both parties in an alliance relationship.

Determining the details of the prestations and counter-prestations requires much negotiation and knowledge of the history of previous exchanges. When agreement is reached, it can strengthen the alliance, but as my exegesis of a lamentation in Chapter 7 shows, the process of determining contributions can be arduous and full of tension.

#### *Makassae networks*

In Birunbiru, Makassae people followed a pattern of obligations similar to what Hicks described for Tetun people, in that agnates and affines assisted with house building, repairing fences, harvesting corn and threshing rice. Birunbiru people residing in Bidau regularly returned to Birunbiru to contribute their services for such tasks and for significant rituals. In particular, they returned to their origin villages for weddings and funerals, and these rituals often involved whole villages. During my fieldwork, I did not



become aware of any marriages or mortuary rituals held in Bidau for Birunbiru people, though a Bidau wedding was being planned between a Makassae man and a Mambai woman.

Shepard Forman worked with the ethnolinguistic group of Makassae in Quelicai in Baukau district for fifteen months during 1974-1975. For the Makassae that Forman studied, descent is patrilineal and “residence is almost universally patrilocal after a ‘reasonable’ amount of bridewealth is paid” (Forman 1980:154). Forman points out that “membership in and affinity with a named sacred lineage house (*oma bese*) are clearly recognized both within and without the house” (Forman 1980:154). Likewise, Birunbiru Makassae in Bidau trace their origins through males to particular sacred houses in Birunbiru. The word that Makassae informants used most frequently to describe to me these sacred houses was the Tetun word “*umalulik*” (sacred house).<sup>26</sup> The Birunbiru residents in Bidau returned at least annually to their sacred houses for rituals connected with harvests, marriages and funerals.

A study of the Makassae by Justino Guterres (1997), himself a Makassae, provides further insight into the Makassae alliance system and includes informative chapters on weddings and funerals. Guterres work, a Masters thesis titled *The Makasae of East Timor: The Structure of an Affinal Alliance System*, is based on ethnographic material that Guterres began collecting in several villages in Baukau district from as early as 1968. Guterres notes that for the Makassae a lineage is “a unilineal descent group comprising only traceable relatives living in a village unit who share a common *omafalu* (sacred house)” (1997:8). All Makassae associated with a particular sacred house therefore have binding obligations and responsibilities towards one another. A clan “is composed of a number of lineages who recognize that they are related, but cannot trace their ancestors to a common apical ancestor” (Guterres, Justino 1997:8).

The Birunbiru Makassae were a tight-knit group in Bidau, and though not all were related by descent or marriage, they referred to each other as family, thus expressing their social cohesion.

Makassae contract asymmetric alliances. Two individuals united in the wife-givers/wife-takers system are joined in a web of complex mutual obligations over a lifetime, as are the Tetun and Mambai and various other ethnolinguistic groups. Toby Lazarowitz, who studied the Makassae in the village of Borala, Viqueque district, from December 1974 to August 1975, describes and analyses symbolic values and the integration of Makassae society (Lazarowitz 1980). He employs the theory and methods of structural analysis to analyse marriage, agricultural work, social organisation and religion. Lazarowitz (1980:109-110) recorded that Makassae in Viqueque district have a series of gifts that have to be paid before a marriage is consummated, and only for these prestations can a man contribute his own livestock or goods. A second set of prestations, which can be after the actual wedding, are given by the agnates of the groom to the bride's father's group and counter-prestations are made by the agnates of the bride's father (Lazarowitz 1980:110). At a later stage further prestations are given, "which confirm the gradual movement of the man from the position of stranger to that of husband of the woman and an affine to her family" (Lazarowitz 1980:111-112).

As is the case with the Tetun and Mambai, delays in the giving of prestations and counter-prestations by the Makassae help ensure an alliance relationship. Further, mortuary rituals draw on many alliance relationships. While bridewealth only involves the wife-givers (*omarahe*) (M) and the wife-takers (*tofomata*) (M), death payments involve three categories, namely the family of the deceased, all that family's affines, both wife-givers and wife-takers (Lazarowitz 1980:132). As Lazarowitz notes: "The deceased's family is *tofomata* to its *omarahe* groups and *omarahe* to its *tofomata*

groups” (Lazarowitz 1980:134). When there was a death in the family of a Birunbiru resident, the extent of the alliance relationships and the strength of the Makassae networks were evidenced by the large number of Birunbiru Makassae who went back to Birunbiru for the mortuary rites.

When Makassae marriages are being contracted, each family may appoint a negotiator, being either their *anusobu* (M) (keeper of the word) or a respected older man or woman from their lineage to negotiate a settlement for bridewealth (Guterres, Justino 1997:49). This practice was evident in Bidau. On one occasion during my fieldwork, a village chief from Birunbiru came to Dili in the role of negotiator for a proposed marriage. This chief was from the same lineage as the future groom.

Guterres (1997:45) argues that rural to urban migration, mostly to Dili, has contributed to “large-scale exogamy” for the Makassae. In Bidau, Makassae residents had more freedom than those residing in Birunbiru to contract marriages with people from different ethnolinguistic groups, and class and education were important considerations when choosing a partner. Makassae who resided permanently in Birunbiru tended to marry endogamously.

#### *The role of customary law and traditional leadership*

The kinship obligations of Bidau residents were part of a wider system of *adat* (I) (customary law), which contributed to the social order in Bidau by regulating beliefs and practices. Dionisio Soares draws on Durkheim to argue that customary law is a social fact because of its ability to regulate social life and the power it has to oblige members of a society to act in line with social rules (Soares 1999:1-2).<sup>27</sup> As Soares argues, in a society made up of social groups that form alliances through marriages, customary law “provides the means of safeguarding social life and controlling behaviour based on kinship relations” (1999:7). Bidau residents, when asked about

matters such as why they paid bridewealth, conducted mortuary rites the way that they did, and participated in ceremonies in their *umaluliks*, said they were obliged to do such practices because of *adat*, and they saw this as adequate explanation.

Customary law has a moral character, including educative and restorative functions. It directs people towards appropriate behaviour and includes processes for compensation to be made to an aggrieved party for any wrongdoing. In the past, customary law in East Timor entailed both physical and social sanctions, including social isolation (Soares 1999:10). In Bidau, by conforming to kinship obligations and other aspects of *adat*, residents not only avoided the risk of social isolation, they also reinforced the sense of what was right behaviour and thus contributed to social solidarity. As Durkheim argues: “Law and morality represent the totality of bonds that bind us to one another and to society, which shape the mass of individuals into a cohesive aggregate” (Durkheim 1984:331).

Under Portuguese and Indonesian rule, customary law “practically disappeared from public for almost two centuries” as state courts dealt with criminal cases (Soares 1999:10). However, it continued to have a place in civil law, and East Timorese still relied on and preferred traditional ways of resolving disputes (Soares 1999:12). This was evident soon after residents returned to Bidau in late 1999, when some used customary law to settle disputes, such as fighting between victims and relatives of militia. Making use of customary law thus halted a possible escalation of violence and allowed relatives of militia and those with grievances against them to live in close proximity as neighbours.

In East Timor, traditional leadership and governmental authorities have had overlapping structures since Portuguese times. Ospina *et al* (2002) have studied the relationship between traditional power structures and the promotion of modern forms of

local governance in East Timor. As the powers of the state have developed, the role of traditional leaders has diminished, especially in Dili. However, local leaders still have an important role. In Bidau, the village chief (*xefe-suku*) had limited power and influence, but still helped maintain the social order, for example, through keeping village records and mediating disputes.

*The efficacy of religion in social and individual recovery*

Religion, especially Catholicism, functioned as a cohesive social force in Bidau. In making a distinction between religion and magic, Durkheim (2001:42) stresses the cohesive nature of religion:

Religious beliefs proper are always held by a defined collectivity that professes them and practises the rites that go with them. These beliefs are not only embraced by all the members of this collectivity as individuals, they belong to the group and unite it. The individuals who make up this group feel bound to one another by their common beliefs.

With the majority of the population of East Timor becoming Catholic during the Indonesian occupation, Catholic beliefs, the Catholic Church's moral teachings and participation in Catholic rituals became important influences on collective life. Churches provided relatively safe venues and opportunities for people to meet, not only for religious and social purposes, but also for clandestine activities. Many East Timorese went to church, prayed the Rosary, took on new forms of pilgrimage, and joined in religious processions, especially during the months of May and October. The receiving of Catholic sacraments replaced or added to existing animist practices. As most East Timorese ascribed to the same religion, religion was generally a cohesive, rather than divisive, influence. The strength of Catholic affiliation and practices carried on in the first few years after the 1999 conflict. In Bidau, many people participated in religious rituals during the initial period of my fieldwork and this was an important aspect of social recovery. Towards the end of my fieldwork, as other opportunities for

social gatherings in public spaces increased, participation in religious processions and attendance at church began to decline.

In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Durkheim (2001) set out to describe the basic elements of religion and focused on its social dimensions. For Durkheim, religion is something eminently social, and he argues that religious beliefs and rites function to strengthen the bonds of social solidarity. Thus, he writes that:

if religious ceremonies have any importance, it is because they set the collectivity in motion – groups gather to celebrate them. Their first effect, then, is to bring individuals together, to increase contacts between them, and to make those contacts more intimate (Durkheim 2001:258).

In line with Durkheim's position, I observed that the social aspects of religious rituals were extremely important in Bidau. Praying the Rosary together, walking to Mass together, and joining in religious processions not only reinforced friendships of those who knew each other but also enabled newcomers to get to know their neighbours. Moreover, these religious rituals provided residents with opportunities to traverse social boundaries. It did not matter when people had settled in Bidau or to which ethnolinguistic group they belonged, all could participate. Some religious rituals – the village processions of the Marian and Jesus statues – even included the entry into homes that would normally be out of bounds to outsiders.

As residents stated, attending religious functions provided them with opportunities to forget about their problems. Some spoke of finding solace by engaging with relatives and friends at these events, thus pointing to the efficacy of the social solidarity involved in the rituals. However, others said that praying was a source of comfort. In looking at how believers see the function of religion, Durkheim (2001:311) states:

The worshipper who has communed with his god is not only a man who sees new truths that the unbeliever does not know; he is a man who is *capable* of more. He feels more strength in himself, either to cope with the difficulties of existence or to defeat them.

Durkheim recognised the power of religion to strengthen the believer, but he argued that the real power behind this was the power of society (Durkheim 2001:313). Catherine Bell (1992:218) proposes that the above statement by Durkheim “may accurately capture the truth of ritually constructed power relations, not the delusions of collective emotion.” As Bell (1992:218) argues:

The person who has prayed to his or her god, appropriating the social schemes of the hegemonic order in terms of an individual redemption, may be stronger because these acts are the very definitions of power, personhood, and the capacity to act.

Bidau residents found strength in religion, and it was not just because religious rituals brought them together socially and built up social bonds. It was also because they experienced something empowering on a more individual level.

#### *The role of the state*

The social order is shaped not only by kinship networks and religion affiliations and practices, but also by government and the division of labour, the latter especially as societies become more complex and technologically developed (Durkheim 1952:378, 388-391). Even though the East Timorese administration has had limited reach since 1999 and the city of which Bidau is a part has not yet developed to the extent of being highly industrialized, both the state and occupational differentiation feature in Bidau.

By far the most critical change for East Timorese was that they had gained their freedom, and this contributed to the emergence of a new social order. For the first time, East Timorese had the opportunity to govern their own country. How East Timorese would incorporate their historical, political and cultural past into their advancement towards becoming a new sovereign state was unfolding during my fieldwork. In 2001, they voted for the Constituent Assembly (which developed the Constitution and later became the first Parliament) and in 2002 for their first President. The official

celebrations to mark the start of formal independence of the country on 20 May 2002 were both spectacular and memorable, a culmination of decades of struggle. The security provided by the United Nations, and later the East Timorese police and military, meant that East Timorese were able to live peacefully and express their nationalist sentiments and political affiliations. Many did so by joining political rallies prior to the 2001 election and by displaying the national flag at the time of independence.

As East Timor had been governed by Portugal for over 400 years and ruled by Indonesia for twenty five years, the social order in Bidau included Portuguese and Indonesian legacies, even though prominent features of past rule had been left behind. Under Portuguese rule, there had been strong discipline, which older Bidau residents contrasted with what they saw as a lack of discipline in their newly independent nation. Under Indonesian occupation, the lives of Bidau residents and their associates had been closely monitored, and residents had become wary of people whom the Indonesians engaged to spy on their activities. When Bidau residents gained their freedom and were no longer under surveillance, they could move and speak freely.

Under both Portuguese and Indonesian rule, people moved from rural districts to settle in Bidau, mostly seeking work. Aurélio Guterres (2003), who documents migration life stories as a way to unravel the complexity of migration and the relationship with development, provides a critique of the lack of development by the Portuguese administration and the detrimental resettlement programmes implemented by the Indonesian government in East Timor, which separated many people in rural villages from their traditional lands.



Some Bidau residents referred to a division between *ema boot* (big, respected people) and *ema ki'ik* (small people). A significant legacy of Portuguese rule was a view of social status related to education. Teresa Morlanes (1991:51) observes that:

East Timor society under Portuguese administration rested on a set of generally accepted values expressing themselves in hierarchical terms which assumed that some races were better than others, and on the idea that the social status of a category of people will rise by its acceptance of the dominant value system...

Educational qualifications and the ability to speak Portuguese increased people's social standing (Morlanes 1991:51). According to Morlanes (1991:52), individuals were socially identified as belonging to the categories of Portuguese (white), Mestico (white/indigene mixed or other racial mix) or Indigene ("pure" native to the island). In post-conflict Bidau, education and language were still signs of status, and light skin was preferred to dark. While opportunities for education had been very limited under Portuguese rule, the Indonesian administration had made primary school education compulsory, and opportunities for secondary and higher education had greatly expanded. A high priority for parents in Bidau after 1999 was to for their children to have quality education, and they relied on the state to provide this service.

In this context, the government's decision to adopt Portuguese as one of two national languages (the other being Tetun), and in particular as the main language for education and government, was a controversial decision, which disadvantaged university students and other young adults whose schooling had been entirely in Bahasa Indonesia. In their homes, most Bidau residents spoke either Tetun or another local language (such as Makassae). After independence, efforts to develop Tetun as a national language intensified, and this entailed incorporating many loan words from Portuguese. Research on the Tetun language shows the influence of both Portuguese and Bahasa Indonesia (Capell 1943-1944; Hull 1998; Williams-van Klinken 2003).

During the Indonesian period, educated Bidau residents had been able to secure good employment, which had improved their social standing and status, as they had been able to meet their ritual exchange obligations with financial payments. As the East Timorese civil service was much smaller than the Indonesian administration had been, many former civil servants were unemployed after 1999, resulting in a drop in status. Those residents who found ways to gain income had an ability to accumulate wealth and thus could increase their social standing in Bidau. Occupations ranged from home duties to fishmongers, taxi drivers, security guards, politicians and shopkeepers. A small number of people raised small animals, such as pigs, chickens and goats, which generated some income and provided animals for ritual purposes. Men who worked as security guards proudly declared their occupation, believing this to be a position of authority and status.

A number of people received a pension from Portugal, which assisted in the upkeep of the household. Others sent their children overseas to work, and these were expected to send money back to their families. Similarly, some residents received money from relatives who were part of the East Timorese diaspora, though these kin had their own struggles. Amanda Wise's (2002) dissertation, *No Longer in Exile? Shifting Experiences of Home, Homeland and Identity for the East Timorese Diaspora in Australia in Light of East Timor's Independence*, focuses on East Timorese living in Sydney and explores the various forces that have shaped their identities.

#### *Renewing the social fabric*

The social fabric of Bidau can be likened to a *tais* (T) (traditional woven cloth) – a colourful composition of threads and patterns, which has been pulled and stretched, but due to strong weaving holds together. *Tais* carry symbolic meanings and have ritual functions; they are designed differently according to the social groups from which they

originate, and those who have the knowledge can easily identify their source. Bidau residents from different social groups are like the different coloured threads, woven together according to the patterns of their relationships and rituals to form a distinctive and resilient social whole. Multiple affiliations – ethnolinguistic, kin, household, religious, political, sporting, youth – link each resident into the whole in intricate ways.

The 1999 conflict did not destroy the social fabric of Bidau, but it did strain it. As Bidau residents reengaged in rituals and everyday activities, a collective process of mending began. This entailed a reordering of the various layers and forms of social order. Levi-Strauss (1968:312) discusses how the social fabric is ordered:

[A]nthropology considers the whole social fabric as a network of different types of orders. The kinship system provides a way to order individuals according to certain rules; social organization is another way of ordering individuals and groups; social stratifications, whether economic or political, provide us with a third type; and all of these orders can themselves be ordered by showing the kind of relationships which exist among them, how they interact with one another on both the synchronic and the diachronic levels.

In post-conflict Bidau, significant elements of the social order had disappeared, most notably the Indonesian system of government, but so too had significant threats to order, primarily the Indonesian military and the East Timorese militia groups. As Bidau residents reconnected their ties with one another and remade their homes, a new social order emerged. Newcomers became part of and helped shape this new network of relations. Aspects of the old order that were carried on, especially *adat* and Catholic practices, were threaded with new elements, especially independence, freedom of movement, free market economics and the beginnings of democratic government. Residents were optimistic about their nascent new order, and though wary of possible threats to this order, engaged in a dynamic social life that quickly renewed the social fabric of Bidau.

The process of recovery for individuals went hand in hand with the renewal of the social fabric. Their healing was in and through relationships, as they engaged in the numerous material and social exchanges required for formal rituals and more informal social interactions. Mauss argues in his much cited work *Essai Sur Le Don (The Gift)*, that “it is groups, and not individuals, which carry on exchange, make contracts, and are bound by obligations” and what are exchanged are not exclusively things of economic value, but also “courtesies, entertainments, ritual, military assistance, women, children, dances and feasts ...” (1967 [1954]:3). Mauss’s concept of “*total* social phenomena” and his study of the phenomena of gift exchange emphasise the need to look at the totality of rules and relationships that make up the social fabric (1967 [1954]:1). For Mauss, such social phenomena “are at once legal, economic, religious, aesthetic, morphological and so on” (Mauss 1967 [1954]:76). Further, Lévi-Strauss provides many examples identifying that goods exchanged are “vehicles and instruments for realities of another order, such as power, influence, sympathy, status and emotion” (1969:54). In Bidau, there were many opportunities for residents, as members of groups, to engage in exchanges, which provided social, emotional and economic support to individuals while building up social bonds. Individual healing was thus aided by participation in a complex and vibrant urban village life. Recovery was widespread and was not limited to those who had the most economic resources.

### **Thesis sections**

This thesis is divided into three parts. Part One, entitled “Faces and Places of Significance,” consists of four chapters. It introduces categories of residents of Bidau, places of importance to them, how the violence of 1999 affected them and their broader experiences of sickness and hardship. By selecting characters from different categories of residents, I show the diversity in people’s backgrounds, their varied experiences

during 1999 and the strategies they have adopted to deal with the past. A major change after the 1999 conflict was the departure of many Indonesians from Bidau Tokobaru. This left many vacant houses, which were claimed by squatters, greatly changing the population mix in that village section. In Bidau Motaklaran, live the more established residents, but also in this village section are the homes of Makassae residents who maintain strong links with their origin villages in Birunbiru district. Chapters within Part One reveal the kin and social connections that assisted residents when they had to leave the village sections at the height of the violence and highlight the importance of their social supports upon their return. Another significant factor is the relationship of residents with their environment, and this theme is expanded by looking at places of social significance that were destroyed.

Part Two, “Life Cycle Rituals,” draws out the networks of kin and associates by examining, in three chapters, relationships played out in weddings and funeral rituals and expressed in lamentations. Residents expressed the difficulties when these life cycle rituals were delayed or had to be modified due to situations of violent conflict in the country. The Catholic Church features in these rituals with some couples including a Nuptial Mass as part of their wedding rituals and some residents leaving instructions for their kin to have a Mass said for them when they die. However, residents conduct many mortuary rites without any church representatives. These chapters show that when rituals were delayed or severely disrupted, residents still sought meaningful ways to fulfil marriage obligations and respect their dead. They illustrate how traditional and social obligations that many residents deem important to maintain can foster social cohesion and reduce isolation, even though they can also generate conflict.

Part Three, “Recovery and Reconstruction,” contains three chapters, which explore practices that contribute to healing. By paying attention to the everyday

activities of residents as well as their special events and ceremonies, the division of space becomes apparent. Everyday activities and ritual practices are examined within their different but linked contexts of public space, private homes and the intermediate areas of verandas and gardens. These chapters bring to light how the reclaiming of public and private space and the rebuilding of houses and other structures within the physical environment was integral to social and individual recovery.

## **PART ONE: FACES AND PLACES OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The first part of this thesis, comprising four chapters, introduces the people of Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru and their most significant places. It focuses on the impact that violent conflict had on both these people and their physical environment.

The first chapter introduces the Portuguese Period Settlers, Indonesian Period Settlers and Post-ballot Residents of Bidau, including the Makassae from Birunbiru district, who span the three periods of Bidau settlement. It describes the diversity of the people who settled in Bidau and the social connections that enabled them to survive violence, endure suffering and rebuild their lives. Chapter 2 then winds through the streets of Dili and Bidau to introduce places of importance and describe the destruction of public spaces, the private spaces of houses, and the intermediate spaces of verandas and gardens. The destruction of the settings used for the daily activities and special rituals of the people of Bidau contributed to social disruption, just as their rebuilding would contribute to healing. Chapter 3 focuses on the militia violence of 1999, how people survived that year and how they were still haunted by fears that fighting would come again. Chapter 4 then opens up the wider world of their suffering, from mental health problems, to the deaths of relatives and friends during the years of Indonesian occupation, to the many forms of “sickness” suffered, to the financial struggles to meet daily food needs, rebuild houses and still observe wedding and mortuary exchange obligations.

Through these chapters, I reveal how residents survived dangerous journeys of escape then returned to find their homes partially or completely destroyed, and how they endured and dealt with this. The key themes of suffering, loss and survival lead to a more specific exploration, in Part Two, of how ritual featured and functioned in the lives of residents as they rebuilt their village and their own lives.

## CHAPTER 1: FACES OF BIDAU

What is the most difficult thing for me arising from the 1999 conflict is that I cannot meet with people who have died. I miss their friendship. Many of my friends from Bidau and other parts of East Timor died. (Alberto, Portuguese Period Settler, Interview, 24 January 2001)

The violence during 1999 re-opened wounds and triggered painful memories for East Timorese still recovering from terror during the 24 years of Indonesian occupation, including the 1975 Indonesian invasion and 1991 Santa Cruz massacre. The composition of villages throughout the country altered. During the violent upheaval prior to and after the announcement of the ballot result on 4 September 1999 that 78.5% of voters had chosen independence and rejected autonomy within Indonesia, many residents left Bidau for varying periods, returning once security was established after InterFET (International Force in East Timor) arrived in the country.<sup>1</sup> Different groups seeking to stake claims on vacant houses started to move into Bidau Tokobaru from late September 1999.

Changes in the population's composition together with the destruction to property and public utilities altered the nature of life in Bidau, as did ruptures in previous alliances and the imposition of new administrative structures within the country with the arrival of the United Nations. The departure of Indonesian authority and civil servants left a vacuum in government administration and service delivery including in the key sectors of water and electricity supply, sanitation, schools and health. East Timorese underwent a swift transformation, from being Indonesian citizens in a half island claimed as the 27th province of Indonesia, to becoming residents of a country under United Nations administration, to becoming the free citizens of a new sovereign nation-state on 20 May 2002. They rejoiced in their freedom, but slowly came to see the many challenges that this entailed.



To explore the different ways violent social and political turmoil affected those living in Bidau and the social relations that helped them survive, I distinguish three categories of residents living in Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru – Portuguese Period Settlers, Indonesian Period Settlers and Post-ballot Residents. I also distinguish as a distinctive group of residents the Makassae who had their origin villages in Birunbiru. This group formed a quarter of the population in Bidau and spanned the three timeframes for settlement, arriving in Bidau from 1973. Other residents identified these Makassae as a group, as did these Makassae themselves, and most of them were clustered in two areas of Bidau. In contrast, the members of the other dominant ethnolinguistic groups in Bidau (the Tetun and Mambai) came from various rural areas, and their houses were spread throughout Bidau. By introducing illustrative characters from the four categories of residents identified, I highlight important characteristics of these groups of residents and the resources they had for coping with the violence and upheaval.

### **Portuguese Period Settlers**

East Timor's early history was shaped by Portuguese interests in its lucrative sandalwood trade and the influence of Dominican missionaries who arrived in Lifau in the Oecussi enclave from around 1515. East Timor subsequently became a Portuguese colony, but it was not until 1702 that a Portuguese governor set up a permanent settlement there, at first in Lifau. For centuries, the Dutch and Portuguese tussled over territory in the region, and conflicts occurred between disgruntled indigenous rulers known as *liurais* (T) (kings), the Portuguese and the Topasses ("Black Portuguese"), the name given to the offspring of Portuguese soldiers, sailors and traders and islander women.

In 1769, in the face of ongoing threats from the local leaders in Lifau and the Dutch based in Kupang, West Timor, the Portuguese Governor Antonio José Telles de Menezes moved the base of colonial authority to a new settlement in Dili (Boxer 1960:349-355; Dunn 1983:15-21; Fox *et al.* 2000:11). Prior to Portuguese settlement, Dili comprised two domains: Motain in the west and Bidau in the east.<sup>2</sup> One of the influences of Portuguese settlement in Dili was on the local language such that the language of Bidau became a rough Portuguese-based Creole (Baxter 1990). At times, the Portuguese used force to support their administration in Dili. For example, they deployed troops to control a disturbance in 1886, when the population of the city was startled by riots, violence and *desacatos* (disrespect for authorities) mainly in the Chinese neighbourhood of Bidau (Dores das 1901:2).

The eastern half of the island and the Oecussi enclave remained under Portuguese administration until the Portuguese governor and administration withdrew from Dili to Atauro Island on 27 August 1975 after civil conflict began.<sup>3</sup> Leading up to the departure of the governor in 1975, there had been an emergence of political parties in East Timor after the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement (AFM) overthrew the Caetano regime in Portugal on 25 April 1974. The UDT (Timorese Democratic Party) staged a coup in August 1975, but was rapidly defeated by Fretilin.<sup>4</sup> On the 28 November 1975, Fretilin proclaimed the Democratic Republic of East Timor (DRET). Portugal did not recognise this declaration of independence, and it proved to be short-lived, with the Indonesian military invading the country on 7 December 1975. The United Nations passed a resolution on 12 December 1975 denouncing the invasion and affirming the right of East Timorese to determine their own future, but no international intervention was taken to remove Indonesia from East Timor. On 17 July 1976, the Indonesian Parliament declared East Timor to be Indonesia's 27th province (Dunn 1983:282-341; Pinto *et al.*

1997:41-59; Taylor 1999:68-78; Kingsbury 2000:19-20; Suter 2000:182; Kohen 2001:113-129).

The Indonesian invasion in 1975 sparked the departure from the country of many East Timorese who had held positions of power. People were killed. Dreams for the future were abandoned. Terror became a reality in everyday life. Some East Timorese fled to the mountains to join the resistance movement, their absence dividing families. Many Timorese were relocated away from their original homes, as the Indonesians sought to control the population and set up “model villages.”<sup>5</sup> The imposition of Indonesian rule required East Timorese to become Indonesian citizens and adopt *Pancasila*, the national ideology of Indonesia. *Pancasila* included the Indonesian anthem, focused on Javanese society and military culture and contained five broad principles. One principle required that all Indonesian citizens had to profess a recognised faith. This obliged East Timorese to choose one of the five recognised religions: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Protestantism and Catholicism (Cristalis 2002:66). The other principles related to nationalism, humanitarianism (internationalism), democracy and social justice.<sup>6</sup> This led to an increased membership of the Catholic Church and to it becoming a strong political force within the country (Symthe 2004:35-53). With the promotion of Tetun as the liturgical language of the Catholic Church and the regulation under *Pancasila* that everyone had to choose a recognised religion, the number of Catholics increased considerably from 27.8% of the population in 1973 to 81.4% in 1989 (Neonbasu 1992:76).

Indonesia imposed its rule on the population until East Timorese voted for independence in the UN-sponsored ballot held on 30 August 1999. During 1999, leading up to the ballot, militia groups and Indonesian soldiers came to Bidau, as to other villages throughout the country, invading the streets, and a scorched earth policy

followed the announcement of the ballot results. Militia, with the backing of the TNI, went on a rampage, destroying much of the country's infrastructure and killing an estimated 1,500-2,000 people. During what has become known as East Timor's "Black September," people in Bidau were terrified. In common with East Timorese throughout Dili and the country, most hurriedly hatched escape plans in search of safe havens or were forcibly removed from their homes under threats from militia or Indonesian military.<sup>7</sup> Those who left faced different challenges and returned at different times, most after InterFET established security following its arrival in Dili on 20 September 1999.<sup>8</sup>

Several historical factors preceded the UN-sponsored ballot in East Timor. There had been international condemnation of Indonesia after the 1991 massacre at Santa Cruz. British filmmaker Max Stahl had captured the tragedy on film providing evidence of the harshness of the Indonesian occupation. Bishop Belo and José Ramos-Horta had received the Nobel Peace Prize on 10 December 1996 for their continued efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution to East Timor's problems. The Indonesian President Suharto had been forced to resign on 21 May 1998 and had been replaced by B.J. Habibie. A UN-brokered agreement had been signed on 5 May 1999 by the governments of Indonesia and Portugal, which had opened the way for East Timorese to express their political wishes about the future of their country, and the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) had opened its official headquarters in Dili on 3 June 1999. UNAMET's mandate was to organise and conduct a popular consultation using a direct, secret and universal ballot to ascertain whether East Timorese would accept special autonomy within the Republic of Indonesia or reject it, leading the way to East Timor becoming an independent country.

On 25 October 1999, the UN Security Council passed its Resolution 1272 to establish the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). UNTAET had

responsibility for the overall administration of East Timor, and InterFET, which had arrived on 20 September 1999, transferred full military authority to UNTAET on 23 February 2000. UNTAET continued to be the body responsible for administration of the country until independence on 20 May 2002. At independence, the United Nations Mission in Support of East Timor (UNMISET) was established to assist East Timor for two years until all operational responsibilities were fully devolved to the East Timorese authorities.

Based on my survey of households, I estimate the population of Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru to be approximately 1,270 as at 30 June 2001. Portuguese Period Settlers, i.e., those who settled prior to the 1975 Indonesian invasion, comprised 20% of the 148 people interviewed. Most of them were Tetun or Mambai and lived in Bidau Motaklaran, some having lived there since the mid-1940s. Within this category, I include the small number of original settlers who were born in Bidau Motaklaran. The number of original settlers interviewed totalled 15 (10%). One had lived in Bidau all her 57 years.<sup>9</sup> Portuguese Period Settlers had established roots in Bidau, either being born there during Portuguese rule or having parents or grandparents who had lived in the neighbourhood. They owned land there. They shared a history of the area. They knew their neighbours. The majority could speak Portuguese as well as Tetun and Indonesian. They had strong networks of support, regularly socialised together and took leadership roles in the organisation of religious processions and major social events. All those interviewed were Catholic.

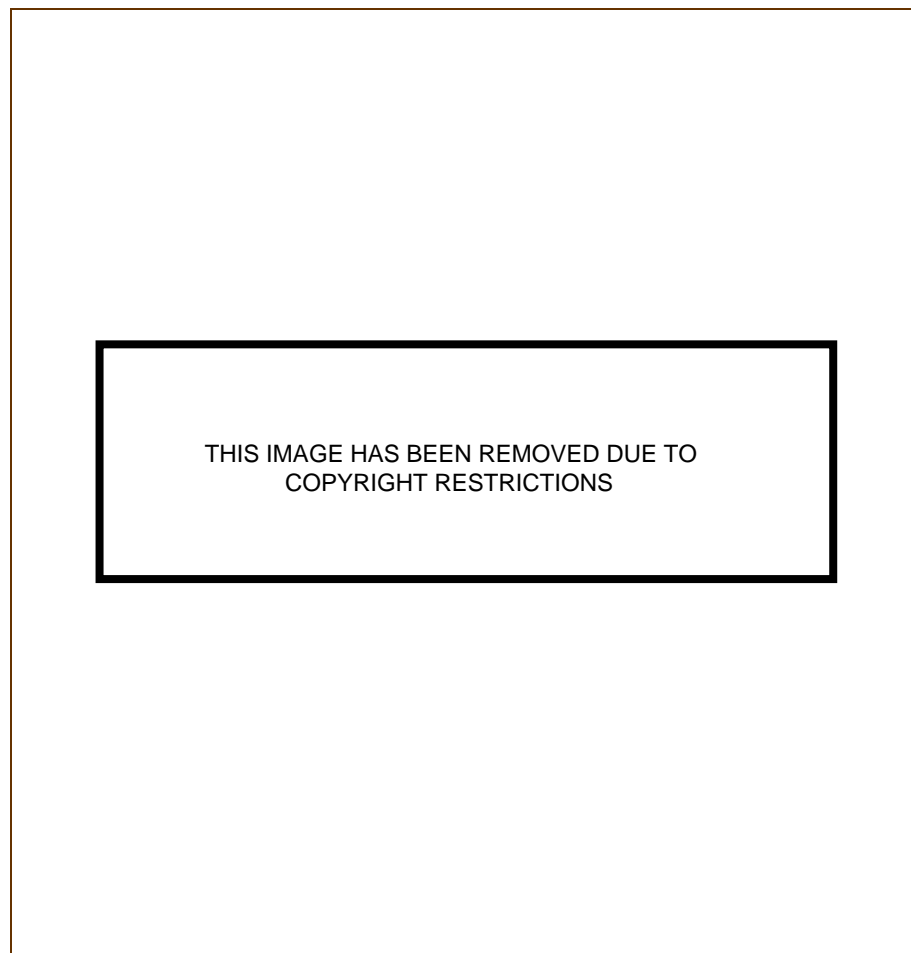
The life of Alberto, a Portuguese Period Settler who has lived in Bidau Motaklaran since 1972, illustrates some of the main characteristics of the more privileged members of this group. Alberto is a married man with nine children – five sons and four daughters whose ages, in 2001, ranged from eight to 23 years. He was

educated during the Portuguese administration and was able to secure employment and further his career during Indonesian rule. These opportunities for education and good employment gave him some standing in the community. Like many older residents in Bidau Motaklaran, Alberto supported the re-establishment of Portuguese ties and the idea of Portuguese being one of the national languages. When asked how he felt about the lack of development of East Timor by Portugal during its long history of administration and the withdrawal of the Portuguese in 1975, he offered this response.<sup>10</sup>

It was a long way for the Portuguese to come to Timor. Indonesia did many things in East Timor but you have to look at the reasons why. The problem is that the distance from Portugal to East Timor is very far, so that made it difficult to send money to East Timor, so they [the Portuguese] did not do much here. Portugal is one of the poorer countries in Europe, and that is why they did not have much money to construct buildings here. It is about quality not quantity. The Indonesians did build things here and developed our country, but it was political, not according to what Timorese people wanted or needed. The Indonesians wanted to show to the international community that they have done many things in East Timor.

Not everyone held the same views as Alberto, but there were many households in Bidau Motaklaran that maintained close connections with Portugal. A number of residents had relatives in Portugal assisting them financially to get back on their feet and some were eligible to receive Portuguese pensions. Some warmed to the idea of sending their children to study or work abroad, as this would provide a source of much needed income and because they felt there was limited opportunity for them in East Timor. They worried about problems of unemployment and boredom that could lead to violence and land young people in trouble. Portugal was used as a European access point for East Timorese to obtain work visas and then seek employment in England or Ireland. Alberto's eldest son, Mateus, left for Portugal in August 2002.<sup>11</sup> By December 2002, Mateus had travelled on to England and was working in the catering section of an airline company at Gatwick airport. In July 2003, the second of Alberto's sons, Jaime, travelled to Portugal and later joined his brother in England.

In addition to Alberto's nuclear family, other people often stayed overnight at Alberto's house. For example, young men who were friends with his older sons stayed for up to a few weeks. The guests in his household shared the companionship of his family and their television set, during the 2002 World Cup soccer competition when a room full of people would sit up all night cheering on their favourite teams. On other occasions when young men were having personal difficulties, such as the ending of a romantic relationship, they took comfort living with this large household under the watchful guidance of Alberto who played a supportive role to members of the local youth group.



**Plate 1. Portuguese Period Settlers**

This practice of residents moving between households happened regularly. To quantify this movement in the case of Alberto's house, I recorded visitors to the house

over a one-week period from 5-11 May 2003. While I was aware that this household received many visitors, the large number of “household visits” recorded surprised me. In total, there were 185 visits from other residents of Bidau to this household. These included 136 drop-in visits, 11 residents who stayed overnight on different evenings and 38 people who came to the house to purchase ice.<sup>12</sup> This exercise confirmed the significant extent of movement between households for some East Timorese.

Such movement was a pattern that Alberto had experienced from an early age. Alberto was born on 9 December 1955 in his grandmother’s house in the nearby village section of Bidau Massau. He is the eldest of four children, having one brother and two sisters. Alberto’s father and mother were both born in Viqueque, and he belongs to the Tetun ethnic group. Alberto’s father was a veterinarian employed by the Portuguese government, and his mother attended to household duties caring for what Alberto referred to as “many relatives and cousins” who lived with them. As a young boy, Alberto lived with his parents in Ossu, Viqueque district, where he commenced his primary school education. Because his father had to move for employment, he attended school for only one year in Ossu due to his family’s relocation in 1962 to Same, in Manufahi district, on the rugged southern slopes of East Timor. Alberto attended school in Same for three years, but moved to Bidau Lcidere in 1965 to reside with his aunt.

Alberto’s early years of residing with different family members to access education is a similar story to others privileged enough to be able to do so. He had opportunities for education not afforded to all East Timorese. While Alberto’s siblings remained living with his parents, he attended Bidau’s local primary school, *Escola Primaria de Bidau* (P), at the same site where it continued to function as a school during the Indonesian period, when it was known as SD Tiga, and where it has operated since 1999, once renovations rendered it operational again. Alberto also completed secondary



education in Dili. It was common for children to move between families and extended kin for education if they had networks of support. Many Timorese endeavoured to send their children to Dili, as secondary education was not available in remote rural areas, and sometimes lack of transport made education inaccessible.<sup>13</sup> According to Alberto, he did not experience any difficulties being separated from his parents. He saw them when they visited Dili or during school vacations when he returned to Same.

In 1972, Alberto moved to his current residence in Bidau Motaklaran with his adopted brother who is several years younger. The house was originally built in the style of a traditional house with a thatched roof, but in 1988 was reconstructed with brick and a zinc roof.<sup>14</sup> He purchased the property from Timorese for 6,000 Portuguese escudo. Alberto's parents paid for a group of men (mostly relatives from Same) to move to Bidau Motaklaran to share the house with him. There were seven or eight men living together prior to the Indonesian invasion. All of the men attended school except for three who did the housework, including the washing and cooking.

After Alberto completed senior high school, he made plans to register for university in Portugal to study veterinary science. This opportunity would not only have provided him with a chance to travel, but would have advanced his career prospects and the likelihood of securing a better lifestyle. When Indonesia invaded, things changed very quickly, and he aborted his plans to study in Portugal. In the chaos, he took refuge in his house. He knew members of Fretilin who fled to the forest at the time.<sup>15</sup> Only three men remained in his house in Bidau Motaklaran; the rest of the household returned to Same.

When Timorese moved between villages or hid in the forest, they experienced food shortages, and many residents in Bidau reported that members of their kin groups died from malnutrition during these years. Alberto's parents initially remained in Same,

but then fled to the forest, later making their way east to Viqueque. The following year, in 1976, Indonesian troops ordered them to move to Dili where they took up residence in Alberto's household, which at the time included his adopted brother and another man who later married his cousin.

The Indonesian military used geographical control to constrain and prevent Timorese from supporting the resistance. People were relocated from their traditional lands to new villages close to roads and intersections; these new villages were closely guarded by troops and had restricted entry and exit (Dunn 1983:313, 336; Taylor 1999:92-94). The Indonesian government promoted these resettlement camps as "model villages."

Despite the tragedies resulting from the 1975 war, some people were able to find opportunities to get on with their lives. In January 1976, Alberto started his first job, as a civil servant in the government's Personnel Department. According to Alberto, once the Indonesian administration took control they promoted civil servants who held administrative positions under the Portuguese system by two levels and adjusted their salaries accordingly. All communication was in Indonesian. There was an Indonesian task force in every office, and all employees were required to attend government run courses in Indonesian state ideology, *Pancasila*.

In common with other educated residents of his generation, Alberto had learnt Portuguese at school. It was in the workplace that he learnt Bahasa Indonesia. He did not do any formal course to learn this language and stated that he found it easy to learn. As well as Portuguese, Tetun and Bahasa Indonesia, he learnt English and Mambai, the local language of Same.

During his first year of employment, Alberto's life underwent another change – this being the year of his marriage.

After work, I would walk around the street. My special friend at the time was Luisa. Luisa lived in Bidau Lecidere. I met her at a *feira* [wedding reception]. She was not allowed to visit my house. I just saw her at church and in the street. My parents were still in the forest, and Luisa's father had died in the forest. He died from sickness. Luisa's mother died some years earlier. I was not able to ask Luisa's grandparents about our marriage, because they were also living in the forest. I just decided with Luisa to get married. Luisa was living with another family. Because we loved each other, we married. We married in Motael Church in 1976. Many members of our families were still in the forest at that time.

Alberto continued to have secure employment throughout his marriage, though it was difficult to accumulate many possessions. When he did buy any goods, Indonesian military stole them. In February 1976, less than two months after he had started work, ten Indonesian military dressed in uniforms came to his house and demanded the motorbike he had bought.

In 1982, Alberto transferred to the Finance Department and worked there until 1995. After that position, he worked at *Biro Pemerintah Desa (I)*<sup>16</sup>, which was the sub-department responsible for *suku* (T) (village) level administration throughout East Timor. It looked after the structure, organisation, management and financial matters associated with the *suku*. Alberto was the second in charge in the sub-department supervising 20 employees. His job was secure, but it came to an abrupt end in 1999.

The chaos and fighting that ravaged the country following the ballot threw his life into turmoil. Unlike in 1975, he did not remain at his house, but in common with most Bidau residents, he fled, travelling with his family to Kupang. Upon return to Bidau some weeks later, after InterFET arrived, his family faced new challenges as they strived to eke out a living while gradually rebuilding their lives. Their strong support networks would assist them.

### **Indonesian Period Settlers**

Many residents in Bidau remembered the first week of killings after Indonesia invaded East Timor. People discussed the suffering they experienced under Indonesian rule, a period when many of their relatives and friends died. I have defined Indonesian Period Settlers as those people who settled in Bidau Motaklaran or Bidau Tokobaru in the period from the 1975 Indonesian invasion up until 30 August 1999. Of the respondents I interviewed, 48% were Indonesian Period Settlers. Some had been born in Bidau, some had come directly from rural districts and many had resided in other parts of Dili before moving to Bidau. In general, these residents owned the land on which their houses were located, but were financially poorer and less well resourced than the Portuguese Period Settlers. One person whom I interviewed was Protestant, but all the rest were Catholic.

Madalena dos Santos is one of the Indonesian Period Settlers, having lived in Bidau Motaklaran not far from Alberto since 1977. Unlike Alberto, who is a member of the Tetun group, Madalena's ethnicity is Mambai. While living in close proximity to each other, their paths rarely crossed, as they have no kin relationships, nor social connections. Madalena operated a small *kios* (I) (kiosk), an income generating activity to which many residents aspired, but only a few carried out at that time.<sup>17</sup> Madalena's *kios* is located in the intermediate space of her garden in front of her ramshackle dwelling, and is a gathering place for her friends to meet and exchange gossip.

When I interviewed her in January 2001, Madalena told me she was 36 years old, but this conflicted with other details about her life that she later revealed to me, and I estimated that she was much older. Many East Timorese did not know their exact age, nor were they bothered about this. Madalena did not have an opportunity to go to school when she was younger and stayed at home helping her mother. She was born in Aileu, approximately 40 kilometres south of Dili, but moved to the city when she was a child.

Most days Madalena would sit inside her house bouncing her niece Yeti on her knee or keep watch near her few items for sale waiting for any prospective customers or, more importantly, friends and newcomers with whom to exchange stories and snippets of news. Her first husband's name appears in green ink above her own on her left forearm. She said she had these tattoos done for fun.<sup>18</sup> Her long black hair was often unkempt and tied back with elastic bands, unlike older, rural Timorese women who wore neat chignon hairstyles adorned with long hairpins soldered to Portuguese coins, still in vogue more than a quarter of a century after the Portuguese left.

Life has not always been kind to Madalena. She suffered many hardships well before the 1999 violence. When she was a teenager, she had a serious accident while cooking. Boiling oil splashed her face and arms leaving her with unsightly facial scars. However, her facial scars become less conspicuous as her friendly personality emerges, and her dark eyes dart mischievously as she tells a story or jokes with children. During our first meeting, she told me that she had married only once, stating this was the custom for Timorese people. Yet some of her relatives told me a different story. They described her as a beautiful young girl prior to the accident. They informed me that she had been married twice, her first marriage being to a Chinese man, Chung-Chin. This explained her knowledge of the Hakka language, in addition to her knowledge of Tetun and a little Portuguese and Bahasa.

Months later, after our friendship had developed, Madalena disclosed details to me about her relationship with Chung-Chin, a man who had been born in Hong Kong, but had moved to East Timor when he was approximately 40 years old. At the time of their marriage, he was aged 60, and she was still a young woman. This was a "traditional marriage," a term used by East Timorese to describe a relationship when a couple was cohabiting but no ceremony had been held in a church. Madalena boasted

that Chung-Chin was very wealthy and told me that he paid a large amount for *barlake* (T) (bridewealth) – marriage payments that flow from the husband and his kin to the bride's kin. For five years they lived in Kuluhun, a village on the boundary of Bidau Tokobaru, until Chung-Chin died. According to Madalena, her first marriage was not a happy union. When she visited her friends, Madalena would return home to an angry husband who would often beat her. When I asked her about the beatings and for her thoughts on the cause of such behaviour, she replied that if a husband paid money to the bride's family, especially, as in her case, a large contribution, it created problems. She did not think that bridewealth was a good idea, as some men believed these payments entitled them to treat their wives any way they wanted. Madalena tolerated Chung-Chin's abusive behaviour and maintained loyalty to him even after his death, visiting his grave at the Chinese cemetery in nearby Taibesse on significant religious occasions.

Her life improved with her second marriage, which was to Vicente, whom she met three years after the death of her first husband. Vicente was Mambai, born in Same, Manufahi district. Madalena lived with Vicente as his traditional wife, and they had three children, two daughters and one son. Later they had a church wedding in Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Bekora, a few kilometres from Bidau.

Vicente was a kind and supportive partner and a devoted father to their children. There was no exchange of bridewealth payments for this marriage, and they used what money they had towards building their house in Bidau Motaklaran. Madalena reminisced about her wedding day and the joyful celebration in their garden, enthusiastically describing the wedding cake with several tiers, an important showpiece at the party. Most of our discussions about relationships and marriages always included a reference to her wedding cake as well as stressing other important highlights, such as the dancing at her wedding, which lasted for two days.

Despite the hardships of having little money and the fears they experienced under Indonesian rule, Madalena, Vicente and their children found solace with each other and within the extended support network of relationships with neighbours, friends and the family of Vicente's nephew. That was until 1999, when these networks of support were disrupted, as kin and friends were separated. In September 1999, as did many other Bidau residents, Madalena and her family took refuge in the nearby convent of the Dominican sisters, before being ordered by the Indonesian military to go to Korem, the provincial level military command in Kaikoli (see Figure 2).

In 2001, Madalena's daily life revolved around her nuclear family and her small *kios*. Occasionally Madalena and friends who gathered at the *kios* would have a cigarette together, rolling their own with a pinch of tobacco and paper fashioned from cornhusks. Madalena would get up around 3.00 a.m. and make cookies to sell in her small shop. Other products she sold included small sachets of shampoo, washing powder, matches, candles and sweets. After cooking breakfast, she washed the dishes from the previous evening, washed clothes and prepared lunch, which consisted of vegetables and fruit in season. Following the morning chores, Madalena would rest on the bamboo bench under the shade of the palm roof of her *kios*. Vicente would go to the old central markets and sell vegetables obtained from his kin in Aileu.<sup>19</sup> On days when she could not afford to buy goods for the *kios*, Madalena would close it temporarily.

Madalena, Vicente and their children lived in a simple dwelling set on a sizeable block of land with flowering bougainvillea bushes and fruit trees. The house had walls constructed from *bebak* (T) (leaf stalks from gebang palm, *Corypha utan* Lamk.)<sup>20</sup> with rusted corrugated zinc sheets for roofing, and the interior had an earthen floor. Madalena took great pride in her garden and had many pots of flowering plants neatly arranged in strategic places in the spacious area. If visitors arrived, Madalena liked to

entertain them in her front garden and would take lavender-coloured plastic chairs from inside her house and place them under the shade of jambua (*citrus maxima*) trees. She would apologise that she was not able to offer coffee and often would say to me the customary expression *tuur deit* (T) (sat only) to which I replied that it was not a problem as I had coffee before I visited. It was considered impolite if guests visited and were not offered something to drink or eat.

It was in this house in Bidau Motaklaran that Vicente died. It was a shock when he passed away suddenly on 24 May 2001, displaying no prior symptoms of illness. Madalena's life instantly took another turn for the worse. Becoming a widow for the second time, she was burdened by many responsibilities. Her first concern was to attend to the immediate obligations required to bury Vicente, while in a state of emotional distress herself, and care for her three children as a sole parent. Other problems then swamped Madalena's life and interrupted her daily routine. She could not afford to operate her *kios*. She survived on a network of support from relatives and friends. The Dominican sisters also assisted her by trying various avenues to generate an income for her. One venture included the purchase of pigs from Lospalos, a town at the eastern end of East Timor, but these died shortly afterwards.

Eventually Madalena reopened her *kios*, almost 18 months after Vicente's death, but selling only a few items. By then it was difficult to compete with the larger shops, especially the Chinese store in Bidau and supermarkets in nearby Audian. With the proceeds from the *kios*, she did not make enough money to support her family and relied on the financial support of others. The reopening of the *kios*, however, did provide her with an interest and a channel to regain her former position in the community by becoming a corner place for the exchange of news.



The other main way Madalena coped with her difficulties was to care for her children and others who lived nearby. In particular, she looked after her niece, Yeti, who was one year old when Vicente died. They were almost inseparable. Like most of the residents in Bidau Motaklaran, Madalena's chief concern was to improve her house and encourage the children to go to school as she saw them as the future hope for East Timor. In January 2001, Madalena's eldest daughter Noi, aged 16 years, was attending high school in Bekora, a short bus trip away. Evangelina, the other daughter, aged 14 years, attended the same school and was in the same grade, but in another class. For various reasons, students were not always in grades commensurate with their ages, because conflict had caused schools to close from time to time and delayed the admission of some students, while others experienced interruptions to education when their parents could not afford to send them to school. Madalena's son, Dionisio, was nine years old in 2001 and attended the local primary school, SD Tiga.

Both Madalena and Alberto had networks of kin, long term neighbours and friends close at hand on whom they could call for support. They also both had land they could call their own. Many who came to Bidau later did not.

### **Post-ballot Residents**

Once it was safe to do so after the post-ballot violence, people emerged from hiding and returned to their homes. Many people, finding their houses destroyed, searched for unoccupied places to set up new homes.

Of the respondents I interviewed in 2001, 32% had resided in Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru for less than three years, most having moved into Bidau because their houses elsewhere had been destroyed during the 1999 violence. I refer to this third category of residents as Post-ballot Residents, most of whom were squatters who moved into vacant houses after InterFET arrived. Most of the vacant properties were in Bidau

Tokobaru, with only a few scattered in Bidau Motaklaran. This was because Indonesians who had worked in the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (I) (the provincial level of the Indonesian Representative Assembly) had occupied most of the houses in Bidau Tokobaru, and they had left either before or soon after the ballot and were not expected to return. Because these houses had been the homes of Indonesians, they had not been burnt. Most of these houses were constructed from brick and had tiled floors with interior bathrooms and kitchens. They had manicured gardens and attractive bamboo fences. Some houses still bore the marks of bullets from the shooting.<sup>21</sup>

The departure of the Indonesians and the arrival of the squatters brought a major change in the composition of the population of Bidau Tokobaru. A few people obtained permission from community leaders to reside in the vacant houses, while others simply noticed a vacancy, moved in, and cleaned up the premises. Several people who moved into vacant houses had resided in Bidau before their own homes there were destroyed. Over time, some houses that squatters had claimed changed hands between kin as relatives moved to the city from rural areas.

During the period from late 1999 to early 2001, people were tolerant. However, during the latter part of 2001 and the early months of 2002, some of the Portuguese Period Settlers became annoyed when a number of families moved into Bidau, setting up small shops and constructing homes on public property along a main road, Estrada de Bidau. Disputes also arose in Bidau due to jealousy sparked by some people having good jobs and possessions. Residents of Bidau Tokobaru felt marginalized with little representation in the *suku* and at district level and complained that they often missed out on support from government and other agencies, such as NGOs that were involved in emergency relief work. They were more suspicious and less friendly than Bidau Motaklaran residents in relation to people visiting their neighbourhood.

All but one of the Post-ballot Residents said they were Catholic, the exception being a Muslim Indonesian woman. In general, however, the Post-ballot Residents comprise a diverse group of people. Some had received no formal education, while others had, including some health professionals who worked at the nearby National Hospital. Some had previous connections in Bidau; others did not. The way people obtained houses reflect this diversity. One man secured a house in Bidau Tokobaru when his mother-in-law handed him the keys as she left for Indonesia. Another man lived with his wife, two daughters and 15 other relatives in a house owned by a militia member who had returned from West Timor and was staying not far away in Akadirahun. He met with the militia member and made an agreement to stay in the house, paying no rent, because his own home had been burned. There was also a larger house that was used by “street children,” cared for by a group of East Timorese men in their early twenties.<sup>22</sup>

People who lived in Bidau Tokobaru came from various rural districts in East Timor, including Baukau, Lautem, Viqueque and Bobonaro. Rafael, a university student in his early twenties, squatted in a house with his younger brother. He had moved from Maliana, Bobonaro district, to Taibesse in July 1999 in his final year of high school to get away from the militia group *Halilintar* (T) (Thunder) which had been attacking student groups. His ethnic identity was that of Kemak speakers, one of the two main language groups in Bobonaro district. In October 1999, at his uncle’s direction, he moved into the same street as his uncle in Bidau Tokobaru. Later, Rafael’s older brother, his brother’s wife and their child moved from Maliana to take up residence in the house when Rafael joined the East Timor Defence Force (*Forças Defesa Timor Leste* – FDTL) (P) and his younger brother moved to Suai, Covalima district, to work with an NGO.

A few of the Post-ballot Residents were Indonesian women married to East Timorese. An Indonesian woman from Sumba, who had an infectious sense of humour and enjoyed making jokes, told me that it had been difficult for her, not because she was Indonesian, but because her husband had gainful employment and owned a motorbike. These afforded her family a good lifestyle, but evoked much jealousy with her neighbours. By October 2002, she had moved, and different tenants occupied the premises.

Ricardo's story is similar to that of many residents in Bidau Tokobaru. Returning to Dili on 23 September 1999 and faced with the destruction of his house, Ricardo moved into a vacant house in Bidau Tokobaru. Ricardo did not seek permission from anyone to claim this house, but finding it empty, he cleaned it and moved in. This was not a huge task, as he had few possessions to take with him. With his house in Bidau Santa Ana destroyed, he was forced to separate from his married sister and younger brother, with whom he had previously shared the Bidau Santa Ana residence. His sister and brother who attended university moved in with friends in Bidau Massau, and Ricardo moved into the vacant premises in Bidau Tokobaru with four male cousins, three of whom were attending senior high school in 2001.

Ricardo had been a seminarian with the Salesian Order, but left prior to ordination. Ricardo is an intelligent young man who had completed 12 years of education as well as spending four years studying at the Institute Pastoral Indonesia (IPI).<sup>23</sup> He was Makassae, born in Birunbiru, and in 2001, he was 32 years old. Several members of Ricardo's nuclear family had died prior to the outbreak of fighting in 1999. Both of Ricardo's parents had died – his father in 1974 from malaria and his mother in 1979 in Mount Matebian from a lack of food, one consequence of the continuing struggle with the Indonesian forces. She was one of many Timorese who died from

malnutrition during the Indonesian occupation, as many people moved from their villages and did not settle for long enough to be able to plant or harvest crops. The Indonesian military shot Ricardo's sister in 1979 when she went to a village to obtain food supplies. She was 16 years old when she was killed. One of Ricardo's brothers was presumed to have died during November 1991. The Indonesian military jailed him in Natarbora when he was 16 years of age. Ricardo and another brother interceded for his release through the Red Cross, but when they visited the jail on a second occasion, the military informed them that he had run away. Ricardo and his brother left with a story of disappearance, no body and no opportunity to satisfy their many questions about their brother's destiny.

When the conflict erupted in 1999, Ricardo and his siblings experienced more difficulties. According to Ricardo, the paramilitary group Team Saka, following the announcement of the ballot results, came with a vehicle and took some of his relatives, together with others hiding in Bishop Belo's residence, to Baukau for their security.<sup>24</sup> From Baukau, this paramilitary group took some of Ricardo's kin to Kupang. Ricardo remained with friends in Bidau Massau. On 4 September 1999 around 1.00 p.m., they heard the sounds of militia shooting and burning houses. Knowing that it was unsafe for them to remain in the area, Ricardo and his friends walked over the next couple of days to a village in the hills south of Dili near Remexio. They stayed in the forest until the 23 September 1999, surviving on a diet of cassava and drinking water from the river.

### **The Path to Birunbiru**

Spanning the three categories of Bidau settlers are the people from Birunbiru district, which is to the east of Dili. If one walks a short distance along a dirt path from Alberto's house, taking in the smells of the drains, often filled with stagnant water and mosquitoes, an area of dilapidated shacks appears. These dwellings were constructed

with sheets of rusted zinc from the walls to the roofs, and were surrounded by puddles of dirty water from burst water pipes. Most of the dwellings had holes in the roofing, and the inhabitants huddled together when it rained to keep dry. Families who live in this section came from villages in Birunbiru district, most from villages in mountainous regions, some of which were only accessible by walking. During the early settlement of Bidau in the 1970s, the *xefe-suku* exercised his power to grant permission to Birunbiru residents to set up houses in Bidau Motaklaran. A number of residents said that the land allocated to Birunbiru people had previously been owned by a Birunbiru resident, while others said that the land was vacant land that had belonged to the Portuguese government.

The people from Birunbiru whom I interviewed comprised 25% of interviewees. The majority were Indonesian Period Settlers, with 59% of the Birunbiru people I interviewed having arrived in this period, most since the late 1970s and early 1980s. They were also the most significant group to have arrived in this period, with almost one in three (31%) of the Indonesian Period Settlers interviewed being from Birunbiru district. Five people from Birunbiru district whom I interviewed (14% of the Birunbiru residents interviewed) were Portuguese Period Settlers, two having lived in Bidau Motaklaran since 1973, with another three moving into the area in 1975 prior to the Indonesian invasion. Birunbiru people made up only 17% of the Portuguese Period Settlers interviewed. They were more connected with other residents from Birunbiru than with other Portuguese Period Settlers and were not part of the strong network of support that helped Alberto and his family cope with the challenges during and after Indonesian rule. Ten Birunbiru residents interviewed were Post-ballot Residents (27% of the Birunbiru residents interviewed). They comprised 21% of the Post-Ballot residents, and included Ricardo.

The continuous flow of Makassae migrants to Dili over the years and their increased presence in the city has been a cause for tension. Many of the Portuguese Period Settlers believe that people from Birunbiru are the instigators of fighting in the neighbourhood, and many do not welcome their presence in Bidau. People from Birunbiru were sometimes referred to as *muturabu*, a derogatory Makassae word for “fighting drunk.” The stereotype of people from the eastern parts of East Timor as uneducated, coarse troublemakers looking for fights still thrived in Bidau as in other parts of East Timor. The people from the eastern part of the island are known as *firaco* with those born in the western districts known as *kaladi*. The *kaladi* are stereotyped as more “civilized” and therefore more diplomatic in their approach than the *firaco*, who are considered more “barbarian” with a preference for fighting rather than negotiating (Adjitjondro 1994:27). Residents in Bidau did not refer to *kaladi* as more “civilised,” but rather as even-tempered, calm and quiet, while they viewed *firaco* as talkative and quick-tempered, with a propensity for fighting. However, these stereotypes did not match people I came to know.

The people from Birunbiru are part of the Makassae ethnolinguistic group, and most speak Makassae as their first language. Some also speak Tetun and Bahasa Indonesia. All those interviewed said they were Catholics. Some combined traditional beliefs and animist practices with their Catholic beliefs and visited their *umaluliks* (T) (traditional sacred houses) in Birunbiru on an annual basis. Their beliefs incorporated myths about snakes. One practice involved killing chickens, examining their intestines and looking for signs that would provide answers to particular questions. They used this ritual to help them decide upon a course of action. Some residents did this when they wanted to know whether to leave their homes during the violent months in 1999. At

other times, they took auguries to decide when to plant crops or gain advice about an important life decision, such as marriage.<sup>25</sup>

The people of Birunbiru in Bidau maintain strong social networks among themselves and with people living in Birunbiru district. The pattern of relationships between residents from Birunbiru became clearer when I visited Ricardo's origin village. When I asked the *xefe-suku* in Birunbiru why people from that district referred to each other as brother and sister when there was no biological relationship he told me the following narrative, which his grandfather had recounted.

Approximately 50 years ago, a Timorese man from Laivai had a dream. In the dream, he met a snake who was looking for his sister. The snake said if you can help me find my sister you and your generation will have good luck. In the dream, the man put the snake in a *tais*. He then took the *tais* with the snake wrapped inside to Terubala. However, when he reached there, the snake's sister had moved. The next night the man had another dream, and the snake's sister came to his place and told him: "My brother came looking for me, but he could not find me because I moved. If my brother comes again, can you tell him I live up this mountain. You, your generation and the generations of Terubala will now become brothers and sisters."

The *xefe-suku* stated that because of this narrative people residing in Laivai and Terubala now call each other brother and sister, and people from Birunbiru now relate to each other in the same manner. Other East Timorese use this form of address to express friendship and to indicate closeness to people and their extended families.

The district of Birunbiru was the home of *Sagrada Familia* (T) (Sacred Family), a clandestine, quasi-political organisation set up in 1989 with a spiritually based ideology. Cristalis (2002:171) describes an interview she had with its eccentric leader, known by the code-name L7, who had been one of the sub-commanders of Falintil (*Forças Armadas de Timor Leste*, East Timor National Liberation Army) and who boasted that the basis for the popularity of this group was its motto "to die with a smile on the face."<sup>26</sup> *Sagrada Familia* succeeded the St. Anthony's group, Timor's largest youth

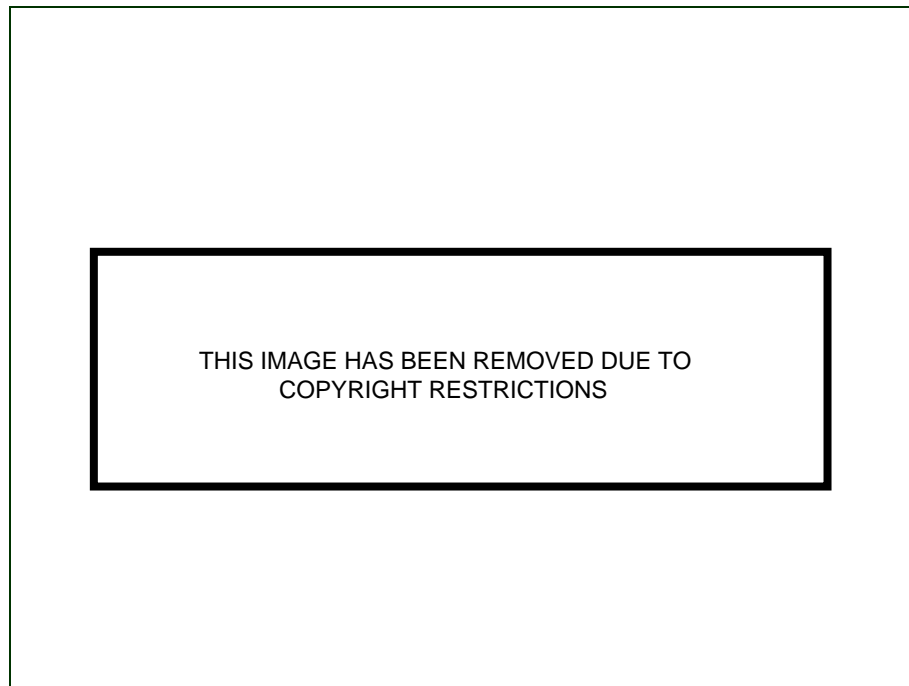


organisation in the 1980s (Cristalis 2002:171). Some residents believed that L7 owned a large house in Bidau Motaklaran. There were 22 people squatting in the house at the time, and in 2002, an eviction notice appeared in front of it. Some residents described L7 as a person whose health had been affected by living in the forest under harsh conditions for long periods, while others expressed nervousness that he might own property in Bidau, believing him to be dangerous.

Many of the people from Birunbiru were very poor. Due to the poor quality of the water, which did not improve until a piped system was installed in 2002, people's skin was covered in patchy fungus. The quality of the water, brownish in colour, was one of the main concerns of the people from Birunbiru I interviewed in early 2001. Some of the children had no clothing, and those who did were usually dressed in old stained clothes. The majority of Birunbiru women living in Bidau wore a *kabaia* (T) (woman's blouse with long sleeves and fastened in front with pins) and a batik skirt, and the men wore old shorts and T-shirts. Several men from Birunbiru worked as fishermen or sold coconuts along the beach road. Women attended to household duties and looked after their many children. When giving birth, they preferred to do so in their residential dwellings. They chuckled when I asked them why they did not go to hospital and stated that they had always had their children at home. After giving birth in their rusty zinc houses with leaking roofs, with assistance of women in their own circle of friends, they later made their way to the hospital to record the event. While most of the women from Birunbiru have received little formal education, they had numerous skills, including the ability to weave *tais* (T) (traditional woven cloths).<sup>27</sup> Of those who did have education and opportunities, one woman was involved in politics and won a seat in the Constituent Assembly during the country's first democratic elections in August 2001.

Most children went to school, though there were some families who commented that they could not afford the clothes, notebooks and pencils needed for their children to go to school. This was the case for one couple who had a three month old daughter and three sons aged ten, five and four years. They were not able to send their eldest son to school, because they could not afford clothes and books for him. All the children were naked and covered in sores, playing on their dirt floor. The militia had burned their house and what few possessions they owned during the 1999 conflict. Their house now consisted of rusty zinc sheets nailed together and their furniture consisted of a wooden bench and one bamboo bed. Three of the couple's sons had died from "sickness," each at approximately one year of age. The husband had lived in a remote village as a child, and due to lack of finance had been unable to attend school himself, and the wife had attended primary school for just four years. The husband sold fish and had a daily income of Rp.15,000-25,000 (A\$3-5). He stated that he only ate one meal a day at lunchtime, which consisted of rice and vegetables, though the rest of the family also had breakfast consisting of cassava and *sasoro* (T) (rice soup). The husband's aspiration was to return to Birunbiru district to resume horticultural activities.

Most of the residents from villages in Birunbiru would have preferred to return to their birthplaces if they had the financial means to do so. Their strong Makassae ties to Birunbiru may have contributed to their weaker assimilation into Bidau. The *xefe-suku* in Birunbiru believed that many Birunbiru people viewed living in Dili as a temporary measure, due to displacement by the conflict and the need for income support for families. In Birunbiru, there were limited income generating projects that could sustain them, and living in the city still held appeal for those who believed it offered them better employment opportunities. However, the *xefe-suku* anticipated that in the future many of these families would return to their origin villages.



**Plate 2. Birunbiru resident at his fruit and vegetable stall in Bidau Motaklaran**

Celestina, a Makassae, exemplifies many of the characteristics of the people from Birunbiru. She was an Indonesian Period Settler, having lived in Bidau Motaklaran since 1979, and she operated a small *kios* in Alberto's street. Celestina's day began at 5.00 a.m. when she went to Bekora or Komoro markets to purchase vegetables, or as early as 3.00 a.m. on days when she went to Liquica market. Upon her return, she would set up her stall. Her husband had died some years earlier from tuberculosis and she lived with her son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren in a rusted zinc shack. Both of Celestina's siblings had died. Her brother died from illness, and the Indonesian military killed her sister in 1985 in their origin village in Birunbiru. Celestina's son sold coconuts for US\$0.50 each along the coastal road opposite the World Bank offices. He paid US\$0.25 cents to local residents to climb their coconut trees to obtain supplies. Every morning he wheeled his loaded cart to the beach and at sunset wheeled the cart back again with whatever unsold coconuts remained.

During one of our conversations, Celestina proudly showed me her voter registration card,<sup>28</sup> which stated that her date of birth was 1 January 1954. She looked much older than this indicated, as she had many teeth missing, and working outdoors in harsh weather conditions when she returned to her origin village had aged her. She always dressed in an old T-shirt and sarong, but would take off the T-shirt and pull her sarong over herself when she took an afternoon siesta on the bamboo bench behind her stand. After her siesta, she resumed business at her stall or occasionally she walked to the next *kios* a few metres away for a chat with its vendors. In the afternoon, she sat on the bridge close to her stall soaking up the local atmosphere. Other times she would sit there with friends checking her hair for *utu* (T) (lice), a common sight around Bidau.

Celestina caught my attention by calling out, “*bondia Australi*”, (T/I) (good morning Australia) as I passed her stall. This exchange based on our nationalities continued, as every time I passed her stall, she would greet me with “*bondia Australi*” to which I amicably replied, “*bondia Birunbiru*.” Almost every day she was laughing and in good humour. There was one day, however, when her spirits were dampened. She complained about her sore, cracked feet. She was barefoot and had no thongs, the most common everyday footwear worn in Bidau Motaklaran. When I went to the shops later that day, I purchased a pair of thongs for her for US\$0.50. In return, she wanted to give me vegetables worth far in excess of this amount, demonstrating the generosity and value of exchange of some people despite their poverty.

Each year during the wet season, usually around January, Celestina returned to her birthplace in the mountains for a month or more to assist her family in agricultural activities. Some years she would also return for a similar length of time in the middle of the year. During my visit to her origin village in February 2003, I observed maize crops and rice paddies irrigated from the river nearby. These were the main crops grown.<sup>29</sup>

Celestina was known by another name in her origin village. As did many East Timorese, she used a nickname as well as the name used for formal documents such as her registration card. Some people in Bidau had also used code names during periods when they were involved in clandestine activities working with Falintil.

For a number of years, Celestina had operated her *kios* opposite Alberto's house, but she moved 50 metres down the road to another venue after the turmoil in 1999. When she first set up shop again, she started with only a few vegetables, comprising garlic, neatly arranged clusters of small onions and some chillies. As the markets improved, with a variety of vegetables in season throughout 2001 and 2002, she too developed her stall by selling more produce, including a variety of leafy green vegetables, bananas, carrots, palm wine (*tua*) (T) and betel nut. In the latter part of 2002, she also had enough money to buy some cigarettes, and she enjoyed having a few of these each day. In the middle of 2003, when she returned from one of her visits to her origin village, she set up a fruit stall at a new location, on the beachfront opposite the Turismo Hotel. This change of venue attracted customers from the hotel. Operating her stall, however, did not always return her a profit after she had purchased fruit, including oranges grown on neighbouring islands, from the markets. In mid-October 2003, she discontinued operating this fruit stall and spent her time assisting Makassae friends who cooked and sold fish and melons along Estrada de Bidau.

## **Conclusion**

Among the Portuguese Period Settlers, Indonesian Period Settlers and Post-ballot Residents there were identifiable social groups in addition to the people from Birunbiru, notably small groups of students living together and a small group of people from ethno-Chinese backgrounds, who had some specific networks of support. In general, every resident interviewed had significant social connections. People socialised mainly

within their own groups of family, friends and neighbours, but there were also regular crossings of boundaries to go to shops and attend various community and religious gatherings. Many residents had plans for the future and ideas about the development of their country following their years of pain and struggle for independence. The majority initially concentrated on obtaining enough food for their daily needs and on rebuilding their houses. Everyone had been a witness to the violence. Each person was in some way haunted. Everyone had suffered loss of some kind: family members, friends, neighbours, homes, clothes, photographs, jobs, their health, years of education, motorbikes, pigs, gardens, and so on.

Many residents faced uncertainty. They were not sure in what direction their lives would go. Their sense of freedom had a bittersweet taste, not only because of what had happened in the past, but also because their high expectations for a better future had not yet been realised. Several people were impatient and disillusioned with the lack of improvement in the quality of their lives. Residents had to juggle their lives, changing what they did in the past and looking for new ways of being in the world. This was not easy. Some people did not know what to do.

As well as common threads that connected residents socially, there were also differences, especially in relation to resources available. Alberto, for example, had what Bourdieu (1977:171-181) refers to as “symbolic capital.” In addition to having economic capital to support his household, he had the support of an extended kinship network that he could mobilise in times of need, had completed secondary education and had prestige and status in the village. This symbolic capital afforded him more power in shaping decisions about his life and those of his wife and children than a resident such as Madalena, who as a sole parent with no formal education was more dependent on the generosity of others to support her household.

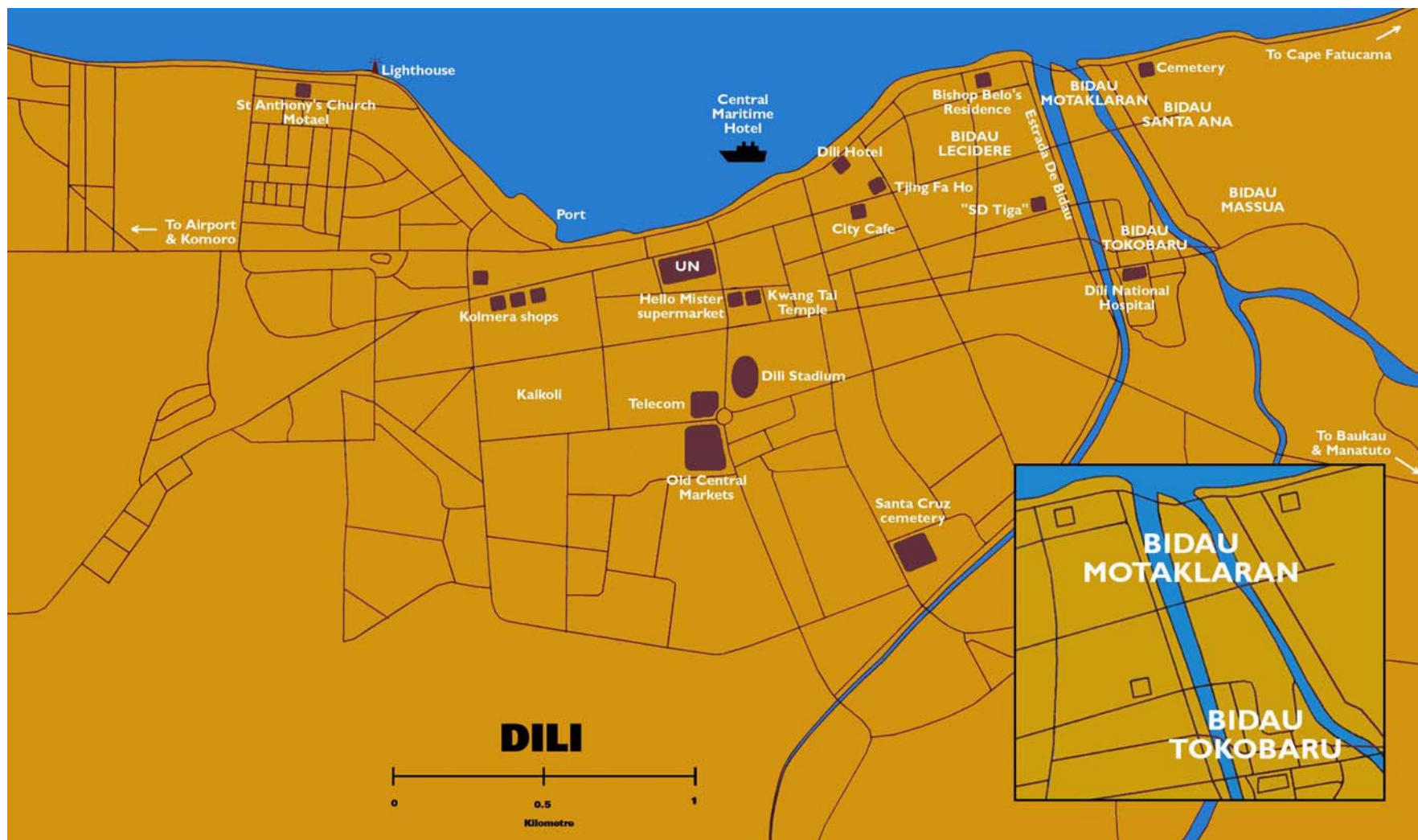


Figure 2. Map of central Dili in 2001 showing research sites of Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru

## CHAPTER 2: TREKS TO HEALING ALONG ROADS OF RUBBLE

All the houses have been destroyed and the people don't have money to rebuild their houses. (Portuguese Period Settler, Interview, 12 March 2001)

Tilley (1994:33) describes places as only existing because of their “emplotment in a narrative. Places, like persons, have biographies inasmuch as they are formed, used and transformed in relation to practice.” This is true for Bidau. For many residents, especially the Portuguese Period Settlers and the Indonesian Period Settlers, the locality, the place of Bidau, holds meaning because of the shared history that they have experienced there. A very significant part of that shared history was the damage inflicted on their bodies and the Bidau landscape in 1999.

There is no doubt that anyone who visited Dili after the widespread destruction of 1999 would agree that it was a “wounded” city. Harvey (2003:27) discusses the application of such terms as “wounded”, “sick” or “ailing” to a city:

Such metaphors presume that the city is in some sense an organic form of social life that originates through human action. The city grows, is sustained, or dies out as the case may be. In the process it can assume different states, such as robust or wounded, healthy or sick, elegant or shamefully ugly.

These metaphors can be enticing and useful, but as Harvey (2003:28) warns, there can be dangers in applying such terms. What looks like a wounded city to one person might appear to be healthy to another person. Another consideration, especially one that can apply to the reconstruction of a damaged city like Dili, is to see who is not being served and what is not being done. Taking this approach, marginalized groups are identified as well as areas that may become urban ghettos. Another recent term “urbicide” has been applied to destroyed cities. “The term ‘urbicide’, coined by the famous architect and former mayor of Belgrade, Bogdan Bogdanovic, describes the double project of the



destruction of communities, their habits and cultural heritage as an integral part of warfare” (Humphrey 2002:58).

Part of the 1999 violence was the devastation of the physical environment in Dili – people’s homes, many government buildings, other public places, and the infrastructure for water, sanitation and electricity. In this chapter, I wind through the city looking at places of significance for the people of Bidau and how these places and the activities carried out in them were affected by the destruction. These sites include public places such as the primary school S.D. Tiga, the National Hospital, the church in Bidau Lecidere, the local grotto, the cemetery in Bidau Santa Ana and the cockfighting pit. They also include private homes, including the convent of the Missionary Dominican Sisters of the Rosary.

### **Dili destroyed**

The events during 1999 that ravaged East Timor added to the country’s record of violent upheaval, killings and destruction. Dili as well as towns and villages throughout the country had been destroyed on previous occasions. During the Allied intrusion in December 1941 and the subsequent military operations during World War II, East Timorese suffered both loss of life and destruction of their country. “Thus, when the Japanese finally surrendered the scene in Timor was one of human misery and devastation. Dili had been badly damaged by Allied bombing, and the other main towns and villages partly destroyed, either by bombing or by the wanton destruction inflicted by Japanese occupiers” (Dunn 1983:26). Following this ordeal, East Timorese were subjected to the destruction of Dili again with the Indonesian invasion of 1975, an event embedded in the memories of residents in Bidau.

As I flew into the country on 3 November 2000 at the beginning of the wet season, I noticed the marked contrast between the striking scenery of some lush

mountainous regions and the stark nakedness of the coastal city of Dili built on a stretch of flat land facing the Ombai Strait and bounded by barren hills. Dirt roads meandering across mountaintops were visible from the air. Harsh climatic conditions, erosion and human intervention over many years have contributed to this deterioration of the physical landscape. During the Indonesian occupation, trees had been cleared in some locations to restrict the movement of Falintil soldiers and other Timorese by making them more visible. This action was taken in an attempt to thwart support for the resistance (Aditjondro 1994:20; Kohen 1999:127-129). People have continued to cut down trees for materials to construct their houses and acquire wood for cooking purposes. Some sell bundles of firewood in the markets and along the roadsides in rural districts.

It was difficult to imagine what the city looked like prior to 1999. While the landscape and people had both been treated harshly, somehow the people appeared to have fared better, at least on the surface. They were welcoming of new faces. Children especially were inquisitive to discover the names of foreigners and their country of nationality. The constant greetings of “Hello Mrs.” and “What’s your name Mrs.” were like echoes that I became used to hearing as I made my way around the city. Walking the streets, I used landmarks such as demolished buildings or supermarkets to find places, as there were few street signs. Walking, however, was not always a relaxing pastime, as the honk of car horns usually signalled taxi drivers looking for a fare, as almost every car functioned as a taxi in early 2001. *Mikrolets* (I) (minibuses) also operated in the city and, as well as larger trucks and utilities with wooden benches in the rear, were the main transport to rural districts.

The taxis, along with restaurants and hotels, had multiplied in Dili in response to the many *malae* (T) (foreigners) who had come to work there on contract or as

volunteers with the UN or other agencies or to develop business interests. Dili held mixed appeal for these foreigners. A number preferred to work in rural districts where they found people friendlier, while the capital city held attraction as it had a bank, shops, better communication facilities and a number of restaurants where people could socialise. Health risks, however, detracted from its allure, with many people contracting malaria or dengue fever in Dili. Perhaps some of the comments written by Anna Forbes in the 1880s are still valid. She describes the town of “Dilly” as a place where “a walk through its streets leaves a depressing effect on the spirits” (Forbes, Anna 1987 [1887]:231). She further describes the township and refers to the unhealthy appearance of the people:

It is not a lively place: no traveler will of choice visit Dilly, for its reputation as the unhealthiest port of the archipelago is not undeserved, and the report that one night passed in its miasmal atmosphere may result fatally deters any who would, except of necessity, go there. Those who are appointed here make up their minds, shortly after arrival, that they will go as soon as possible ... Fever-stricken people and places are recognizable at a glance; the pale faces and enduring air of the residents explain the lifeless town and dilapidated buildings. (Forbes, Anna 1987 [1887]:231)

During my early days in the city, I found it confusing working out the names and roles of the numerous intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations (most operating under acronyms), understanding community structures, coping with language difficulties and working in three currencies (Indonesian rupiah, Australian dollars and American dollars). It was an equally confusing time for East Timorese, confronted with many new faces, changes in lifestyle and the challenge of discovering new ways of being in the world.

Dili was hot and dusty, and the remnants of blackened shells of houses, burnt out vehicles and piles of rubbish were scattered everywhere. Along the roadside on scenic routes near Tasi Tolu, people had dumped their garbage unwilling to complete the extra kilometres to the waste disposal site at Tibar. The burnt-out shell of the red 555

Lospalos bus remained like a squatter in Rua Dr. Antonio de Carvalho, the street that led to my future home in Bidau.<sup>1</sup> Transformed from a previously valued mode of transport, it stained the landscape as a dirty plaything for children, a reminder of the recent conflict. There was also much debris floating out to sea from canals, and the road to the *Kristu Rei* (T) (Christ the King) statue was littered with plastic water bottles, papers and other items of junk not worth collecting. Some people appeared to be walking in a daze to no particular destination.

In 2001, Dili's central business district included the United Nations buildings, the nearby "Hello Mister" supermarket, the shops in Kolmera, and the restaurant strip taking in City Cafe. Nearby was a general store that previously operated as "Tjing Fa Ho," the building still standing with its name and Chinese characters intact. Mr Ley Kiung Keng, who was born in Dili and whose father had been born in China, had operated a giftware shop that sold household items in the business called "Tjing Fa Ho." He had commenced this business in the 1940s and operated it until 1974 when he took his family to Singapore prior to the 1975 Indonesian invasion.<sup>2</sup> The Chinese store is a symbolic memorial, still standing as a witness and reminder of the history of Chinese traders, many of whom the Indonesian military killed during the invasion.<sup>3</sup> Chinese traders played an influential role in the history of the country, initially trading in sandalwood and controlling import and export trade and later operating most of the businesses in the country prior to 1975 (Forbes, Henry O. 1885:418; Ormeling 1957:130-141; Boxer 1960:350; King, Margaret 1963:50-51).

A significant meeting place for Buddhists is the Kwan Tai Temple located behind "Hello Mister" supermarket. This temple, dedicated to the deity of Justice, attracted many Catholic Timorese who consulted the keeper, a man without a formal title or training, but who had knowledge passed from his father. He gave advice about aspects

of people's lives and decisions that might influence their future, and did so by reading the fall and scatter of joss sticks. According to the keeper, this temple was opened in 1937 and was not destroyed in the 1999 conflict because people were too frightened of the consequences that might be imposed by the deities. However, the fear of god did not deter militia from attacking people at, and destroying, churches.

Within walking distance from the temple was the site of the old central markets. Many vendors stocked their stalls with the same merchandise, e.g. sachets of washing powder, shampoo, biscuits, canned sardines, batteries and lighters. Other traders sold a limited range of footwear (mostly sports shoes and flip-flops) and there were a few tables where one could purchase music cassettes. Around the perimeter of the markets, people displayed fruit and vegetables in season in neat arrangements on the ground. These included small piles of onions, chillies, garlic, tomatoes, carrots, bananas and papaya. The old markets were notorious for gambling and the occasional fight, and betting tables operated in one section close to where the buses for Liquica departed. Some days, cockerels displaying brightly coloured plumage were for sale, for use in the popular sport of cockfighting. Moneychangers operated at the markets or in the street near the "Hello Mister" supermarket. Opposite the markets, Telecom Australia administered its office, selling mobile phones, collecting revenue from private landlines and offering the only public internet service.<sup>4</sup>

Opposite the United Nations buildings (the Governor's offices during Portuguese administration) and not far from the wharf, floated two hotels, the "Hotel Olympia" and the more luxuriant "Central Maritime Hotel," which contrasted with the rusty wrecks of ships still polluting the shores, remnants of past wars. In front of these hotels on the foreshore, fishmongers displayed their catches in the open air. Some fish hung from trees by *tali-balanda* (T) (string made from agave plants), others were set out on tables

protected from flies by the hawkers vigorously waving banana leaves over them.<sup>5</sup> Coconut sellers, including vendors from Bidau, operated small businesses along the coastal road, and at cooler times throughout the day, men peddled three-wheeled bicycles around the city area. These contraptions had a compartment erected on the front stocked with items for sale including soft drinks, water, tobacco, biscuits and a variety of confectionery items. In the heat of the day and towards late evening, their owners parked these bicycles along the coastal road to take advantage of the sea breezes and socialise with friends. Other men pushed *karrosa* (T) (carts) from which they sold *bakso* (I) (a popular meatball dish enjoyed by Timorese).

Some monuments in parks featured “warriors,” machetes in hand, posing aggressively as they burst free of handcuffs and chains. One such monument was the integration monument still standing in the central park opposite the Dili port. This was in stark contrast to religious statues in other public places. As Aditjondro (1994) notes, Indonesian security forces responded to the increase of Catholic icons by constructing *integrasi* (I) (integration) monuments throughout the country. Aditjondro (1994:38) discusses the Indonesian response to the issue of church leaders promoting “the construction of Catholic symbols – crucifixes, Virgin Mary statues, grottos and *via dolorosa* structures – on as many hills and mountains as possible.”

### **Path to Bidau**

It was against this backdrop of charred buildings, hectic post-emergency reconstruction, heat and enthusiasm that I commenced my fieldwork in the village sections of Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru in the village of Bidau Santa Ana.<sup>6</sup> In Tetun, *mota klaran* literally means between two rivers (*mota* translates as (seasonal) river and *klaran* translates as middle or centre).<sup>7</sup> *Tokobaru* is a composite of two Indonesian words, literally meaning new shop (*toko* translates as shop, *baru* as new).



Figure 3. Map showing village sections of Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru

From the main streets of Bidau, narrow dirt paths led to rusted, corrugated zinc shacks, which leaked during the rainy season, and were mostly inhabited by people from Birunbiru. Neatly paved roads led to brick houses and vacant blocks, while many dusty paths wound in between banana and coconut trees arriving at houses tucked away out of sight from the main roads and built from *bebak* slats on cement foundations. People living along the canals endured views of debris discarded by local residents and others living further away up in the hills. During the wet season, rubbish washed down into the sea, with stagnant, stinking ponds remaining in the canals between heavy downpours. Residents complained angrily to me that people living upland in Lehane threw waste into the canal, yet I observed that they also used the canals for waste disposal.



**Plate 3. Section of Bidau Motaklaran where Birunbiru people reside**

Pigs were a common sight; they roamed around the streets scavenging in rubbish heaps and drains, together with underfed dogs that appeared to be too lethargic to trouble anyone, though kept as guard dogs. Cockerels crowed in the background with



hens clucking and pecking on floors inside houses and scrounging on nearby patches of dusty ground.

People walked along the streets from around 6.00 a.m. carrying black plastic bags containing *paun* (T) (bread rolls) purchased at one or other of the local bakeries. A Timorese Chinese family owned the largest shop, which sold a variety of items including washing detergent, shampoo and personal hygiene products, brooms and other household goods. Behind the shop, they operated the larger of the two bakeries in Bidau, entry being through the ruins of the house, which previously stood alongside. The smaller bakery was a few streets away, owned and operated by an East Timorese family. Small stalls were located on almost every corner selling the same items of vegetables, fruits in season, betel nut and palm wine. Occasionally these were relocated or changed ownership according to people's ability to run a viable business. After almost two years of operating the stall opposite our house, my neighbour Miguel died from a stroke, and his small business was taken over by the children living in the house behind. At first, it operated more as a place for the children to have fun, singing and making jokes, and they sold only a few vegetables.

In East Timor, there were overlapping structures of governance and administration, which had developed under various government authorities and traditional leadership during Portuguese and Indonesian rule. During the resistance against Indonesia, Falintil set up a clandestine, parallel system of governance with a village level representative (*NUREP*) appointed in each village.<sup>8</sup> At a national level, the *Concelho Nacional da Resistência Timorense* (CNRT) (P) (National Council of Timorese Resistance) was created in 1998 with Xanana Gusmao as the leader, a development from the *Conselho Nacional da Resistência Maubere* (CNRM) (P) (National Council of Maubere Resistance). CNRM aimed to “encompass all political

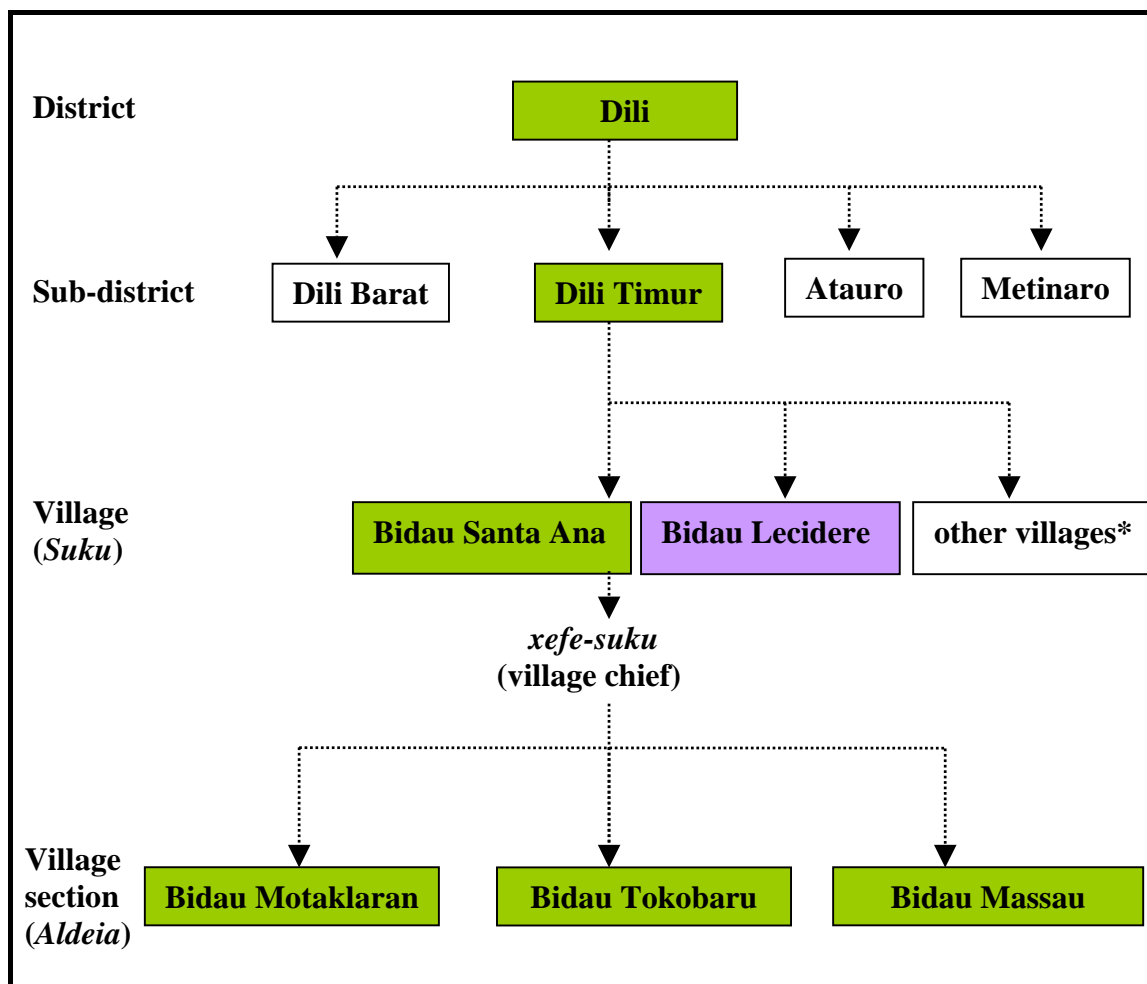
ideologies” and continue the struggle towards independence and unification of the nation (Niner 2001:22-23).

Under Indonesian occupation and under UNTAET, Bidau came within the sub-district of Dili Timur in the district of Dili, one of East Timor’s thirteen districts. During Indonesian administration, government went down to *suku* (T) (village) and *aldeia* (T) (village section) levels, but what happened “on the ground” varied considerably from village to village.<sup>9</sup> However, under UNTAET and the initial years of the first government of the independent *República Democrática de Timor-Leste* (P) (RDTL) (Democratic Republic of East Timor), government administration only went to sub-district level, as the system of local government was still being developed.

On the 26 June 2001, the *xefe-suku* walked me around the *aldeias* of Bidau Santa Ana checking their physical boundaries.<sup>10</sup> He said that it was more accurate for people to use the term *aldeia* and give the name of their *aldeia*, rather than use the word *suku*, to describe where they lived. However, this was the first time I had heard anyone in Bidau use the word *aldeia*. At the time of my arrival in the area, the *xefe-suku* held the official position for village leadership, one he had inherited from his father. Under the Indonesian system, he had been a paid government official, but as village heads were no longer government employees, he now received no pay.

The *xefe-suku* had lived in Bidau Motaklaran all his life, being born in his house in 1951. He was a member of the Tetun ethnolinguistic group, and when I interviewed him for the household survey (19 February 2001) there were 14 people residing with him – his wife, five daughters, five sons and three nieces. The two older nieces came from Vermasse and Manatuto to attend school and university in Dili, while the youngest niece resided with him because her parents had died and there was no one else to care for her. The children’s ages ranged from 10 to 24 years. During the conflict, the *xefe-*

*suku* fled with his family to Remexio for five weeks, returning to Bidau on 23 November 1999. As he no longer received an income for his duties as the *xefe-suku*, he purchased fish from Metinaro (approximately 25 kilometres east of Dili) and then resold them in Dili at a profit.



**Figure 4. Administration chart for the *suku* Bidau Santa Ana prior to 20 May 2002**

\* Other villages included in the sub-district of Dili Timur were Balibar, Kamea, Hera, Metiaut, Bekora, Kuluhun, Bairro dos Grilos, Bairro Formosa, Bairro Central, Bemori, Santa Cruz and Lahane Timur.

### **Public places of significance**

For the people of Bidau, some of the significant public sites for daily activities and special events were within the bounds of Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru, while

others were close by in neighbouring *aldeias*. Not all of these places were destroyed in 1999, but the activities and rituals associated with them were disrupted.

*Sekolah Dasar Tiga (SD Tiga) (I) (Primary School 3)*

Most children from Bidau attended the local primary school commonly referred to as SD Tiga Bidau situated in Rua Humberto da Cruz, Akadiruhun. A few children attended the primary school in Bidau Massau, and most older students would go each day to the senior high school, Colégio Paulo VI, located in Rua Belarmino Lobo, Bairro Central, about a fifteen minute walk away. All these schools had had windows smashed, doors and roofs removed and furniture looted, leaving only the foundations and walls. Student records were destroyed. Not only had militia made the buildings unusable, the Indonesian teachers who had previously done much of the teaching had left and needed to be replaced.



**Plate 4. SD Tiga Bidau**

At the front entrance of SD Tiga, graffiti consisting of a drawing of an eagle with “Black Eagle” written underneath, the symbol of a local gang, marked both gateposts.

The school had no sign, but the name at the time of my interviews with teachers in June 2001 was that given under the Indonesian system. The school had closed in August 1999 and re-opened in November 1999. One group of students expressed their disappointment that they were not able to make the transition to high school because of the disruption to their education. Students experienced many changes, including a change in curriculum. Only Portuguese was taught until July 2000 when the school resumed a fuller curriculum, including subjects such as mathematics, natural science, social science, human rights, health, religion and sport, with school hours being from 8.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon, Monday to Saturday. The decision to teach Portuguese in schools was made long before it was officially established as one of the national languages.<sup>11</sup>

The Principal told me in an interview on 28 June 2001 that there were 582 students enrolled at the school at that time, 319 boys and 263 girls. There were no school fees, but students contributed Rp.1,000 per month (A\$0.20) to pay the cleaner.<sup>12</sup> Teachers earned US\$123 per month, irrespective of duties or experience. By mid 2002, the school was conducting classes from 8.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon and from 12.00 noon to 3.00 p.m. Children resumed wearing school uniforms of navy blue shorts or skirts and white blouses adding another expense, which families struggled to meet. Most families dressed their children in the school uniform, though a few children set off for school still wearing their ragged clothes. A major problem for the school after the destruction in 1999 was a blocked toilet system. Residents who lived nearby had been using the facilities resulting in blockages, so it became necessary to close and lock them. If the students or teachers needed to use the toilet, they had to go home and use their own facilities.

### *Dili National Hospital*

Walking south from the coast road to the opposite end of Bidau Motaklaran, one arrives in about 15 minutes at the National Hospital, which is situated in Rua Jacinto de Candido, Bidau Tokobaru. It was one of the places where residents of Bidau sought refuge in 1999, and it underwent many forms of restructuring during the transition from Indonesian administration to management by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) before being handed over to the Ministry of Health on 20 May 2002.<sup>13</sup>

The hospital had a mixed reputation among the residents in Bidau. Some people had found the Indonesian doctors there very helpful during Indonesian administration; others had been fearful of injections, believing they could possibly suffer severe consequences, even death, if they underwent treatment. In 2001, some residents praised international doctors who had assisted them at the hospital. However, others still lacked confidence in the public hospital. Although some residents felt it necessary to go there when illness struck, a large number of people in Bidau preferred to go elsewhere, such as the Catholic clinic at Motael, the Bairo Pite Clinic, to the clinic of Dr. Sergio da Costa Lobo in Akadiruhun, or consult traditional healers. A few visited one of the East Timorese nurses who lived in Bidau Motaklaran to arrange for prescriptions and medicine. Others chose to have no treatment at all.

### *The Bishop's Residence*

Under Indonesian occupation, churches were one of the few places where East Timorese could freely assemble and talk with their friends. Sometimes churches were used to organise clandestine activities. Bishop Belo's house and the garden surrounding it, located in Bidau Lecidere, became a site of refuge for thousands of people, including many from Bidau, following the ballot results in 1999. However, militia attacked the house on 6 September 1999, and the Bishop was evacuated to Darwin, showing that

even religious leaders and holy places were not protected from the atrocities. The house was destroyed, but every Sunday from 2000 to late 2002, crowds of people walked to an open-air Mass held in the grounds of the residence. En route to the church grounds, in Rua de F. Camara, was *Karpintaria Karidade* (T) (charity carpentry) an open style workshop that manufactured both wooden coffins and beds – resting places for the dead and the living. The business also constructed *oratóriu* (T) (wooden shrines) which look like tabernacles.

Of those I interviewed, 99% (146 people) stated that they were Catholic. During the latter part of 2001, a small congregation of the “Assembly of God” was established in Bidau Motaklaran, but had closed its doors by the middle of 2002. I rarely observed anyone attend this church, which was organised by an African man from Ghana. Most people said they attended church services on a regular basis, though I observed some families sent a different member each week to attend Mass. A few men stated that they only went to Mass on special occasions, such as Christmas and New Year. One of my interpreters jokingly commented one day: “Annette, do you really think Bernardo goes to church. He just said that – he doesn’t go!” Large crowds at Sunday services was, however, evidence of a strong and active Catholic following, and even more people attended on significant religious occasions.

For Mass, some women dressed in their best *kampāna* (T) (sarongs) with *kabaia* (T) (blouses) and rubber thongs, while other women dressed in western fashions. Women did not wear trousers to church, but did on other occasions. Young girls wore a synthetic version of paper organza and taffeta dresses with boots and socks, and boys were neatly attired in clean shorts and shirts. A few men still dressed in traditional sarongs, shirts and thongs. However, the majority wore trousers and shirts. People purchased new clothes twice a year, for Christmas and Easter, and proudly paraded their

new attire at religious services on these occasions. Those who could afford new clothes purchased these from the shops, while others bought second-hand apparel from the markets.<sup>14</sup>

When people attended church services at Bidau Lcidere, they knelt reverently on the stony ground during the Eucharistic Prayer. Some people removed their rubber footwear to use as kneeling pads. There were plastic seats available, but never enough for the whole congregation. The liturgy commenced around 7.00 a.m., though a number of people arrived early and recited the Rosary. Almost everyone received communion placed on the tongue, rather than having the host handed to them, as is common practice in Australia, and people paid to have Masses said for special intentions, a less common practice in Australia nowadays. A number of residents from Bidau said that they did not attend Mass, as they could not receive communion, because they were not married in the Catholic Church. Some people had rigid beliefs about confession, and one young friend who confided that he did not like going to church, resumed weekly attendance after he went to confession one Christmas. Catholic Church leaders expressed conservative attitudes on birth control and sex education.<sup>15</sup> I was told that these topics were very difficult for agencies to include in their education programs.<sup>16</sup>

Despite some criticisms of the Bishop in the public forum, he maintained a pastoral approach with his congregation and was well loved by them. When he left for Portugal in January 2002 for what was said to be health reasons, many residents in Bidau Motaklaran were saddened. After his departure, Masses were rarely held in the grounds of the Bishop's residence, and Bidau residents either walked to St. Anthony's Catholic Church, Motael, or went to the Catholic Church in Bekora.



### *The Grotto*

A common Catholic practice in East Timor is praying the Rosary, and this takes on different formats. Although some families stated that they prayed this prayer together every evening, in fact some listened to it on the radio in the background at 6.00 p.m., while they chatted to their friends. It is mostly during the months of May and October that praying the Rosary holds special significance in the village. A Rosary procession of a Mary statue moves from house to house, with the location of the statue changing from one house to another each night. On the first evening, the ritual commences at the *gruta* (T) (cave, grotto), an important feature of the Bidau landscape, where people go to pray. It is located close to the area where many of the people from Birunbiru reside.



**Plate 5. Renovated grotto in Bidau Motaklaran**

Most villages in Dili have a grotto devoted to Mary the Mother of God, as there is a strong Marian devotion in East Timor, and the grottos close by at Bidau Santa Ana

overlooking the sea and on the coastal road in Metiaut were grander in appearance than the one in Bidau Motaklaran. Though not destroyed in the violence, this grotto had deteriorated over the years and was renovated during 2002. Approximately three metres in height and constructed of rocks and cement, painted blue, it housed a large statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Two artificial candles with red bulbs and vases overflowing with artificial flowers also decorated the inside area. Of an evening, when there was electricity in the neighbourhood, the lights were turned on. On the right-hand side outside the cave was a white cross approximately four metres high constructed with small rocks embedded in cement. There was a square platform directly in front of the cave with three circular-shaped steps leading down to an enclosed space surrounded by a bamboo fence. There were narrow wooden benches for seating. When the photograph of the grotto shown in Plate 5 was taken, the statue of Our Lady inside the grotto was obscured by a veil and a smaller statue had been placed in front in preparation for the procession from house to house.

#### *Cemetery at Bidau Santa Ana*

The local cemetery is another site where people gathered, made floral offerings, said prayers and burned candles. The *Cemitério De Santa Ana C.M.D.* (Santa Ana Cemetery) established in 1963 overlooks the ocean and is situated in Bidau Santa Ana within a short walking distance of Bidau Motaklaran. On its cream and white brick fence is a sign in Portuguese, *O Sol Logo Em Nascendo Ve Primerio* (we are the first to see the sun rise). The cemetery was not destroyed in 1999, but its exterior wall was renovated with funds from the Portuguese government in March 2002 and a marble plaque near the entrance acknowledges this. The exterior fences of other cemeteries in East Timor were also renovated during 2002, including Santa Cruz cemetery, with similar marble plaques erected at their entrances recognizing contributions of assistance.

Many residents from Bidau Motaklaran have kin buried in the cemetery at Bidau Santa Ana, though not all deceased residents were buried in this cemetery. Some residents chose to bury kin in their gardens. Many people also had family buried in the forest, and a number of people experienced the loss and suffering of not finding the remains of their kin. An unadorned, small chapel with an altar and a large brown wooden cross attached to the wall is located in the middle of the cemetery. On All Souls' Day each year, a priest joins with the community to celebrate Mass in the chapel and grounds. Behind the chapel close to the back wall is a large black metal cross set on a cement platform with two steps. People burn candles and pray at this memorial cross, and fervently toss handfuls of flower petals and beautifully decorated floral wreaths onto it during special commemorations and in private prayer in remembrance of their kin whose bodies have not been recovered, just as they do on graves of deceased kin.



**Plate 6. Memorial cross in Bidau Santa Ana cemetery**

Residents visit the cemetery regularly, some attending on a weekly basis, with Sundays being a popular day for this. The cemetery is a hive of activity in the days prior

to All Souls' Day, as people clean the gravesides of kin and repaint the tombstones. Tombstones vary in style and size. Some decorated with light-blue tiles have the headstone in marble with details of the deceased's name, date of birth and death, some with a glassed section containing his or her photograph. There are five locked charnel houses in this cemetery. That of the "da Costa family" contains the remains of many kin, and a sign on the door lists the names of 17 members of that family. Another well-maintained charnel house has glass windows providing views of the contents. A small wooden coffin covered with a *tais* is arranged on top of a cement bench. There is also a wooden cross, vases of brightly coloured artificial flowers and a locked cabinet. Other graves are secured by small locked doors and contain several coffins. Such burial places have two or three wooden coffins inside covered with *tais* visible from the outside. Some smaller graves, which are those of children, do not have any markings. Other more simple resting places for the dead are covered with large rocks and cement, sometimes with a wooden cross with details of the deceased, others left unmarked.

### *Cockfighting pit*

Mapping the key locations in Bidau Motaklaran would not be complete without following the trail of men carrying their prized cockerels flouncing multi-coloured feathers tucked under their arms. While gambling was outlawed in East Timor, the authorities ignored this activity because it was a traditional practice. In fact, many police officers joined in this recreational pastime as I came to discover when I attended a gathering one afternoon. While I had been to a cockfight at Liquica markets earlier during my stay in East Timor, I noted that these events were better organised a short distance from my home in Bidau Lecidere. The venue was a few minutes walk from Bishop Belo's residence in a side street set among houses, but out of sight of the main road.

### **Private and intermediate spaces**

While the disruption to activities and rituals in public spaces was very significant, the destruction of private homes, including both houses and the verandas and gardens outside them, caused far greater disruption.

#### *Homes*

The “hierarchy of needs” developed by Maslow (1970) is relevant in the context of Bidau following the 1999 conflict. According to Maslow, the hierarchy of needs consists of satisfying the physiological drives such as hunger, safety needs, the need for love, affection and belongingness, esteem needs and the need for self-actualization. These basic needs propounded by Maslow are relevant for any community in the process of recovery. It is difficult for people to become motivated to advance their lives until their basic needs for food and shelter have been met. Maslow offers an example to show that the level of aspiration in some cases may be lowered. He states that, “a person who has experienced chronic unemployment may continue to be satisfied for the rest of his life if only he can get enough food” (Maslow 1970:52).<sup>17</sup> When I interviewed Bidau residents, they were absorbed with fulfilling their basic needs of adequate food, shelter and a safe environment in which to live. By far the most common loss suffered in Bidau, and what many residents voiced as the most personally distressing issue resulting from the violence in 1999, was the destruction of their houses. Scattered throughout the two village sections were the ruins of destroyed houses. The houses of more than half the people interviewed (51%) were destroyed and the contents either burnt or stolen during the 1999 conflict. In some cases, the looting had been done by “second militia,” the term used for looters who stole goods from inside the houses or carried off doors, roof materials or other property after the militia had done their damage.

One of the strongest complaints that residents in Bidau voiced was that no official (government or non-governmental) shelter program had assisted them to repair their homes after the 1999 destruction.<sup>18</sup> Several families lacked the space to receive guests, and deficiencies in their private arrangements were in full public view. The injury to their self-esteem and the disturbance to their equanimity were as significant as the damage to their dwelling. Many people constructed a simple dwelling, not able to afford to rebuild their homes to their previous standard. A small number of the Portuguese Period Settlers had the resources to renovate their houses to accommodate outsiders for rental purposes. To my knowledge, only three households were in a position to do this in 2001. They had stashed away savings or had networks of support that assisted them financially. A few families delayed making renovations to their places until after the August 2001 Constituent Assembly election because they feared more civil unrest. The militia had damaged the *xefe-suku's* house, and he showed me two photographs of the burnt house with its roof missing, but he was more fortunate than other villagers in Bidau, as he had received zinc sheeting from the Portuguese mission to rebuild the roof of his house.

One had to be careful to distinguish between what was wreckage and what were partly constructed dwellings. One household, in which I interviewed a young man as part of the household surveys, had a modest home built on brick foundations with a cement floor, wooden slat walls and zinc roofing. Some months later, friends brought to my attention that the house had gone. The owners had dismantled the house and had taken the materials with them to Aileu, 40 kilometres south of Dili, from where they originally came. The cement foundations remained in the vacant block amidst other rubble.

The destruction of houses resulted in altered patterns of residence as many people whose properties were completely demolished moved in with relatives or friends. Some households had several nuclear families living in the one dwelling. The average number of people residing in each household in Bidau during 2001 was eight people. The largest household supported 25 residents, described by the interviewee as three families living in the one house. Prior to the conflict in 1999, each of these families had had its own separate house in Bidau Motaklaran. The interviewee, who was male, said the occupants included his two married sisters, their husbands, his ten nephews, six nieces, an uncle, a cousin, another brother-in-law and that brother-in-law's brother. In the smallest household, a woman lived alone, her father having died a month earlier. Some people chose not to return to Bidau until after the August 2001 election, to ensure that the situation was peaceful before they settled again. For example, one family remained in Portugal with only the husband living in another village in Dili. Their large brick home in Bidau was destroyed. When peace was resumed in the neighbourhood, they constructed seven small studio units on the land for rental purposes. They decided themselves to live in another village in the capital.

The relationship between house and space in Timor and Indonesia has been well documented (Traube 1986; Fox 1993; Ng 1993; Waterson 1997).<sup>19</sup> Traube (1986:78) in reference to the Mambai, the largest ethnic group in East Timor, explains that at all levels of the house system “the alternation of ritual time with ordinary time is expressed in spatial terms, as an oscillation between going into and out from a house.” This link between inside and outside the house is evident in Mambai daily routines.

By this symbolism, house members spend much of their lives “on the outside.” Their daily routines take them to the zone of “palm tree and garden” (*naua nor nama*), and even farther outward to the “dense grasslands and forest” (*kur-lalan/ai-lalan*). These zones mark what Mambai call the “outside and edge” (*hoho nor eha*) of inhabited space (Traube 1986:78).

Even though Bidau is an urban village, the division of time between inside and outside for ordinary activities and ritual activity is applicable, and the intermediate space of verandas and gardens is an important site for both daily and special ritual activities. According to Traube (1986:59), the veranda is the place where Mambai receive their visitors. This was also true of Mambai and residents from other ethnolinguistic groups in Bidau, at least where verandas were still in reasonable condition. In her study of the Mambai house system, Traube clearly distinguishes between the ordinary domicile for Mambai and what she refers to as the “origin house.” As I discuss later in this thesis, all residents focused on rebuilding the houses necessary for ritual purposes. For Makassae residents this meant giving priority to rebuilding their origin houses (that is, their *umaluliks*) in Birunbiru, while for most other residents it meant reconstructing their places of residence in Bidau.

*The home of Missionary Dominican Sisters of the Rosary*

One home in Bidau Motaklaran held special significance. The Dominican convent situated in the centre of Bidau Motaklaran is a low-set brick house with a two-story extension that has three upstairs bedrooms, a chapel, a kitchen and a storeroom. The main part of the house has an outdoor dining area, with a neatly furnished lounge room displaying both religious icons and decorations from the Philippines, two bathrooms and four bedrooms. The house is contained within a small block of land with a nurtured garden and enough space to park two vehicles, enclosed by an inconspicuous metal fence with a sign *Susteran Dominikan, Bidau Motaklaran*.

This Catholic congregation of religious sisters has been in Bidau Motaklaran since 1994 and is administered by a provincial office in the Philippines. It is linked to a global congregation of Dominican sisters.<sup>20</sup> The first Dominican sisters in East Timor were Spanish sisters who arrived in 1953 from China where they had a mission house.<sup>21</sup>



When the sisters came to Bidau Motaklaran in 1994, the house they acquired was covered in bushes and had been a gathering place for people using drugs. After the sisters moved in, they cleaned up around the property and extended the building to make it their novitiate house.<sup>22</sup>



**Plate 7. Dominican convent in Bidau Motaklaran**

In September 1999, the sisters' house became a place of refuge for approximately 300 terrified people from Bidau Motaklaran. Residents from the village slept and ate at the convent for three days until militia threatened them and forced them to leave. The sisters had the harrowing experience of bearing responsibility for the people, while trying to secure their own safety, as they attempted to find sites of sanctuary within Dili. The sisters eventually travelled to Kupang in a convoy with militia trucks, while the people who had sheltered at their house sought various other places of refuge. Their house was then left unguarded, but was not destroyed.

In 2001, the sisters' household consisted of two Filipino sisters, one East Timorese sister and four East Timorese postulants. In 2002, the composition altered with the arrival of another religious sister from the Philippines and five East Timorese

postulants, who moved from Soibada, where the sisters administer a boarding house for around 100 children. With the inclusion of these members, the household consisted of three novices (one novice had left the Order), nine postulants, three Filipino sisters and one East Timorese sister.<sup>23</sup> The sisters worked with a local youth group and gave religious instruction to children in Bidau. One lectured full-time in the English department at the *Nacional Universidade Timor Lorosa'e* (T) (National University of East Timor). In mid 2003, the novitiate moved to a new building in another area of Dili (Betu, Komoro), but several sisters continued to live in Bidau.<sup>24</sup>

During the latter months of 2003, the sisters acquired a new building at the rear of their Bidau property. This new building, funded by the Portuguese Mission in East Timor, was to become a boarding house for children. However, the architectural design of this sizeable complex with its small windows was not initially suitable for children. Some structures required modification, because they were deemed dangerous.

Children accepted by the sisters to live in the house need not necessarily be orphans by the strict definition of that term. In some cases, the sisters agree to take vulnerable children who have one parent.<sup>25</sup> In October 2003, there were approximately ten children, being the first intake of students, living in the sisters' house in Bidau while the modifications to the boarding house were being completed.<sup>26</sup> The opening of residential child-centres, such as the boarding house, raises questions about the role of the extended family in caring for children whose parents have died. As Knudson (2001:14) noted in her report on the situation of separated children and orphans in East Timor, many children in child-centres did not visit family, and "these children risk losing the networks of friends and relations involved in the very intricate extended families." While the sisters were providing children with a stable environment for their

education, it was not evident that these children had the strong networks of kin of other children in Bidau.

## **Conclusion**

By following a path through the city centre of Dili to Bidau, I have explored the damaged landscape and identified places that hold importance for Bidau residents. By introducing these places – significant for education, health, religious rituals, mortuary rites and social interaction – I open the way to discuss later in this thesis the importance of physical reconstruction, which was necessary for the conduct of key rituals and social activities that contributed to processes of recovery.

The people of Bidau, their physical surrounds and how they formed and used space were all affected by the violent events of 1999. In the midst of the rubble, they had to rebuild their homes and their lives. They had to create new private spaces, redefine boundaries between the public and the private, and form again the intermediate spaces so important for ritual life and the remaking of the social order. They had to do all this while still fearing violence and bearing the losses that they had suffered.

### CHAPTER 3: STOP THE FIGHTING – YEARNINGS FOR PEACE

We will not have true independence until the fighting stops!  
(Portuguese Period Settler, Interview, February 2001)

The fear that violence will resume haunts Bidau residents. Events in the village terrified residents during 1999, including the parade of militia through the streets of Bidau, the subsequent destruction, and their journeys out of the village at the height of the violence. There were no safe places in Bidau.

As memories associated with particular places and connections to place are embedded in both the social body and individual body, the violence had many ramifications. Most obvious was the harm done to physical bodies – through killing, raping, torture and dismemberment. Less visible was the psychological damage to individuals. Also less visible, but significant, was the scarring of the social body, as violence destroyed networks and bred distrust.

Schröder and Schmidt (2001:2) note that we should view violence from a variety of angles. Riches (1986:8-10) discusses the “triangle of violence,” which includes perpetrators, victims and observers, all of whom are caught up in their own interpretive frameworks and their own agendas. He cautions against the dangers of employing the term “violence,” because of the differences in interpretations across cultures. Aware of these limitations, he offers a helpful suggestion, which I have taken as a starting point to analyse violent acts in Bidau:

For a cross-cultural analysis to be reasonable it must do justice to people’s understandings, so there is some sense in my employing the everyday categories of my own cultural world – even though the explanations of violence that I eventually offer will have been filtered through the ‘language of ordinary people.’ (Riches 1986:2)

As Christian Krohn-Hansen (1994) points out, studies of violence tend to focus on the victim’s perspective, often omitting the perpetrator’s view altogether. He emphasises

that “if we are to understand violence as performance, we must look at the motives and the values of the uses of violence” (Krohn-Hansen 1994:367).

These perspectives are relevant to a study of violence in Bidau. A broad analysis of conflict is required to include the historical influences of previous invasions, the role of Indonesian military and East Timorese militia in the 1999 conflict, the political implications of other countries’ involvement, including the arrival of InterFET, and the ongoing concerns about future security and stability within the country.

A desire for fighting to stop was a sentiment that many residents echoed when I asked them what they wanted for the future of their country. In this chapter, I examine what “fighting” means for people living in Bidau and analyse the impact of the 1999 violence upon them. Conflict during 1999 affected Bidau residents in different ways, especially as they went to different places outside of Bidau, either forced to go to places not of their own choosing or escaping to places of refuge. The conflict during 1999 reminded residents of earlier conflicts and was reflected in violence after 1999.

### **A black year: fear, fighting and destruction in Bidau during 1999**

To unravel the complexities, and interpret the meaning of fighting in Bidau is an unwieldy task. Residents had suffered different types of hardship because of violent actions over many years. Some had been involved in clandestine activities and some punished by Indonesian forces for their involvement. When conducting interviews with residents, a number of them told me that such a meeting prior to 1999 would have placed them in difficulties with the Indonesian authorities and may have landed them in jail. This silencing of the community, taking away their voice, is an expression of the power and hierarchy that governed their lives. As people were gagged and unable to express themselves openly, they sought safe places where they could communicate freely. Gathering in churches was one of the few places they could do this.

The year 1999 changed alliances in Bidau as residents chose political sides and made decisions whether they were for autonomy within Indonesia or wanted an independent East Timor. This was not a clear-cut choice. Family allegiances influenced people's decisions. Money was used as an incentive to entice people to join militia groups. A lack of understanding of what democracy meant confused some people, though many were convinced that freedom was worth the struggle and could be within their grasp in the immediate future. They believed that an independent East Timor would bring them freedom and was the passport to a better life.

### *Militia in Bidau*

Residents in Bidau Motaklaran knew who were members of militia groups, who had contributed to the destruction, who had stolen their goods and those who had supported them. "Militia members were generally East Timorese, though West Timorese and Indonesians from other ethnic groups could be found in their ranks" (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2001:59). Militia groups were established with the support and encouragement of the Indonesian armed forces, *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI), with the clear objective of undermining the independence cause (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2001:59). Robinson (2001:273) argues that many explanations of East Timor's militias and the violence of 1999 ignore crucial historical questions. Robinson focuses on the historical and political context that facilitated militia emergence and shaped their behaviour.<sup>1</sup> People's motives for joining the militia varied. Some were attracted to the violence. Some were forced to join, threatened that their families would be killed if they did not, while others did it for money or other inducements including drugs and alcohol. "Crazy dog" was one drug provided freely to young Timorese and had effects similar to those of ecstasy.

Throughout East Timor, men and boys were forced to join militia groups and were given red and white headbands, colours of the Indonesian flag, and put in the back of trucks on parade for people to witness. While many were not true militia, the events were staged so as to give the impression that they were, and were used as a mechanism to create division. This has some similarities with Feldman's account of the state in Northern Ireland, which used visual disinformation to create rumour and fear and to discredit innocent victims (Feldman 1997:48).

Militia groups were active throughout East Timor and with backing of the Indonesian military were responsible for intimidation, murders, torture and destruction. The most violent and powerful group was *Aitarak* (T) (Thorn) militia which was Dili-based and led by Eurico Guterres. This group was active in Bidau, and established a base in Bidau Santa Ana. A number of informants said that only about 1% of the people in Bidau Motaklaran had been militia members, compared to the adjoining village of Bidau Santa Ana where approximately 80% of the village had joined *Aitarak* militia. Residents informed me that some young people just played at being militia and were not serious instigators of destruction. One East Timorese woman also commented that her brother had joined the *Aitarak* militia and was then able to report to her family what plans the militia had for Bidau. Rather than being "true militia" she said that he was able to save many people by giving them warnings about militia activities. While her family had this insider knowledge, it did not stop the militia from destroying their family home. Following the destruction in 1999, her brother remained in Kupang and did not return to Bidau Motaklaran. Similarly, most of the militia members from Bidau Santa Ana did not return there.

Another informant disclosed that during Indonesian rule some Bidau residents had held grudges against Makassae residents and retaliated by joining militia groups during

1999 to fight against them. When residents returned in late 1999, a few Makassae retaliated by bashing and threatening residents related to the militia who had harmed them, even though these residents had not been involved in the fighting themselves. Rather than relying on InterFET or other outside intervention to resolve this dispute, the residents involved signed a peace pact agreeing not to harass one another. These letters were signed in the presence of the village chief who acted as a witness.

Everyone I interviewed knew that households in Bidau Santa Ana were paid to join the militia group *Aitarak*. Different residents quoted different amounts of money militia received. Several people confirmed that households were paid, but were not aware of the amount. One resident told me he had been privy to the book maintained by *Concelho Nacional da Resistência Timorese* (CNRT) (P) (National Council of Timorese Resistance) with the names of militia members and the districts they came from. After they knew me for a couple of years, other residents in Bidau started to disclose which families had connections with militia. Everyone was affected by the militia – whether through being related to militia, having friends who joined the militia, having kin or friends killed by the militia, having their houses destroyed by militia or having their personal belongings stolen by militia. Also affected were the people in Bidau who had joined militia groups.

Surprisingly, many people in Bidau did not hold strong grudges against militia. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, they recognised that Indonesian forces instigated the trouble and influenced East Timorese to cause havoc. Secondly, many families had a relative within their wide kin network who had joined a militia group and were reluctant to blame those closely related to them. Thirdly, death, though tragic and distressing, was not a new phenomenon for the people of Bidau, but rather a part of everyday experience. Only a small number of people I interviewed had kin or friends



die during 1999 compared to other periods during the Indonesian occupation, when Indonesian military killed their relatives and acquaintances or when family and friends died from “sickness” or from malnutrition while living in the forest.<sup>2</sup> Fourthly, there was no massacre in this village, unlike in Liquica and elsewhere, so their experiences of militia violence, though terrifying, were less horrific than in some other places. Fifthly, in spite of all the tragedies, East Timorese had won their independence, and the struggle and loss for residents in Bidau Motaklaran seemed worth it. Finally, what appeared to be central in most people’s thinking when I interviewed them was that they wanted to move forward rather than look backwards. Moving forward at that time meant getting their houses in order by obtaining zinc, wood and cement to repair or rebuild them. Getting their houses in order was a start to getting their lives in order. One person even told me that he paid former militia members who had destroyed his home to rebuild it.

#### *Militia and Indonesian military activities*

It was not only after the announcement of results of the ballot on 4 September 1999 that people suffered from acts of brutality and harsh treatment. Intimidation was part of everyday life during Indonesian occupation, with spies from Intel (*Satuan Tugas Intelijen*, SGI, meaning Combined Intelligence Task Force), known as *mauhuu* (T) (informer, spy), living within Bidau Motaklaran and nearby in Bidau Santa Ana. Residents were able to identify spies and were vigilant about what they said and with whom they interacted. Despite attempts to intimidate residents, most people went about their daily lives. Some worked in government departments, others engaged in agricultural and fishing activities, a few operated small businesses and others attended to household duties. Groups within the village engaged in religious rituals and celebrations, planned parties and organised picnics at the beach on Sundays. In 1999,

however, these activities became disrupted and less frequent as people became frightened to leave their homes.

Fear within Bidau increased following attacks in other areas. Two attacks, in particular, unnerved the population in Bidau. The first was a massacre in Liquica, and the next an attack on Manuel Carrascalão's house. Manuel Carrascalão was the chairman of the Movement for Reconciliation and Unification of the People of East Timor (GRPRTT).<sup>3</sup> People in Bidau had relatives living in Liquica, the site of a massacre on 6 April 1999 in the house of the parish priest. In that horrific event, the militia killed approximately 50 people (Kohen 2001:44; Scheiner 2001:112; KPP-HAM 2002:36-39).<sup>4</sup> The brother of Alberto's wife, Luisa, was living with his family in Liquica at the time, so reports of these killings spread quickly to Bidau.

The other violent attack happened shortly afterwards on 17 April 1999 within a short walking distance of Bidau Motaklaran. A large pro-integration rally including many armed militia groups was staged in Dili on that day (KPP-HAM 2002:40). After this rally, *Aitarak* and *Besi Merah Putih* (I) (Red and White Iron) militia led an attack on Manuel Carrascalão's house killing his son Manuelito, as well as several others in the house at the time.<sup>5</sup> This violence triggered more fear throughout Dili. That same day, militia members paraded through Bidau Motaklaran. This display was to intimidate residents with a militia display of power. According to informants, a convoy of approximately 20-30 *Aitarak* militia drove through the streets of Bidau on motorbikes and in a white truck. They sported red and white bandannas and were shooting into the air as they proceeded. No one was injured during this tough display of muscle, but it had the desired effect of unsettling already jittery residents. Soon after, residents in Bidau started to display Indonesian flags in their gardens, afraid of the consequences if they did not appear to be supporting the pro-integration cause.<sup>6</sup> Residents reported that they

had no alternative but to appear to be supporting Indonesia, though most of them knew how they were going to vote and were aware of the views held by their kin and friends. Flying the Indonesian flag was a strategy to keep threats at bay.

Apart from the incidents on 17 April 1999, militia did not go on another rampage through Bidau until the period of campaigning during August 1999. However, individuals were subjected to other violent acts, such as interrogation and torture, during the period of Indonesian occupation, and especially during 1999. Such was the case of one of the youth leaders who was taken by the SGI directed by Kopassus (Indonesian Special Forces Command) to their compound at Kolmera for six weeks. He was beaten, stripped and tortured, with electric shocks administered to his body. He only discussed these matters with his immediate family, but most people in Bidau knew about his suffering because of his position in the community working with young people.

A university student, Rafael, had come to Dili to escape militia violence in Maliana when he was in his final year of high school. The militia group *Halilintar* (T) (Thunder) was very active in Maliana at the time clashing with student groups. Rafael experienced an encounter with one militia member who threatened and beat him. Rafael and a group of his friends had to take shelter in the Catholic Church for a week because they refused to join the group, and in July 1999, he moved to Dili, at first living in Taibesse, and later moving to Bidau.

Other residents in the village had also been subjected to intimidation, torture and imprisonment during the period of Indonesian rule. During 1997, Ricardo's brother Dionisio attended a demonstration in front of the Mahkota Hotel when a UN representative visited the country to assess the situation. At that demonstration, Dionisio was arrested and taken to Polres, the district police station in Kaikoli. When arrested, he was interrogated about the reasons he joined the demonstration, and was questioned

about whether he liked Indonesia. For approximately two hours, he was interrogated, beaten with iron bars and burnt with cigarettes. He was one of fifty people arrested during the demonstration, following which 27 were released and 33 imprisoned for a year. Dionisio was one of the unfortunate ones and was jailed in *Lembaga Pemasyarakatan* (I) (correctional facility) in Bekora from March 1997 to March 1998. He was 22 years old at the time. After his release from prison, he resumed his studies at the university.

During the period of campaigning in 1999, sporadic violent outbursts happened that further unnerved people in Bidau. These included the burning of a motorbike by militia in the nearby village of Kuluhun and the killing of a person in the same area. Yet during the campaign rallies, people came out in force, displaying strong support for Fretilin. It was obvious that the cause for an independent East Timor had a good chance of winning the ballot. Most people in Bidau Motaklaran were confident that the vote would win them independence, especially when approximately 16,000 people travelling in at least 400 trucks and buses turned out for the pro-independence rally in Dili on 25 August 1999 (KPP-HAM 2002:41).

Eurico Guterres and his *Aitarak* militia were enraged to see such support during the campaign. On the 26 August 1999, a pro-autonomy rally developed into a riot with *Aitarak* militia joining in, surrounding Dili and forcing local people to join the parade to bolster numbers and show support for autonomy (KPP-HAM 2002:41). Just prior to this, the militia had gone on a rampage shooting at houses along the main road that runs past Bidau Motaklaran to Kuluhun and Bekora. Following this event, a frightened group of approximately 30 people scrambled over the silver metal fence of the Dominican convent seeking safe haven.

When I talked to Joaquina, a Makassae from Baukau district who had settled in Bidau in the Indonesian period, it was evident that there had been an escalation of violence and fear over the months leading up to the ballot:<sup>7</sup>

In 1999 on 4 May, I had just given birth. Five days later on the 9 May at 4.00 p.m., the militia shot my cousin. He was a student at UNTIM (National University of East Timor) in the English department. I was afraid in April, but in May, I was very upset about this incident. Following this, the militia and the Indonesian military made a place – a post – and if they saw people go outside they shot them. We stayed here [a house in Bidau Tokobaru], closed the windows and doors and prayed to God. In August, the militia came and were shooting at our neighbour's house. On 26 August, the militia wanted to kill my husband and steal the car. They stole the car. My husband went to UNAMET to give them information about the stolen vehicle. After the 30 August 1999, we went to Baukau with other family members. We went to the forest and lived in a small village for a month. We took supplies of food for the month from our family in Baukau. We came back to Dili on 28 October after InterFET had arrived. We came back to find our house destroyed and all the contents inside destroyed as well.

### **Forced moves and hurried escapes**

Exploring events shortly after the announcement of the ballot provides an indication of difficulties people experienced when they had to scatter and make quick decisions to save their lives. Families were torn apart. There was chaos in the village as militia rampaged, destroying houses and property, terrorising the population. Most of the violent clashes that affected people in Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru occurred between 4 September 1999, when the ballot result was announced, and 20 September 1999, when InterFET arrived. It was during this period that many people had to abandon their homes. Only 4% of those interviewed remained in their own houses. To escape the shooting, burning and destruction that was erupting in Dili, many at first sought refuge close by at the convent of the Dominican sisters, the residence of Bishop Belo, or the beach area. One woman ran to the precincts of the hospital and lived for a few days in a ditch, which she covered when looking for food. Many fled to the nearby mountains or to other districts of East Timor. Some walked for days to return to their rural villages,

including groups of men who walked for five days to reach their villages of birth in the district of Birunbiru. Militia and Indonesian military ordered other residents to go to Korem, the military command in Kaikoli, and forced many to go to West Timor. Approximately 29% of people interviewed went to West Timor, some taken by the military and some of their own accord.

Many people turned to their faith for strength and consolation. One woman said the name of “Jesus” when approached by militia who mocked her laughingly, replying, “We are Jesus!” From 4 to 6 September 1999, approximately 300 Bidau residents turned to the Dominican sisters for protection. On the afternoon of 4 September 1999, the sisters watched the announcement of the ballot results on CNN. The religious household at that time comprised Sr. Pely, Sr. Belen, Sr. Laurinda, two novices and four postulants. As militia started setting houses ablaze, around 50 people arrived at the convent seeking refuge. Houses previously occupied by a group from Birunbiru were burning about 500 metres from the Dominican sisters’ property. People brought with them bundles of their possessions tied up in blankets, sheets and other clothes they could hastily gather. They slept on the floors around the building, some on the veranda, and some on the dining room floor using their bundles of goods as pillows.

On the following afternoon, 5 September 1999, as more people in the area became fearful, approximately 200 more people arrived at the convent gates. They were from Bidau Motaklaran but the sisters did not know all of them. The sisters’ telephone line was cut that night, and they were no longer in communication with their friends and supporters. In the week prior to the announcement, they had received numerous calls of support from their Dominican sisters in Spain, the Philippines and Australia. A Dominican priest had also phoned them from Rome to check on their situation. As had other religious congregations, the sisters had stocked up on food expecting that they

might be called upon to support people during the anticipated crisis. The Dominican sisters had five sacks of rice, canned goods, and noodles and were able to maintain an adequate water supply. All these supplies were needed, as more and more people made their way to the convent for safety.

On the 6 September 1999, Bishop Belo's residence, where many residents from Bidau Motaklaran had taken shelter, was attacked (Chomsky 2001:141; Kohen 2001:43-44; Scheiner 2001:119). After the attack, around noon, another 50 or so people arrived at the Dominican convent shaking the gates and yelling frantically to the sisters to let them in. The atmosphere inside the convent was extremely tense by that stage, and the people inside were afraid that those shaking the gates were militia. They did not want Sr. Pely to open the gates. The sisters, who were also worried about their own fate, tried to reassure and calm people inside, but felt obliged to open the gates and allow more people to enter, which they did.

That evening, around 6.30 p.m., a burly man, dressed in black with an automatic machine gun and flak jacket filled with bullets and other assortments of weaponry openly visible, arrived by motorbike at the gate and spoke to the sisters in Indonesian. His face was not covered, and he was a threatening figure. He told the sisters that they had to open the gates and the people had to leave, otherwise they would all be killed. He told them that they had to go to Korem.

Meanwhile the people and sisters could see clouds of smoke billowing from houses nearby and from the Bishop's residence. The burning was visible from the second floor of the convent, and the sight was very disturbing. Up until this stage, only a few people had been crying throughout their stay. Most women were consoling their children, and people were praying the Rosary. After the menacing motorcyclist ordered them to leave, many people started crying, not wanting to go. Sr. Pely felt like crying

herself, being responsible for so many people, but also fearing that they might all be killed. The sisters tried to explain that all those who had sheltered there would have to leave, otherwise the militia might burn the convent and they would all die. This was a very difficult message to explain and deliver. Crying and terrified, people started to leave when it became dark. Sr. Pely said that it was like a mass exodus when a group started walking towards the house of a man from Baukau who lived in the same street and who was a member of the TNI. His wife had died from sickness during 1999 and, as the sisters had attended the funeral earlier in the year, they had a good relationship with him. Local residents also trusted him. The sisters watched as people made their way towards his house. He had a small truck, which he used to transport some of the people to Korem. Others made their own way to Korem or went to different places including the beachfront.

The three sisters, novices and postulants stayed the night of 6 September in their convent. They also had five girls staying with them who were relatives of another Dominican sister who was overseas. The girls' parents had fled earlier to Dare, in the hills 12 kilometres south of Dili, but had deemed it safer for their children to remain with the sisters. That evening no one could sleep, disturbed by the sounds of gunshots and explosions, unable to decipher whether these noises were the sounds of houses burning and exploding or from instruments of war used to destroy the city.

Early on 7 September 1999, the Dominican sisters decided to leave their convent. They packed a few changes of clothes and had to leave the remainder of their belongings in the house. They had stored many musical instruments for friends on their property and covered these with zinc sheets to protect them in case the house was burned. The group they had been harbouring and most of their neighbours had already left the village section, so they became nervous about their situation. They thought of



going to Soibada, a five-hour drive, where they administered the boarding college; however, the East Timorese TNI member warned them against this and said the roads were blocked. The sisters' driver had gone to Dare with his family on 3 September, so the sisters had to arrange for another driver. Fortunately, a neighbour who lived in the same street was available. They decided to go to Bekora, a 15 minute journey by vehicle, to the residence of the Canossian sisters, another Catholic religious congregation. As they passed by the bridge close to Alberto's house, they saw many militia shooting into the air and carrying cans of gasoline ready to ignite buildings. Upon arrival at the Canossian convent, a priest sitting on the steps informed them that the Canossian sisters had already left. They had made a decision to go to the police station.

With few options remaining, the Dominican sisters then went to Korem, escorted by the TNI man from their street and members of their neighbourhood who had tied red and white flags around their heads and arms, pretending to be militia. On the way, they witnessed militia shoot a driver in a truck near the Kuluhun bridge. The driver fell out of the vehicle, but the sisters could not stop to assist him. Inside the Korem compound were many militia and large numbers of Indonesian military. The military knew that if they were with East Timorese in the compound, outside forces would not attack them there. The sisters saw many residents from Bidau who had previously taken shelter at the convent, and they were happy to see them alive. Likewise, residents from Bidau were relieved to see the sisters. However, this was not a calm place to stay. The Indonesian military ignored the behaviour of militia who threatened East Timorese by waving their machetes around and intimidating them. The sisters slept in the compound overnight in their vehicle erecting tents from sheets to make some privacy for themselves. Many people were just sleeping on the ground.

The next day, 8 September 1999, the sisters, distressed at staying at the compound, wanted to leave. The military told people that they would be transported to West Timor and military trucks would be arriving soon for this purpose. The sisters waited, but by 3.00 p.m., nothing had happened so they made a decision to travel to West Timor in a convoy with TNI and militia. The other vehicles in the convoy were a small car carrying a friend and his family from the Chinese bakery in Bidau Motaklaran, two large trucks of militia and military, piled high with beds, chairs and other household goods taken from houses, and a smaller pickup truck with the sisters' Timorese TNI acquaintance from Bidau. The sisters' blue four-door utility travelled in the middle of this convoy with the truckloads of militia and goods at the front and back. They travelled along the main roads, and as the TNI and militia were escorting them, no one stopped them. Near Manduki, a mountainous region in Bobonaro district before the town of Batugade, they saw thousands of people on foot.

Around midnight on the 8 September 1999, they arrived in Atambua, West Timor. One of the novices was from Atambua, and the sisters were able to stay at her parents' place for two days and nights. Even though the novice's parents, like most people in Atambua, were fearful of the strong militia presence in the town, they took risks, unsure of reprisals from militia, by offering others accommodation. This household was already supporting about 10 or 11 extended kin before the sisters' group of 14 arrived. The TNI and militia vehicles did not remain in Atambua, but made their way to Kupang.<sup>8</sup> The family from the Chinese bakery stayed in Atambua with relatives of one of the postulants.

The sisters' driver went back to Bidau Motaklaran escorted by another TNI member to collect more kin to bring them to West Timor. After the driver returned to Atambua on 11 September 1999, he drove the sisters' group to the residence of the

Claretian priests in Kupang. This house was crowded as the priests were already accommodating many refugees including the Saint-Paul de Chartres sisters from Suai. The three Dominican sisters slept in the chapel for two weeks, and the novices and postulants stayed in Kupang with Indonesian sisters from the Charles Borromeo congregation. After two weeks, the Dominican sisters also moved to the convent of the Charles Borromeo sisters to join their novices and postulants. On 8 October 1999, Sr. Pely and Sr. Laurinda returned to Dili by plane, organised for the returnees.<sup>9</sup> Sr. Pely recalled: “We knew our house was not burned so we had the guts to come back. After all, this was the third war which Sr. Laurinda had lived through.”<sup>10</sup> Sr. Belen travelled with several Timorese novices and postulants via Bali and Jakarta to the Philippines to enable them to complete their training.

Alberto, Madalena, Ricardo and Celestina each used the resources they had available to survive at this time, and each ended up in different places. Alberto and his family first took refuge for a few days in the Dominican convent, but they had a different experience of leaving Bidau Motaklaran. Alberto’s story emphasises the importance of friends and connections, especially Indonesian friends who lived in West Timor. When the militia ordered them to leave the convent on 6 September, Alberto’s family went to the militia post in Bidau Santa Ana. There were thousands of people, including many of their neighbours, at this post. Rather than stay there overnight, as many people had to, they had the option of staying with relatives in a house in Bidau Santa Ana. These relatives lived across the road from Alberto, but they were kin of the owners of the house in Bidau Santa Ana. When the owners left for Atambua, Alberto and his relatives moved in. They knew many of the militia and people staying in Bidau Santa Ana. The militia at the post told everyone they had to go to West Timor. Alberto

responded that they had no documents or passports, but the militia said that it did not matter; they still had to go.

Around 9.00 a.m. on the following day, 7 September 1999, Alberto's family left with another family from Bidau Motaklaran. They travelled in their two vehicles to the provincial level police office Polda (*Polisi Daerah*) in Komoro, Dili.<sup>11</sup> Here they waited for a militia truck to take them to West Timor. They waited for about 30 minutes and then decided to drive there themselves. At this point, the family separated. Alberto's three older sons remained at Polda and later went in a militia truck to West Timor. Alberto, his wife, four daughters and two younger sons, as well as an old woman (his next-door neighbour), her daughter and two young boys commenced their journey to the west. The other family also followed. There were only two vehicles in their convoy, but they had taken precautions. They decorated their vehicles with Indonesian flags, a gesture they were obliged to make for their own safety. Even though they were Fretilin supporters and had voted for independence, they had also avoided unnecessary trouble in previous months by placing an Indonesian flag in their garden following the militia intrusion into their village on the day of the attack on the Carrascalão's house.

Along the road, they joined a convoy of at least 100 vehicles, including many militia trucks. At the Loes River west of Liquica and before the border town of Batugade, militia, with TNI military standing in the background, stopped them. Militia were stopping everyone, checking their documents and wanting to know their destination. Alberto informed them that they were going to Atambua, even though he had other plans. When they reached the border, they were stopped again, this time by Indonesian military, with militia standing in the background. The military questioned Alberto about the occupants of the vehicle. They wanted to know how many men and how many women were travelling with him. They then questioned him about his travel

plans. Alberto again responded that they were going to stay with family in Atambua. After being satisfied with his answers, the militia allowed them to continue.

Alberto had wisely planned his own destination. He was headed for Lakafehan, a village situated between Atapupu and Atambua in West Timor where he had arranged to meet an Indonesian teacher. This man was a friend of his sons and had visited them on numerous occasions in Bidau Motaklaran. He was anxiously awaiting their arrival and offered them accommodation with his family. Alberto's group stayed with this family for two days (7 and 8 September 1999). Alberto's immediate family was reunited at this place, with his three sons making their way to this pre-arranged destination.

On 9 September 1999, they travelled in two vehicles to Kupang. This time a different family from Bidau Motaklaran joined them. Their Indonesian friend who had offered them refuge also accompanied them. They stayed at a refugee camp in Kupang for only one night finding this a terrifying experience with militia everywhere threatening people. The next day, they went to look for premises to rent. Again, connections and friends played a central role in their endeavours. The Indonesian friend from Lakafehan assisted them by introducing them to his friends who made a house available for rent. Alberto's group and the other family from Bidau Motaklaran shared this house in Kupang. They remained in this house from 10 September 1999 to 4 November 1999.

Madalena's story was very different. Fearing for their lives on 5 September 1999, she and her family went and stayed with the Dominican sisters for two days. This was the best option as they only lived a few streets away. When the Indonesian military ordered them to go to Korem, they had no choice but to go. The military had threatened to kill them if they refused. For four days, the Indonesian military held Madalena's

family at Korem before permitting them to return home. When they did so, they found their house partially destroyed.

Madalena relayed to me some of her experiences of the ordeal:

I saw people killed in Korem. I saw people shot in front of me. Many, many people were killed. They killed men. I became afraid that I would also be killed. I am always afraid. I feel a bit better, but I always have pictures in my mind when I think about 1999.

Staying at the compound was a harrowing experience, one from which Madalena experienced flashbacks. Not that “flashbacks” was a term she used. She told me that they were like pictures in her mind. She said that when she thought about the events of 1999 or there was fighting in Bidau she would worry and it was at these moments that images would intrude into her thoughts. These flashbacks were one consequence of the violence she witnessed, but they did not bother her too much, and she found ways to take her mind off her problems. What she did worry about was the future. If groups started fighting again, what would she do? Where would she go? What would be the outcome next time? She wanted silence, no fighting and no problems with people. Her plans were to take care of her children because they were the future of East Timor.

Ricardo had previously resided in Bidau Santa Ana with his younger sister. On 4 September 1999, following the announcement of the ballot results, he moved to Bidau Massau to stay with friends. About 1.00 p.m. that day, they heard the sounds of militia shooting and burning houses. This group of friends decided to go to Sukuliurai, near Remexio, in the hills to the south of Dili; they remained there until the 23 September. When Ricardo returned to Dili, he moved into the empty house that he found in Bidau Tokobaru.

Celestina went back to her village in the mountains and remained there for three months from September 1999. She did not have trouble with militia, as Falintil were

present in her village. When she came back to Bidau Motaklaran, she resumed operating a small *kios*.

Experiences of other residents varied according to their financial means and family networks. One family who owned a business and had the financial means flew to Bali and stayed with relatives there for two months. Another family with financial means separated, with the wife and children going to Portugal and the husband remaining in Dili. He moved to another part of Dili after militia destroyed his large residence in Bidau Motaklaran. This family had enough savings, business and property interests in Dili to make choices about where to go. They monitored the situation in East Timor to assess when it was safe enough for them to be reunited. For them, this was not until after the election of the Constituent Assembly on 30 August 2001.

Some families were forced to separate, with men going to different locations to hide from militia, and women and children staying with extended kin or being taken to different compounds by militia or military. A group of Ricardo's friends, comprising seven men, walked to Birunbiru, a journey through Remexio, Aicruz, Waimori and other mountainous villages, which took five days to complete. They survived by eating cassava, coconuts and rice. Another group left Bidau Motaklaran on 3 September 1999, travelling by bus to Baukau. *Team Saka* a paramilitary group operating in Baukau had come to Bidau to escort relatives from the Baukau region back there for safety. While the group of Bidau residents had the protection of the paramilitary group to escort them to Baukau, it did not give them immunity from having their houses destroyed and the contents stolen, as they discovered some months later when they returned.

A few older people stayed in their homes, resisting threats by militia. One man who referred to himself as old – he was 50 years old at the time of the 1999 conflict – remained steadfast in his own home. He told the militia that if he was going to die, he

wanted to die in East Timor. He pleaded that he had not made trouble for them, that he was an old man. He was not going to budge. He was born in his family home, and his grandparents had previously resided there. Over a period of a few days, a group of militia would bring petrol to the front of his house and continue to threaten him. He did not know why the militia did not attack him. He reasoned that at the time he thought that God did not “call” him. It was not time for his death.

Women in Bidau had to deal not only with their own suffering resulting from the fighting, but had to cope with childbirth and caring for their newly born babies under extremely tough circumstances. There were post-parturition prohibitions on women’s activities, and women were generally expected to remain at home for a period of three months after giving birth, but these practices could not be observed during periods of violence.

Joaquina, an Indonesian Period Settler who had resided on her property for 22 years, had a harrowing experience a few days after her son was born. One of the most disturbing incidents for Joaquina happened on 9 May 1999 when the militia group *Aitarak* shot and killed her cousin who was a university student. Five days prior to this tragedy, she had given birth to her son.

Another woman was pregnant during the popular consultation and went with her husband to Bishop Belo’s house for two days. Following the attack upon the Bishop’s residence, they went to Polda for one day. From there, the militia took them to Atambua. They stayed in a refugee camp in Atambua for one night where they experienced problems obtaining food and water. When they were able to access money from a bank via the husband’s keycard, they attempted to rent a house, but this proved to be unsuccessful. After experiencing these difficulties, they travelled to Atapupu, where they remained for one month, staying in a house owned by the husband’s



relatives. It was in this house that the woman gave birth to her daughter without any medical support, calling on the assistance of one other woman at the time. Not long after giving birth they were again on the move, this time travelling to Kupang, where they remained for three days seeking support from UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) to be repatriated back to East Timor.

### **Violence before and after 1999**

In addition to the impact of the 1999 conflict, it is important to examine the aftermath of past violence upon the lives of Bidau residents. The year 1999 was only one year in a long history of destruction and death throughout the country. The tragedy in people's lives did not begin or end there. As Nevins (2002:627) reminds us "it is necessary to break out of the historical-geographical black hole surrounding the year 1999 in East Timor."<sup>12</sup> It was not one single event, but a series of violent clashes spanning many decades, that affected residents in Bidau. In the East Timor context, Aditjondro (2000:176-180) includes psychological torture associated with physical violence, the building of pro-integration monuments, the prohibition of the Portuguese language and the destruction and desecration of Catholic icons by Indonesian forces under the heading of symbolic violence.

Events during 1999 evoked memories of other hardships, which residents had previously experienced. People recalled events that happened during 1975 and relayed stories of kin who had died at different times and in different places during the period of Indonesian occupation, including in the Santa Cruz massacre on 12 November 1991. Some older residents had witnessed events of World War II. Alberto recalled the harrowing experience of being in Dili at the time of the 1975 invasion:

I remembered the Indonesian military shooting people in the streets. They killed all the Chinese. I went looking for food. We were afraid because we could not speak the Indonesian language when we met the Indonesian

military. The shooting continued for about a week in Dili. The soldiers were everywhere. We had to hide in the bushes and come back to our house late at night. After a week, the soldiers visited every house and took anything of value. They took watches, chains, radios and electronics. They took everything out of our house. They went from house to house stealing things. Following this rampage, we had nothing left.

When fighting happened in Bidau after 1999, it triggered memories of past conflicts for residents and they were never sure how the disputes would be resolved. Usually someone ended up injured. A resident discussed an incident that frightened her on 27 January 2001. There was fighting in the street that night in Bidau Motaklaran and many people were running for safety. This woman, shaken by the noise and worried about what might develop from the fighting, sat up in her room all night and could not sleep. The same incident, which was a clash between local youth gangs, also disturbed Madalena. On this occasion, Madalena, her husband Vicente and their three children left their house and stayed with the Dominican sisters once again. Following similar fighting in Akadirahun in November 2002, Madalena locked up her house and took her three children to stay with relatives in another area of Dili for three days.

What was most disturbing for the people in Bidau was the perceived threat of mass violence in East Timor, especially leading up to the election of the Constituent Assembly on 30 August 2001. Around this time, many residents thought of the events surrounding the vote in 1999. The possible violence they feared was shooting, gang fighting and possible threats to their lives and destruction of their property. Several residents feared that an increase in the number of political parties in East Timor would result in more violence. These fears were understandable, as political parties had resorted to violence in the past. For example, people remembered the power struggles, fighting and killings when Timorese political parties first formed in East Timor during 1974. When the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation held a National Public Hearing in Dili from 15-18 December 2003 on “Internal Political Conflict 1974-

1976,” key public figures and political party representatives gave evidence in relation to past violence, torture and killings.

After 1999, a fringe political party formed calling themselves the Popular Council for the Defence of the Democratic Republic of East Timor (*Conselho Popular pela Defesa da Republica Democratica de Timor Leste* (P) (CPD-RDTL)). CPD-RDTL claimed to support the short-lived independent government formed just before Indonesia invaded in 1975. The party operated outside the political process in East Timor, and some people alleged that pro-integration Indonesians had infiltrated and funded them, seeking to destabilise East Timor’s first democratic elections.<sup>13</sup>

Because of the past problems with political parties, most residents in Bidau were reluctant to discuss their political affiliations. However, prior to the election of the Constituent Assembly many openly showed their support for Fretilin by decorating their vehicles with Fretilin flags and joining in parades around the streets, while a small number voiced their support for smaller parties such as KOTA (*Klibur Oan Timor Asuwain* – Sons of Mountain Warriors).<sup>14</sup> Residents started to become excited about the prospects of their party winning some seats in the Constituent Assembly. Children joined in the hype chanting political slogans as they played. When the Constituent Assembly elections went smoothly, residents of Bidau felt more confident that perhaps a new era had dawned, at least in relation to political processes.

Despite signs of hope with periods of calm after independence, there were still problems in the village. On the evening of 6 November 2002, there was a fight between some young men in front of Alberto’s house. This incident, in which one man sustained eye injuries, which required treatment at the hospital, was over a young woman whom neighbours described as *feto manas* (T) (hot woman). Apparently, she had two boyfriends, which created problems. Over the course of a few days, several young men

were arrested and taken to the police station for questioning. The families called upon one of the Dominican sisters, Sr. Rosario, to provide support for the men at the court hearing. Most residents who talked about the fighting blamed the woman and ignored the behaviour displayed by the men.

There were striking similarities in the behaviour of people as they discussed this incident and another event less than a month later when rioting occurred in Dili on 4 December 2002. On both occasions, people gathered in public spaces of streets and the intermediate spaces of residents' gardens to discuss what was happening. There was much curiosity, discussion, laughter and expressions of excitement about events that had serious consequences. For the minor incident involving fighting between the young men, crowds of their friends took turns to converge on the police station to obtain an update on proceedings and later, upon their return to Bidau, to relay information to other residents. Residents joked and laughed with each other as they waited for more news. On the 4 December 2002, many residents were watching smoke billowing from "Hello Mister" supermarket and crowds destroying property within view of the main street of Bidau Motaklaran. Residents appeared excited by the happenings. Many gathered in the streets, laughing and discussing the situation with relatives and friends. Inside the private space of houses, however, residents expressed their concerns. Some residents told me that the mother of one of the young men in the brawl was crying all evening distressed that her son was in prison and insisting that he had never been in trouble before. On 4 December 2002, many people looked bedraggled and tired by the end of the day. That night there was a curfew, and as usual at that time, the electricity was cut. With people confined to their homes, there was an uncanny silence. Dogs did not bark, roosters stopped crowing, and there was no guitar playing in the streets.

On 5 December 2002, Alberto invited friends to join him for lunch; they passed around the whiskey, relieved that this episode of violence was brief. His reactions to the events were strong, and he insisted that the instigators be shot. Residents visited his place throughout the day to watch the television coverage, which showed thieves falling off bicycles and dropping their loot, their startled faces captured for all to see. Some residents were angry about the burning of shops and property and disappointed that East Timorese who worked in the supermarket and hotels would lose their source of employment. They were also annoyed that this latest wave of destruction would give the country bad press internationally. As usual, unfounded rumours were rife, such as the one suggesting that the Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri, had left the country. He had not, and I saw him the next day doing his shopping in Lita supermarket in Bidau Lcidere stocking up on supplies after his house had been burnt.



**Plate 8. Burnt out shops still smouldering on 5 December 2002**

People in Bidau held optimistic aspirations for the future of their country, yet they often made derogatory comments about themselves and their situation. They frequently voiced pessimism in the phrase, “East Timor is no good;” for example, when they had

not cleared their drains and during heavy downpours streets flooded turning gardens into muddy swamps, or when they talked about their skin colour, believing dark skin to be less attractive than light skin, or about killings in various parts of the country. These comments reverberated throughout the neighbourhood following the rioting and deaths in Dili on 4 December 2002 and when people were murdered in villages in Ermera and Bobonaro districts in early 2003.<sup>15</sup> Indonesian forces could no longer be blamed for such violent outbursts, but some reports accused militia returning from West Timor of instigating these problems.

East Timorese leaders had already publicly recognised that the history of violence had a legacy. In an address to the nation marking one hundred days of independence on 30 August 2002, President Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão mentioned two issues that related to violent behaviour. One involved destruction of state property. Shortly after the official opening of the post office in Komoro, people had thrown stones and broken all the building's windows, and soon after the Regional Office of Customs and Tax was opened in Baukau in early August 2002, the same thing had happened. The President urged the people not to destroy what the country was painfully rebuilding. Another matter he raised concerned the behaviour of police. He urged police to avoid the idea that enforcing law and order demands the use of violence: "We should all remember that we have just come out of 25 years of a situation where violence became part of our way of being (clearly imposed on the Timorese) and the reaction of the people is still pronouncedly aggressive ..." (Gusmão 2002).

East Timorese were confronted by a reality that many already acknowledged – that people in their own communities had a propensity for violent behaviour and that this was so despite the strong influence of Catholicism. The crucifix is ubiquitous in Catholic Timor, and many people relied on their faith for strength and support and

looked to the church for protection. However, the fact that people were killed in the Bishop's home showed that those who sought refuge at religious sites were not untouchable. The killings of priests in Suai and sisters in Lospalos during 1999 also showed that religious leaders were just as vulnerable as the rest of the population.<sup>16</sup>

While the public forms of violence were generally deplored, attitudes to violence that occurred in homes and schools were more ambiguous. In Bidau, as well as in rural districts, there was a strong emphasis on discipline of children, and it was occasionally implemented with harsh treatment. Some residents in Bidau Motaklaran practised physical discipline on their children, though this was contrasted with allowing children to roam freely around the streets without parental supervision. I observed parents hit their children, and sometimes parents and older siblings whacked children across the head. When I visited Madalena and her children on Christmas Day 2002, Evangelina had her forearm bandaged, and I enquired what had happened to her. She told me that her mother had hit her because she had gone out and had not informed her mother of her whereabouts. I talked to Madalena about it, suggesting that it was not a good idea to beat her children as they could internalise this hurt and then respond in an angry way in the future. Madalena just smiled and thanked me for my comments. In a cultural context where strong disciplinary measures for children are tolerated, the injury to Evangelina's arm may appear insignificant to those involved.

Evangelina often complained about her teachers and one in particular who slapped her across the face. In the local primary school, one teacher said that sometimes children needed to be hit. She stated that even though she hit the students they still came to school. Some students also displayed aggressive behaviour towards teachers. One teacher commented on this problem in relation to the school in which he worked:

When you talk about violence, it has been part of our culture. The children still remember everything that Indonesians did. During the Indonesian time

because of the political situation, the students always came to school to threaten teachers especially those who were from Indonesia by saying, “choose machete or let me pass to the next grade.” They were often absent from school, but at the end of the year they came with machetes threatening the teachers if they did not pass them. The teachers did what the children wanted because they were afraid they would be killed. This does not happen anymore; even though they still threaten the teachers, they tend to be more aware. (Teacher – Colégio Paulo VI)<sup>17</sup>

Often tension could erupt quickly and the consequences could be harsh, as the following case from early 2001 illustrates:

A student from the local high school was put in Bekora jail because he hit a teacher. The student had arrived late for school on two occasions and, because of this, he was expelled from the school. The student’s father accompanied him to apologise to the teacher. However, this apology was not accepted. Later when the parent was not present, the student struck the teacher with his hand, and a ring he was wearing cut the teacher’s head. He was later arrested and put in prison. (Interview with lawyer)<sup>18</sup>

The lawyer who related this case worked for his quick release, realising that a prison was no place for children.

Several analysts (Gampel 2000; Levita 2000:152; Volkan *et al.* 2000:233) have written about the transmission of trauma between generations.<sup>19</sup> I was thinking about such transmission when I cautioned Madalena about hitting her children. However, violence is not always passed on. As Herman (1992:114) stresses, contrary to popular belief of a “generational cycle of abuse,” the majority of survivors of abuse neither abuse nor neglect their children. Jill Korbin (1998:257) an anthropologist who has worked extensively in the field of child abuse and neglect notes that intergenerational transmission of violence has remained an important factor in the aetiology of child maltreatment, although it is not an invariant cycle of abuse.<sup>20</sup>

Over time, the notion of fighting in Bidau broadened, and after public campaigns, violence against women, previously a hidden problem in East Timor, was brought into the public arena. Initially, when I asked different residents if domestic violence was a problem in Bidau, they told me that it did not occur, even though there was evidence of



it. Several women complained that their husbands became angry if they did not attend to household chores, but they did not elaborate on how their husbands expressed their anger. In 2001, a woman operating a restaurant closed her business because of her husband's violence, and she related how on one occasion he had dragged her down the street by her hair.

Later in 2001, a campaign *Hapara Violensia* (T) (Stop the Violence) – which involved a media campaign, the distribution of posters, badges and T-shirts, and workshops organised by various NGOs – contributed to raising awareness of this problem.<sup>21</sup> One of Alberto's daughters interested in this campaign stuck a large poster, which included the words “*hapara violensia*,” on the front of their house, and some men who attended cockfighting would pronounce this slogan to troublemakers.<sup>22</sup> In 2003, a Bidau woman was encouraged and supported by her neighbours to leave her abusive husband. She moved to another area of Dili and took her children with her. This was unusual, because women in East Timor were often blamed for domestic problems and persuaded by kin, friends and church authorities to stay with their husbands.

## **Conclusion**

The brutal acts by Indonesian military and militia during 1999 impacted deeply on residents, and experiencing these events together formed part of their shared history. Significant incidents included militia coming to Bidau. In April 1999, militia members from *Aitarak* terrified residents when they showed up in the streets of Bidau Motaklaran immediately after carrying out a massacre no more than a kilometre away. Militia returned in force to Bidau in August and after the announcement of the ballot results in September when they destroyed more than half the houses and terrorised the population. At this point, residents shared the experience of having to abandon their homes. Many initially fled to the Dominican sisters' convent, Bishop Belo's house or the beachfront,

but were then forced to move on and out of Dili. Some escaped into the mountains, while others made hazardous journeys to West Timor. Their stories of their escapes revealed the networks of kin and friends who assisted them.

Significantly, in relation to recovery, the conflict did not set the residents of Bidau against each other. There were few militia in Bidau, even though many families would have had militia members among their wider kin. East Timor differs from many other countries that have been ravaged by war, in that the fighting did not leave behind a deeply divided nation. The conflict in 1999 was not a religious war or a civil war, and the orchestrators of the violence, the Indonesian military, had left. There were some former militia still in East Timor and some others returned, but there were justice and reconciliation processes in motion in the country, as the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) and Serious Crimes Unit sought justice for those against whom atrocities had been committed.<sup>23</sup>

After 1999, Bidau residents were still nervous that there would be more outbreaks of violence and fighting in their village. Violence after 1999 included domestic violence, some fights between gangs of youth, harsh disciplining of children, and the burning of buildings in Dili during rioting on 4 December 2002. Although the types of violent acts changed over the years of my fieldwork in Bidau, residents continued to be haunted by fears of violence because what had occurred in the past was still very present to them. Not only did their damaged physical environment remind them of the conflict, they also bore scars of the violence. This was part of their broader suffering, suffering that included mental health problems, high infant mortality, the burden of financial obligations and disruption to life cycle rituals.

## CHAPTER 4: WORLDS OF SUFFERING

If you think a lot, maybe you would be stressed, like crazy.  
(Indonesian Period Settler, Interview, 2 May 2002)

Kleinman and Kleinman (1991) offer a definition of suffering useful as a starting point for investigating the worlds of suffering in Bidau:

Suffering can be defined from the historical and cross-cultural record as a universal aspect of human experience in which individuals and groups have to undergo or bear certain forms of burdens, troubles and serious wounds to the body and spirit that can be grouped into a variety of forms. There are *contingent misfortunes* such as serious acute illness. There are *routinized forms of suffering* that are either shared aspects of human conditions – chronic illness or death – or experiences of deprivation and exploitation and of degradation and oppression that certain categories of individuals (the poor, the vulnerable, the defeated) are specially exposed to and others relatively protected from. There also is *suffering resulting from extreme conditions*, such as survivorship of the Holocaust or the Atom Bomb or the Cambodian genocide or China's Cultural Revolution. (Kleinman *et al.* 1991:280)

As there are different forms and interpretations of suffering, it cannot be examined as a single concept or uniform experience. The interpretations and depths of suffering vary across and within cultures; they are shaped by poverty, chronic illness and disease, natural disasters, wars and other adversities. As Kleinman and Kleinman identify, illness is a socially constructed reality and an ethnography of experience has much to offer in understanding suffering across cultures (Kleinman *et al.* 1991:275). They suggest that “anthropological analyses (of pain and passion and power), when they are experience-distant, are at risk of delegitimizing their subject matter's human conditions” (Kleinman *et al.* 1991:276). They argue that by staying close to the “ethnographic context of experience” we are able to find “something panhuman in the experience of distress” (Kleinman *et al.* 1991:292).

Bidau residents had some common ways of describing suffering, but what was difficult for one person was not necessarily a problem for another, and while they were all subjected to the violence of 1999 and trials of Indonesian occupation, their

recollections and interpretations of events differed. Patricia Foxen (2000), an anthropologist writing about Mayan Indian experiences of coping with the violence of Guatemala's long civil war, illustrates how through an analysis of narrated stories of violence links can be made between individual symptoms and broader socio-political issues. She argues that in fragmented post-war communities the notion of sharing a collective or coherent "social memory" is problematic and insists that "memories of trauma and violence do not fit neatly into a coherent past, where victims and perpetrators are clearly delineated, where past and present are static realities" (Foxen 2000:377).

In Bidau, to suffer (*terus*) (T) meant to endure a range of hardships, especially those experienced during the Indonesian occupation. Many residents valued the suffering that was an inevitable consequence of fighting for independence. For some, suffering came from engaging in activities for the independence movement, in which they strongly believed, and facing the prospect that they could be killed for doing so. As residents discussed the difficulties of 1999 and preceding years, they disclosed stories of relatives and friends who had been killed for political reasons. Some of the respondents had been imprisoned, and some had to live in the mountains, moving frequently to hide from the Indonesian forces and suffering terrible hardship.

The majority of Bidau residents, having survived years of struggle, did not focus on the personal, private toll concealed within their bodies. They were proud. They suffered. They survived. Though deeply saddened by these experiences, Bidau residents did not always consider suffering to be devastating. They understood some of their hardships to be intertwined in their everyday lives. They shared a collective history, and many found consolation through their interactions and friendship with others. They

honoured those who had been killed or those who had been leaders in the resistance, including, Xanana Gusmao, who was regarded as a national hero.

Many Bidau residents explained that to cope with their difficulties they turned to prayer and found comfort in their spiritual practices. The redemptive features of suffering are central to Catholic traditions, linked to belief in, and theological interpretations of, the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. During the Catholic Mass, East Timorese, in reciting the creed, pray the words “*Nia terus to’o mate, ema hako i Nia*” (T) (He suffered until death, and people buried him). The word “*terus*” links their suffering to that of Jesus and to the hope of life after death. The cross is ubiquitous in East Timor, and Stations of the Cross along winding paths to sacred places are reminders of suffering and redemption. Indigenous religious practices in East Timor also contain themes of suffering and healing, though Bidau residents did not discuss this in detail. Sacrifice of animals was part of ceremonies held in *umaluliks*, and a few Bidau residents sacrificed an animal when a family member was sick, and prayed to their ancestral spirits to intervene for healing.

In discussing their suffering, Bidau residents described many sicknesses and deaths from sickness. When listening to accounts of sickness, it is important to observe the sociocultural environments in which the sicknesses occur, and not just assess them in biomedical terms. Biomedicine focuses on sickness and healing as essentially biological events, and sociocultural effects are considered as marginal and secondary (Hahn 1995:76, 94). While biomedicine has much to offer and its advances have greatly enriched medical science, it falls short by not including the cultural setting, which affects all types of sickness. Kleinman (1995:21-40) provides a comprehensive overview of biomedicine with its concentration on disease and is critical that it does not

take sufficient consideration of the patient's experience of suffering. Kleinman notes a change of direction that biomedicine has taken:

... the very purposes of biomedicine have been altered from an earlier emphasis on the deeply human grounds of illness and care, shared by other healing traditions, to economic and political priorities, which are the chief influences on research and teaching, organization and delivery of services, and the day-to-day work of the practitioner. (1995:39)

In a revision of biomedicine, Hahn (1995:265) promotes what he has termed “anthropological medicine which integrates a sociocultural perspective with a biological one at the core of medical education, medical practice, research, and institutional arrangements.” In this revision, the biomedical is still important, and Hahn (1995:59) cites examples of sickness in West Africa – where people's reporting of sickness took some diseases such as malaria for granted and part of the way things are – as evidence that it is crucial to observe physical conditions when looking at health. To broaden beyond the biomedical, Hahn (1995:97) proposes a systems theory, “including not only molecules, cells, organs, and human bodies, but persons, families, societies and the biosphere” as well as the interaction of these with one another is a better way to approach the topic of sickness and healing. This approach incorporates power relations and cultural expectations that affect sickness and healing, and such an approach is appropriate in Bidau. When referring to sickness, Bidau residents usually used the word *moras* (T) (sickness), which covered a wide range of illnesses, including fatal ones. They rarely used biomedical terms to describe sicknesses or their causes. Many did not consult doctors or go to the hospital to seek treatment for ailments, but accepted illness as something that just happened.

Critical medical anthropologists<sup>1</sup> argue that the influences that organise populations are often overlooked and are critical of ecological approaches to sickness and healing because they ignore the role of power in society and the ways populations

are organised by societal rules and the allocation of material resources (Hahn 1995:71). In considering the experiences of sickness and healing of Bidau residents, it is important to consider access to resources and the various actors involved in health care. The conflict in 1999 caused a massive disruption in health services, and following independence, a national health care system was in the process of being re-established with ICRC, the UN, international NGOs and the Ministry of Health involved.

To explore the forms and meanings of suffering voiced by Bidau residents, I draw upon their experiences of suffering.<sup>2</sup> The destruction of houses is noticeable as one walks around the village sections, but to understand the varied and difficult problems people in Bidau have experienced, one has to step further than their front doors and look not only at, but also past, the events of 1999. No two stories of suffering were the same. Most people coped and it appeared that many people had adapted well, but there were those who apparently had not. A few residents suffered from mental illness. Some showed signs of depression. A few people had dropped dead unexpectedly.

In this chapter, I explore the experiences of sickness and suffering that residents expressed. Suffering in Bidau went beyond the direct impacts of violence in the country – intimidation, killings, torture, forced displacement, burning of homes, loss of possessions – to include many forms of sickness and struggles that troubled residents – mental illnesses, stress related deaths, deaths from malnutrition, infant mortality, sicknesses that had no name, struggles to meet financial obligations and life cycle disruptions. Some residents, having survived wars, then lost spouses to illnesses they believed were stress-related. It did not seem fair. They had survived the worst periods, but now they entered peaceful times without their partners. Though residents were moving on with their lives, they carried the past with them. Some showed symptoms of what in the West would be regarded as trauma.

## **Mental health problems**

*What is trauma? We do not know this word*

Literature on trauma and psychosocial interventions has developed from efforts to assist individuals to process their experiences of war and violence. This literature is helpful, though we have to take care how we use the concept of trauma, bearing in mind, as the psychiatrist Patrick Bracken puts it, “the dangers of inserting non-indigenous frameworks and priorities into situations where communities are attempting to rebuild their lives and ways of life” (Bracken 2002:6). Bracken believes that projects that Western NGOs often implement in Third World settings to assist victims of wartime violence introduce a “Western ‘technical’ way of thinking about suffering and loss” to people at a time when they are weak and vulnerable (Bracken 2002:213). “The effect is often to undermine respect for local healers and traditions and ways of coping that are embedded in local ways of life” (Bracken 2002:213).

Silove (1999:200) argues that torture and related abuses may interfere with “five core adaptive systems subserving the functions of ‘safety,’ ‘attachment,’ ‘justice,’ ‘identity-role,’ and ‘existential-meaning.’” He challenges the current thinking about trauma. In particular, he questions whether the concentration on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is adequate to determine the multiple effects of “extensive trauma, injustices, loss and displacement” (Silove 1999:200). Silove states “concepts of safety, grief, injustice and faith may be more meaningful to traumatized survivors irrespective of their cultural backgrounds than are categories such as PTSD or depression” (Silove 1999:205). Such concepts made more sense to Bidau residents than the idea of trauma.

There is no word for trauma in Tetun.<sup>3</sup> My interpreters knew the Indonesian word for trauma, having encountered it during their education under the Indonesian system.<sup>4</sup> However, they did not know about PTSD symptoms, which can emerge in some people



as a reaction to shocking events. In 2001, when I asked residents if they knew this concept, many responded that they did not. Residents related to experiences that were more concrete – what they lost, what they suffered, what they wanted. It made little sense to discuss trauma without relating to people's broader life experiences and events. Outside of this context, one was introducing an abstract concept that had little meaning and was of little interest to them. Focusing on trauma did not put bread and butter on the table.

The following words were among the expressions that residents often used and appeared most familiar with when discussing responses to catastrophic events and sicknesses.

<b>Tetun</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Makassae</b>
<i>terus</i>	to suffer, to endure	<i>terusu</i>
<i>susar</i>	distress, need, difficulty	<i>susaru</i>
<i>moras</i>	sick	<i>sisi'iri</i>
<i>triste</i>	sad	<i>triste</i> (T)
<i>laran-susar</i>	worried	<i>geer bau'unu</i>
<i>laran-todan</i>	heavy-hearted, depressed, sad	<i>isa di'ir</i>
<i>nervus</i>	nervous	<i>isa ulur/mutu sisir</i>
<i>ta'uk</i>	frightened	<i>aga</i>
<i>hirus</i>	angry	<i>mutu sisir, sada mera</i>
<i>kole</i>	tired	<i>kole</i>
<i>tanis</i>	crying	<i>iara</i>
<i>tifus</i>	*	
<i>gripe</i>	flu	<i>mini ba</i>

<i>isin-di'ak</i>	healthy	<i>amu-rau/ nau-ra rau</i>
<i>inus-been</i>	runny nose	<i>mini ira</i>
<i>ai-moruk</i>	medicine	<i>sari</i>
<i>violénsia</i>	violence	<i>viola (T)</i>
<i>bulak</i>	crazy, mad	<i>nogo-nogo</i>
<i>lakon hanoin</i>	lose thinking, crazy	<i>mutu molu</i>
<i>haluhan an</i>	forget oneself, crazy	<i>mutu molu</i>
<i>beik-teen</i>	idiot, stupid	<i>mutu molu</i>

\* This was a sickness one resident reported to me. I could not find the exact meaning, the closest in the Tetun dictionary being *tifu* translating as typhoid. However, the young woman was still able to attend school and said that the sickness was in her stomach. Her doctor recommended that she eat *sasoro* (T) (rice soup) for a few days.

Although a few people evinced some of the symptoms that corresponded to indicators of PTSD, such as hypervigilance, flashbacks, and sleeping problems, no one visited a counselling agency, even though information in Tetun about such a service was offered. Madalena showed signs of hypervigilance. She and other residents had flashbacks, describing them as pictures in their minds, images of events that occurred in 1999. One of those who had nightmares was Alberto's youngest son, who was aged seven when the terrifying events of 1999 took place. It is possible that these reactions were related to 1999 and also that more Bidau residents could experience symptoms in the future, as PTSD symptoms can emerge many years after traumatic events, and can be passed on from one generation to the next (Figley 1985; Levita 2000:152-153).

Many residents witnessed gruesome and frightening events, but residents' experiences of violence ranged in severity and what they suffered affected how they reacted. A small number of residents showed signs of depression. For example, one man felt so weighed down by his unsuccessful attempts to find work that he started to give

up the search. He did not eat breakfast because he could not afford to, and he mostly sat on his front porch and did nothing. He said he still felt very sad and he had to rely on others for his basic needs.

Some people said they never could forget what they experienced, but learned to live with their suffering while hoping that there would be some justice. A 26 year old Bidau man summed up his feelings about his nephew being shot, though not killed, by militia.

My heart is still in pain, even though we talk about reconciliation, forgiveness and religion. That is to cover the outside, but not to heal my heart. For me, to heal my heart, I hope that our leaders can bring those who committed crimes to court. I know the person who shot my nephew. He has not come back from West Timor. There is nothing to make me feel better because I know who the militia are, who committed the crimes and returned from West Timor. When I went to CIVPOL and gave them a report about the militia, they said there is no evidence – there is no problem.... I feel free now because I can get up at 3.00 a.m. in the morning and do what I want to do at night without being afraid of the military.

Although residents relied on their own strategies to overcome their difficulties and many had inner resources and strong social connections, they were not always able to resolve their problems. They recounted stories of “sickness” and many requested medicine for headaches, flu symptoms, joint pain and stomachaches. For example, one man requested medicine for his wife who had a history of mental health problems, and a woman who complained of breast pain asked for medicine that could relieve her discomfort. Another woman said she drank heavily when she fled to Kupang because she wanted to block out what was happening. In 2001, she chain-smoked and was very anxious. Some of her anxiety was due to her concern about her husband’s health. She did not want a referral to an agency for support for herself, but was looking for a better doctor to assist her husband who had broken his leg.

Expecting high levels of trauma related problems, a number of NGOs introduced programs in East Timor that included “trauma counselling.”<sup>5</sup> PRADET officially

opened in East Timor on 17 June 2000 and developed a national mental health program with a coordinated network of agencies and services.<sup>6</sup> An organisation called the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), whose main work was in Suai, had an office in Bidau Motaklaran in late 2000, but moved offices to another location in Dili in early 2001.<sup>7</sup> IRCT conducted a one week program of activities to help women from Bidau understand what impact the war could have on them and suggested strategies to assist them. However, none of the interviewees mentioned this program.<sup>8</sup>

When I asked Alberto about support for people with mental health problems in Bidau, he said there was no special treatment for them. He told me that during the Indonesian administration, a hospital to accommodate people with mental illnesses was constructed in Metinaro, east of Dili, but as no doctor or nurse was available to work there, it was never used. There were different types of mental illnesses according to Alberto. A family took action to lock up any member whose behaviour put others in fear of their lives. If a person's condition was not serious, treatment by a traditional doctor was sought. Sometimes people recovered. Alberto had not noticed anyone in Bidau suffering from mental illness as result of the 1975 invasion or the 1999 conflict. He thought that perhaps people in other places became sick.

*Residents who “lost thinking” or were “crazy”*

In Bidau there were a few people with a mental health problems, which residents called *lakon hanoin* (T) (lose thinking, lost thinking). They were accepted and supported by people in the village. Gaspar did not appear in Bidau Motaklaran until the early months of 2002, and Gaspar's sister had omitted him from her listing of her kin group when I interviewed her in 2001. At that time, Gaspar was living in Balibo in Bobonaro district. Whether she intentionally excluded him or whether the omission was an oversight is not clear. I first met Gaspar on the veranda of the house where I lived. Dressed in shorts and

a soiled T-shirt, he was chatting with children. He had bare feet and his teeth, blackened from chewing betel nut, gave him a dark smile.<sup>9</sup> He appeared to be in his early thirties, had short dark curly hair and was overweight. He would float in and out of conversations and would break into singing. He had a gentle voice and was a good singer. He responded to a few questions and then drifted off into his own world of singing. Gaspar chewed betel nut for long periods everyday and complained that he often had headaches.

Gaspar had been studying at university in Java prior to the conflict in 1999, and at the time was considered to be very intelligent. Then something happened. He became sick while at university and, though his family took him to various doctors, no one was able to assist him or diagnose his problem. In Bidau, he spent his days walking around the village with his bag of betel nut in hand, calling in to visit different residents. He posed no threat to anyone, and people in the neighbourhood tolerated him. Because of his family connections, people did not make derogatory references about him, such as *bulak* (T) (crazy), which they did to other people with mental illnesses. Residents treated him kindly, allowing him to sit on their verandas or join in volleyball games if he wished. Gaspar's acceptance in Bidau Motaklaran was in stark contrast to how people with similar mental conditions in other places in East Timor were treated.<sup>10</sup> Such different attitudes were evident when a visitor to the village displayed prejudice against Gaspar, denigrating him to me.

From time to time, a woman with a mental illness would walk around Bidau streets, and residents would just dismiss her, saying to me that she was *bulak*. She would often wander around Madalena's garden. One time she broke some branches from a tree and gave them to Madalena, indicating that she wanted Madalena to beat her with it. Madalena pretended to hit her to comply with the request and pacify her.

Madalena knew the woman's personal tragedies – she had been married on several occasions and treated badly by her husbands – but Madalena did not know when her mental health problems had developed.

Others with mental health problems also resided in the village. One resident described his 30 year old brother who lived with him as *lakon hanoïn*. Another resident, Rui, described his 35 year old wife as *bulak*. She became sick in 1986, and Rui sacrificed many chickens, dogs and goats by way of offerings to the spirit world. His wife recovered, but became sick again in 1996, at which time Rui called a traditional healer from Kupang who came to treat her. The treatment, however, was unsuccessful. During the 1999 conflict, Rui fled to the mountains, but left his wife in the house alone. He appealed to the *lulik* (T) (ancestral spirit) to protect his wife so that she would be safe. She survived the 1999 conflict, but had previously experienced deep losses, especially the deaths of her children. Rui told me that three of his sons had died, one in 1973 from “sickness,” another in 1978 from malnutrition when he and his family were in the mountains and a third from “sickness” in 1989 as a baby in the family home.

This family's suffering was enmeshed in their daily activities, and they had endured problems for many years. Rui and his wife were caring for their three year old grandson after a dispute with their daughter, the child's mother. She had beaten her younger brother and in a rage of anger threatened to curse him. Rui said she threatened to pray that her brother would die so he ordered her out of the house. She moved to her cousin's house in another area of Dili and left her son to be cared for by Rui and his wife. Traditional practices of sacrificing animals had offered Rui and his family intermittent comfort in the past, yet they searched for medicine to overcome ongoing ailments. Rui asked me for some medicine for his wife. In response, I explained about

the services of PRADET and suggested he take her there for assistance, but he did not follow up on this suggestion.

Residents described other “sicknesses” that they regarded as mental problems. It was difficult to know whether these sicknesses had a mental health component or resulted from accidents or tragedies. The man I interviewed in a household of three families, totalling 20 people, stated that his 18 year old niece who lived there had problems in that she did not talk. He did not elaborate on her condition. His family believed that if they did not follow *lulik* practices they would become sick. When they celebrated the anniversaries of their deceased relatives, they killed a chicken or goat and invoked the names of their ancestors, hoping that they would protect them from bad spirits.

### **Deaths in the village**

The consequences of war and Indonesian occupation contributed to a high death toll throughout the country. The figure most frequently quoted for East Timorese who died during Indonesian rule is 200,000 or a third of the population (Tanter *et al.* 2001:260), though the figure may have been closer to 100,000 (Cribb 2001). The tally of those who militia or TNI killed in 1999 is estimated to be between 1,500 and 2,000 (Human Rights Watch 2000; Gorjão 2002:315; Pigou 2003:ii). Nevins (2002:623) quotes a figure of “upward of 2,000 people” killed during the 1999 conflict. Some Bidau residents lost several family members who were killed by either Indonesian military or militia. Many had kin die from other effects of warfare, such as famine, during the period of Indonesian occupation. Additional factors, such as high infant mortality, disease, accidents and natural causes, claimed more lives.

Alberto, expressing his sentiments about the most difficult consequence of the 1999 events for him, said he missed the companionship of those who had died. Many of

his friends from Bidau and other areas had died, and their bodies had not been found. Under these circumstances, he said people went to the cemetery in Bidau Santa Ana and took flowers, wrote the names of the deceased on a sheet of paper and placed this with candles around the rocks and the large cross at the back of the cemetery. He prayed for their souls.

In Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru, 17% of the people interviewed (25 residents) reported that members of their kin group died during the violence in 1999. The relationship of the deceased to the interviewee and the numbers of deaths in that category of kin included – daughters (1), brothers (5), uncles (2), aunts (1), brothers-in-law (3), fathers-in-law (1), grandfathers (1), nephews (5) and cousins (6).<sup>11</sup> In some cases, those left behind relied on others for information about these deaths. The bodies of almost half of those killed were never recovered. These bare figures, however, do not reveal the extent of the network of relationships affected by the loss of each person who died in 1999 and how the deaths affected the wives, husbands, children, brothers, sisters, grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, cousins, in-laws, not to mention friends and neighbours.

#### *Sudden deaths and other deaths from “sicknesses”*

The violent deaths of kin, friends and neighbours in 1999 and at other times during the Indonesian occupation left residents with many unanswered questions. However, other types of deaths that people reported, especially deaths of infants and deaths from malnutrition when people were living in the forest during the Indonesian occupation, were accepted as something that just happened. Generally, residents did not appear to be curious about the underlying causes of such deaths.

Several residents reported that family members dropped dead suddenly. They attributed these deaths to *moras* (T) (sickness) and were not aware of the causes of such



sickness. Madalena's husband felt unwell one morning, visited the hospital during the day and died suddenly that night. Alberto's brother-in-law also died unexpectedly one evening in 2000. He had seemed well when he went for a walk with his wife in the morning, but that evening died at home, leaving his bereaved wife to support five young children. There was no explanation for his death. A woman who lived alone said that her mother "fell down and died" in 1994. This death was also unexpected, and the woman had no knowledge of the cause. This woman did not know why other family members had died either. Her father died in April 2001 from "sickness." She had spent many months caring for him during his illness, but did not know the details of his condition. All three of her siblings had died when they were very small, but she did not know why.

Some people gave more specific explanations, such as strokes, heart attacks and foul play for the deaths of kin. Stress-related illnesses were cited as contributing to people's poor health and possibly to death, the stress arising not only as a direct result of violence, but also due to loss of jobs and status as families members who had previously provided for their families became dependent on others. Alberto's cousin was thought to have died because of the stress of the war. At least that was what his wife, a 44 year old nurse, believed contributed to his death.

During the conflict in 1999, we had to move out of our house and live at the beach. My husband had a small radio to monitor the news to find out about the peacekeeping force (PKF) ... After the fighting, my husband did not get a job. He felt embarrassed that he was not working and I had to work. He was embarrassed, as he had to ask for money for cigarettes. This added to his stress and I believe contributed to him having a stroke and dying. I still feel very sad. It is very hard to forget this.

An Indonesian Period Settler believed that his mother's sudden death in 1995 might have been due to a heart attack. One woman I met in July 2001 was upset because, as nervousness increased prior to the Constituent Assembly election, she had started to

think more about her husband's death. He died in 1991 from drinking palm wine, which she believed had been imbued with poison in a deliberate attempt to kill him. Beliefs that other people may have put poison in food or drink were common.

No one I talked to in Bidau gave witchcraft as the reason for a death, even though, in some parts of East Timor, especially in the east, people attributed sudden deaths to witchcraft. For example, Pollanen (2004:17-19) reports on a case study of a death in East Timor that was believed to be due to witchcraft, but could be explained as a sudden cardiac dysrhythmic death.

*We have buried our children – small losses, early deaths*

East Timor has a high incidence of infant mortality, and many women I interviewed had children die as infants or young children.<sup>12</sup> Out of the 109 interviewees who had had children, 25 (24%) had suffered the death of a baby or young child. Some couples had had a number of children die. Many stated that their infants had died from “sickness.” Others had experienced miscarriages. Details of the reported miscarriages and deaths of children reported by the interviewees are summarised in the following table.

<b>No. of deaths</b>	<b>Circumstances of death</b>	<b>Mother's age as at 2001</b>	<b>No. of surviving children</b>
1	Miscarriage at 5 months in 1995*	43 years	9
1	Daughter died 1985 – buried in Santa Cruz cemetery	Died 1994	8
3	Son died 1975 aged 1 week – sickness Son died 1976 aged 1 year – sickness Daughter died 1999 aged 1 year – sickness**	42 years	10
1	Daughter from mother's second marriage – buried in Baukau	30 years	5
3	Details unknown	Died 1993	9
1	Buried in Santa Cruz cemetery	52 years	8
2	1 son and 1 daughter – died when babies	57 years	6
2	Buried in Bidau Santa Ana cemetery	43 years	10
2	Son died 1987 – malaria Son died 1992 – malaria	41 years	8
1	Buried in Bidau Santa Ana cemetery	37 years	6

No. of deaths	Circumstances of death	Mother's age as at 2001	No. of surviving children
6	Most only lived until approximately 7 years of age. Died from fever when family lived in mountains.	43 years	1
1	Son buried Santa Cruz cemetery.	45 years	2
3	1 baby died of sickness; 1998 miscarriage; 1 daughter died in 1999 aged 1 year – died from fright because of conflict and diarrhoea	35 years	3
3	1 son – 1973 – sickness 1 son – 1978 – malnutrition 1 son – 1989 – died in family home as baby	35 years	3
1	1 daughter – 2 years – sickness – buried in Bidau Santa Ana cemetery	60+ years	3
1	Baby died in childbirth – buried in Santa Cruz cemetery	35 years	7
1	Daughter died in 1998 aged 2 years. She was playing with friends, returned home vomiting and then died.	31 years	3
2	1 daughter aged 3 years died from fever; 1 son aged 5 months died 1991	28 years	4
1	1 son aged 7 years died from malaria – buried in Bidau Santa Ana cemetery	35 years	1
3	All sons died when approximately 1 year old from sickness	30 years	4
2	1 son aged 8 months died in 1990 from sickness; 1 daughter aged 10 months died in 1998 from sickness	31 years	4
2	Miscarriages	32 years	1
1	Son aged 9 months died from sickness – buried in Bidau Santa Ana cemetery	44+ years	7
1	1 son died aged 2 months died in 1976 from sickness	45 years	8
1	Died in 1992 aged 3 months from a cough	27 years	4
2	1 baby died after 8 days; 1 baby died after 1 month – both from sickness	32 years	3

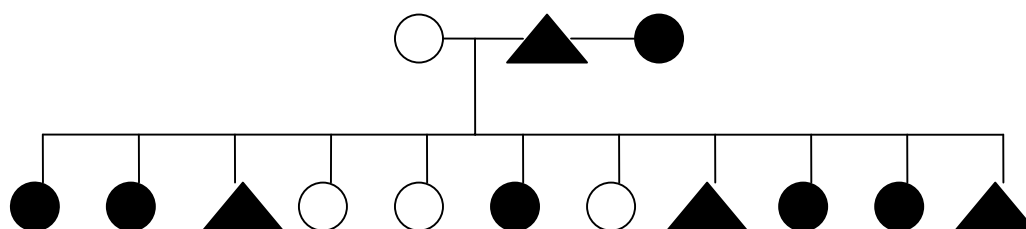
**Table 1. Reported miscarriages and deaths of infants and children of Bidau residents**

- \* A few women also included miscarriages when discussing deaths of their children though this was not a specific question. In this case, the foetus was buried in a cement grave in the garden next to the woman's house.
- \*\* The woman also had her daughter and grandchild die in childbirth in 1999, and her husband died in 1998 from sickness.

Teresinha, the mother of the interviewee Joaquina, had to bury eight of her eleven children, many of whom died at an early age. She is a woman of remarkable courage

and strength whose life history included experiences common to many women in Bidau. When I spoke with her in 2001, Teresinha, a Makassae from Baukau district, believed she was about 68 years old, though she was not sure of her exact age. When asked how she felt about so many of her children dying, Teresinha explained that for the younger ones “it was only a little bit sad,” but what was most upsetting for her was the death of her older son who was studying medicine in Jakarta. She listed each child’s death, displaying little emotion.

After two months of marriage, Teresinha became pregnant, and during pregnancy was bitten by a green snake. When her firstborn died shortly after birth, she attributed this to the snakebite. Teresinha’s husband was reportedly very sad after the death of their first baby. For him, losing someone close through death was not a new experience. His marriage to Teresinha was his second marriage, arranged by his parents after his first wife had died. After the death of their baby, his kin gathered to console him. Both he and Teresinha reasoned that the death was perhaps part of God’s plan for them.



**Figure 5. Genogram showing Teresinha’s children**

Teresinha’s second baby was stillborn, and her third grew to be the son who died as a young man. When he completed high school in East Timor, he went to Jakarta to study medicine. He was 26 years old and had only one year of his medical studies to complete when his motor bike collided with a bus, killing him. Teresinha believed some Indonesians were jealous of him and deliberately killed him. She said that they were

afraid to fight him so they organised an accident. It was not clear what evidence she had for this assertion, but it was clear that she grieved the loss of this child the most.

Teresinha's next two births were daughters who survived and married. Her sixth child was born prematurely and died, and was followed by a daughter who is still living. The next four children each died at around two years of age. Each died in tragic circumstances while Teresinha was living in the forest, the first from an infestation of worms, the second from malaria, the third after being dropped and the last from what was thought to be death from fright. Teresinha believed that he died as a reaction to gunshot noise at a time when the Indonesian military were shooting.

<b>Deaths of Teresinha's children</b>			
<b>Order of birth</b>	<b>Age at death/ Status at interview/ Mother's age at birth of baby</b>	<b>Circumstances of death described by mother</b>	<b>Burial Practices</b>
Daughter	Shortly after birth (Mother - 24 yrs)	Mother bitten by green snake when pregnant.	Buried in cemetery. Flowers on grave.
Daughter	Stillborn (Mother - 25 yrs)	Mother fell while washing clothes when pregnant.	Buried in cemetery. Flowers on grave.
Son	26 years (Mother – 26yrs)	Motorbike accident in Jakarta. Collided with bus.	Body flown back to East Timor. Funeral rituals held in family home in Bidau Motaklaran. Burial in Santa Cruz cemetery.
Daughter	37 years of age. Married with four children. (Mother – 31 yrs)	Alive. Not applicable.	Not applicable.
Daughter	35 years of age. Married with four children. (Mother – 33 yrs)	Alive. Not applicable.	Not applicable.
Daughter	Died shortly after birth (Mother – 35 yrs)	Premature birth.	Buried in cemetery. Flowers on grave.
Daughter	28 years of age. Single. Lives with eldest daughter. (Mother - 36 yrs)	Alive. Not applicable.	Not applicable.

<b>Deaths of Teresinha's children</b>			
Son	Two years (Mother – 38 yrs)	Infested with worms.	Buried in unmarked grave. District known.
Daughter	Two years (Mother - 39 yrs)	Contracted malaria when family living in forest. No doctor and no medicine available.	Buried in unmarked grave. District known.
Daughter	Two years (Mother – 41 yrs)	Mother accidentally dropped baby. Daughter hit head on rocks. Died one week later.	Buried in unmarked grave. District known.
Son	Two years (Mother – 43 yrs)	Nervous and jumpy because of gunshot noise from Indonesian military shooting. Mother believed died from fear of noise. Not sick – died instantly.	Buried in unmarked grave. District known.

**Table 2. Circumstances of the deaths of Teresinha's children**

Teresinha had buried many members of her kin in addition to her children, including her husband who died in Jakarta in 1992. She and her family experienced distress by not knowing the cause of his death. His body was brought back to Dili, and he was buried in Santa Cruz cemetery. After his death, Teresinha moved into the household of her eldest surviving daughter Joaquina and travelled regularly to Baukau to visit kin.

Teresinha's experiences show how an itinerant life in the forest contributed to early deaths and how people had to modify mortuary practices during the early years of the Indonesian occupation. Teresinha's first three children had died prior to 1975. Each had been buried in a cemetery and the family had prayed at their home, which at that time was in Baukau district. As is often the case for deaths of babies in East Timor, funerary rituals were not held in a church. The next four burials, however, were in unmarked graves in the forest. For four years following the 1975 invasion, Teresinha and her husband travelled by foot with her children and members of her kin group to

various villages near Natarbora in the southern part of Manatuto district. They carried children in their arms with their personal chattels balanced on their heads and backs, as they sought safe locations. When the Indonesian soldiers were patrolling, Teresinha and her kin hid in the forest. Teresinha sold her jewellery, which included gold rings, necklaces and bracelets, to purchase rice and corn. They remained at places for varied times depending on the security situation. If they deemed a village secure, they would plant sweet potatoes and corn; however, they were not always able to harvest their crops if they needed to move after a few months. People were very malnourished, and many women did not menstruate because of their poor health. Teresinha lived without the security of a permanent house until 1979 when she moved to Dili.

Teresinha's weathered face with deeply etched wrinkles around her dark brown eyes marked an existence that had not been easy, but she was part of a very supportive kin group and held strong religious convictions. She said that her faith sustained her through her struggles. She was a quietly spoken dignified woman always neatly attired in a sarong and blouse, her black hair woven into a neat style decorated with hairpins. Her focus was her family, and she spent most of her time travelling between Baukau and Dili on a regular basis to support different family members, just as she had been supported in the past. After the deaths of her first three children, Teresinha's mother, her sister-in-law, her cousin, extended kin and neighbours rallied around to comfort her. The advice they offered was not to dwell on the deaths. They told Teresinha that if she kept thinking about them she would become "crazy." They consoled her by saying that she would have opportunities to have children in the future. Teresinha attributed all three deaths to God's plan for her life.

As had Teresinha, other couples in Bidau had also suffered the loss of many of their children. One 45 year old resident reported that he and his wife had seven children,

but that only one daughter, aged 19 in 2001, had survived. Most of the six who had died only lived until they were six or seven years of age and died when sick with fever while the family was living in the mountains.

A Mambai resident, Lydia, reaching 42 years of age, had given birth to 14 children, of whom four had died. Three died in infancy – one son in 1975 from “sickness” only one week after birth, another son in 1976 from “sickness” when one year old and a daughter during the 1999 conflict from “sickness” when only one year old. Lydia’s grief was compounded by the deaths of her husband in 1998 and her 24 year old daughter who died giving birth to a baby who also failed to survive. This daughter’s death was after Lydia and her children had returned to Bidau from Atambua where they had stayed in a refugee camp for two months in late 1999. They found that, although militia had not destroyed their house, they had stolen all their possessions. Lydia struggled through these ordeals and supported her children by baking and selling cookies, though the small income she earned was never enough, and she was desperately seeking more employment, willing to take in washing and ironing to make ends meet. She relied on kin, especially her sister, to whom she sometimes turned for a loan to pay school fees.

As they recounted their stories of infant deaths, some Bidau residents appeared unscathed by what seemed unbearable burdens for anyone to carry. This was similar to what Scheper-Hughes (1992:272) describes as the apparent indifference of Alto do Cruzeiro mothers towards the deaths of some of their infants. In Bidau, while women were sad about infant deaths, relatives and friends discouraged them from focusing on these losses. They had many children to care for and were concerned about their everyday struggle to provide adequate food for them. Women in Bidau appeared more disturbed by older children who had died.



“Fright” was proposed by a small number of residents to be the cause of deaths. Teresinha was not the only mother to attribute a small child’s death to fear of weapons, noise and chaos. One woman reported that in 1999 her frightened son, who was one year old when the worst of the fighting erupted in Bidau, developed severe diarrhoea after the militia took them to the *xefe-suku*’s office. The woman later took him to the hospital where he died shortly afterwards. Such “fright illnesses” had some symptoms similar to what is known as *susto*, a folk illness found in Latin American populations. *Susto* is believed to cause illness and even death resulting from exposure to a frightening event. People believe that it may result in a loss of the person’s soul and produces symptoms of malaise, difficulty sleeping, poor appetite and sometimes gastrointestinal complaints (stomachache, diarrhoea and vomiting) (Rubel *et al.* 1984; Scheper-Hughes 1992:365-368; Hahn 1995:14; Weller *et al.* 2002:449-450). Scheper-Hughes (1992:386) notes, however, that most of the diagnoses of *susto* for infants were made after the child had died and queries whether some cases were treatable paediatric illnesses. The same may have been true for some of the infant deaths attributed to fright by Bidau residents.

Another example of “fright illnesses” is *latah* found in Indonesia and Malaysia. Simons (1996:49-57) describes *latah* as an illness consisting of a set of rather peculiar behaviours performed by some individuals after they are startled (1996:49-57). *Latah* has been described as a culture-bound syndrome. The concept of culture-bound syndromes, however, is not obviously applicable to death from “fright” or other sicknesses that Bidau residents reported. Psychiatry and anthropology have debated the notion of culture-bound syndromes. “Traditional culture-bound syndromes usually are understood to occur in individuals who are relatively powerless and the culturally ‘prescribed’ syndrome allows the individual to communicate their distress in a way that

will be recognized and understood” (Bracken 2002:182-183). Hahn (1995:40-41), however, claims that “the idea of culture-bound syndromes is a conceptual mistake, confusing rather than clarifying our understanding of the role of culture in sickness and fostering a false dichotomy of events and the disciplines in which they are studied.” He suggests that “we need to redirect our attention to the formulation of a theory of human sickness in which culture, psychology, and physiology were regarded as mutually relevant across cultural and nosological boundaries” (Hahn 1995:56).

#### *Other deaths of kin*

It was not only children who died from malnutrition. Several residents reported that adult kin had died from malnutrition during the Indonesian occupation when people moved from place to place in the mountains searching for food.

There was also one case of suicide reported. One woman, an only child, lost both her parents in 1983. When her father died from “sickness” that year, her mother could not manage and hanged herself.

#### **Other burdens – other suffering**

Many residents in Bidau expressed the view that the destruction of their private home was the most distressing experience of the 1999 conflict, but this did not negate the many other losses they suffered, such as the deaths of kin. The following table summarises the different types of loss expressed by Bidau residents.

<b>Category of loss reported by Bidau residents</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>
No loss (experienced/reported)*	13
Family member killed	21
More than one family members killed	4
Corpse of deceased recovered	5
Corpse not recovered	10
Friend/s killed	9
Family member disappeared	4

Category of loss reported by Bidau residents	Number of interviewees
Friends disappeared	0
House burnt/destroyed – total loss	75
House partially destroyed	7
House burnt/contents salvaged	2
Household items stolen	47
Household items burnt	4
Animals stolen/killed	7
House occupied – needed to find another house	1
Property elsewhere – traditional house burnt –recorded **	1

**Table 3. Reported loss in Bidau during or following 1999**

Source: 148 interviews conducted from 24 January 2001 – 26 July 2001

\* For this category, not all respondents discussed issues of loss experienced. A woman reported that while none of her family died in 1999 and her house and contents were intact when she returned to Bidau six months after the violence, the fighting triggered painful memories of her brother's death in 1975.

\*\* These figures were responses to open-ended questions, the answers to which reflect what was most distressing for residents. During later discussions with residents, I became aware that more than one traditional house had been destroyed; however, only one person referred to it as the most distressing loss for him.

In addition to these substantial losses, the suffering of residents included various illnesses, financial worries and disruptions to life cycle rituals.

#### *Other sicknesses*

Common sicknesses and ailments in Bidau included malaria, other fevers, headaches, stomachaches, skin diseases and eye infections. "Malaria" was the word used to describe not only malaria, but also other illnesses with flu-like symptoms. When one of Alberto's daughters, Dulce, was thought to have contracted malaria, she preferred to stay at home rather than go to the hospital for testing and treatment. She wrapped herself in warm jumpers and missed a few days of school, but still helped with household chores. Alberto told me she was frightened of injections and laughed about her refusal to go to the doctor. Other members of Alberto's family contracted malaria at different times, but decided that a consultation with a doctor would be helpful. Many

residents contracted malaria because there were many good breeding grounds for mosquitoes, including open drains in front of houses, which were often blocked and overflowing with rubbish. Residents often waited until government workers came around and organised them to clean up blocked systems.

Madalena and her three children suffered from “sicknesses” that included fevers or feeling cold. Sometimes Madalena had the flu. Other times she resorted to saying that she was just “sick.” Madalena was another resident who avoided hospitals. When I asked why she would not go to hospital, she often joked about her fear of needles. When she was sick, she would lie on her *biti* (T) (sleeping mat) on the ground inside her house or near her small shop.

Many residents complained that the dirty, smelly water made their skin itchy and patchy fungus could be observed on some people’s faces and bodies. Even though the town water supply was connected during 2002, other skin problems were noticeable. Many children from Bidau Tokobaru were covered with boils, some with several boils on their faces. At one time, Teresinha’s daughter Joaquina suffered from a rash. She showed me her arms and legs, which were covered in small welts, which she had been scratching. She visited the hospital to obtain medicine, but still was concerned that her skin problems persisted. She believed that the outbreak of the rash was caused by eating small sardines. Eye infections were prominent, and residents referred to the condition as *matan mean* (T) (red eye), which in some cases was conjunctivitis. Many people did not seek treatment for this condition and stated that it was because of seasonal changes.

A family from the category of Post-ballot Residents who squatted in an abandoned house in Bidau Tokobaru in September 1999 included a nine year old girl who had Down’s syndrome and could not speak. The interviewee described her as his father’s sister’s grandchild, and even though his household already supported ten

people, they had adopted the girl. Her parents lived in another district, but were supporting two of her brothers who also “did not speak,” in addition to other children who reportedly enjoyed good health. The interviewee also had a brother who had been a member of Falintil and had died in the forest and another brother whom he described as “crazy.”

Instead of visiting a hospital or clinic, residents occasionally sought medicines from a male nurse who lived in the same street as the Dominican sisters. He obtained medicines for residents, and people who knew him well preferred to call upon him for assistance rather than visit the hospital. Residents also consulted traditional healers for various ailments. Luisa went to a traditional practitioner who lived nearby when she suffered back pain and had difficulty walking. She had these problems for almost a week, but then the pain eased. Other residents visited traditional healers in Bekora or in rural districts. Same, in Manufahi district, was a well-known area for traditional healers, though not everyone who went there for treatment returned to Bidau cured. One Tetun resident, Betles, was involved in a motorbike accident in 2000 and suffered head injuries. Plagued by constant headaches he went to Same in 2003 to seek help from traditional healers, but after six weeks he died there. His body was returned to Bidau Motaklaran for funeral rituals.

Residents followed particular practices to prevent and alleviate illness. They rarely drank cold drinks, as they believed this helped prevent flu. Many avoided having showers at night, as they thought that to do so was to risk illness.<sup>13</sup> The afternoon siesta was considered important, and residents who previously had worked from 7.00 a.m. until 2.00 p.m. as civil servants and who now worked longer hours had difficulties changing their former habits. Some East Timorese have skills in bone manipulation, and often I saw people click their necks into place or crack their knuckles to relieve pain in

their joints. A few residents believed that if you pick up a coin on the road you could become unwell. Some rubbed coins on their flesh when they were sick and then threw them away in the belief that they could thus rid themselves of the illness.

*Money – the burden of financial obligations*

Social obligations related to marriage and funerary rites involved substantial financial and material transactions, which were often a painful burden. People struggled to fulfil these obligations while striving to meet daily requirements and rebuild their homes. Some residents, such as Madalena, relied on a welfare net of support from relatives and friends to survive. However, commitments to support extended kin and friends were sometimes a burden from which people wished to escape. In some cases, traditional financial obligations for mortuary rituals and weddings were resented, but were difficult to avoid. To pursue an individual goal was sometimes viewed as selfish. Residents who left to work overseas were reminded not to forget those they left behind who might need financial support.

The topic of money came up in many conversations. Residents were curious about how much things cost – visits to the hairdresser, local purchases of vegetables, clothes, items from the supermarket. Having money sometimes created jealousy between kin and friends. A person with a good job enjoyed status in the community, but at the same time confronted a greater likelihood of material demands from others. A younger resident explained to me that it was difficult when he obtained employment because his friends always wanted him to buy them cigarettes and take them out. The friends were also jealous that he had a motorbike.

Following the upheavals in 1999 and the arrival of many international workers, begging in the streets flourished in Dili, and occasionally was encountered in Bidau Motaklaran. Very small children demanded: “Give us a dollar Mrs.” There were cases

of children being beaten if they did not earn enough money from selling fruit or DVDs in the streets and restaurants. As the number of foreign workers in the country declined, children who loitered outside local supermarkets, including Lita supermarket in Bidau Lecidere, became more aggressive in their sales techniques.

Gambling thrived, especially at the old markets and the cock-fighting pit. The woman whose mother had committed suicide had been married for six years and lived an unpredictable lifestyle that depended on earnings from the husband's gambling activities in the old markets. They had three small children, their house and all its contents had been burnt in 1999, and they had moved into an abandoned house, sharing it with the husband's brother's family. In a good month, the husband could win Rp.250,000 playing cards. However, there were times when his luck ran out and he lost money. Prior to 1999, they had also lived precariously, in fear of threats from Indonesian soldiers who had required payments to protect their property and lives. Once when her husband was arrested in the markets, they had to pay Rp.100,000 to the Indonesian military to keep him out of jail.

#### *Disruptions to life cycle rituals*

Conflict in 1999 disrupted life cycle rituals, and social, cultural and religious events and practices. Delays in rites of passage hindered residents from fully engaging in community life.<sup>14</sup> Marriage ceremonies were put on hold. Funerals happened quickly without adequate time for mourning or completion of appropriate mortuary rites. Memorial services were postponed. Delays in other rituals and transition points between life stages caused disappointment and hardship – delays in the rite of baptism, delays in students progressing from one level of education to another, and lack of transitions to employment after leaving school. Practices such as women staying home for three months after the birth of a baby could not be followed. Some religious practices, such as

the tradition of groups coming together to pray at the grotto and process to different houses, were temporarily halted.

Wars and periods of violent unrest restrict access to the resources necessary to enter a marriage contract, as the instability and destruction cause loss of jobs and financial hardship. Not only were weddings delayed, couples who had not had church weddings were obliged to postpone the baptism of their children until an annual feast day in the Catholic Church calendar. As Fr. Antonio Alves, the parish priest at Motaél stated, “Once a year each parish holds an ‘amnesty’ where couples who have not had church weddings can take their babies to church to receive the sacrament of baptism.” The Catholic Church at Motaél holds this ritual on the 13 June each year on the feast day of St. Anthony, the patron saint of the church. In Bekora where many residents from Bidau Motaklaran attend church services, a similar baptism ceremony occurs on 23 June, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Likewise, other parishes conduct these ceremonies on the feast day of the patron saint of their church.

The annual baptism ceremonies, encouraged by the Catholic Church as a positive step for parents to incorporate babies and small children into the church community, may actually polarise the community. Holding these annual public rituals highlights the status of unwed mothers in the eyes of the church and separates them from women who have had a Nuptial Mass, which allows them to have their babies baptised at a service of their choosing. On the surface, what appears to be a public celebration may in fact be the undermining of family pride and personal dignity. Women may feel humiliated and suffer a loss of self-esteem as they are called upon to publicly acknowledge their status. What is not considered is that unwed motherhood may be a product of the conflict, economic duress and other problems obstructing the accumulation and payment of bridewealth.



Another rite of passage that was delayed was the transition of school students to higher levels. Delays hindered students' transition from one class to another and from primary school to high school due to school closures during periods of conflict. Because of the delays, many students in Bidau were in classes that were incommensurate with their ages. Some students in sixth class at SD Tiga expressed disappointment that they were not in Junior High School, which would have been the case had the disruptions not occurred. The disruptions because of fighting closed high schools and the university for long periods, and as a result, some students did not finish high school until in their early twenties. University students had problems when their academic records were destroyed and they were left with no evidence of their grades. Some students had to sit special examinations to determine the level at which they could recommence their studies.

Young men in Bidau experienced problems such as unemployment, lack of money and boredom. They congregated at the bridges or wandered aimlessly around the village without prospects of secure employment or plans for independent lives. Groups of young men aged in their early twenties gathered at the bridges to kick around a soccer ball, play their guitars, or watch young women walk past. Sometimes they sat in Alberto's front garden singing love songs of both traditional Timorese and contemporary foreign origins. Most residents still referred to these young men as youth, and it was difficult to know when people recognised their transition to manhood.

By contrast, some young women in Bidau had more educational and work opportunities after 1999 than they had previously. Although some mothers had no greater ambitions for their daughters than that they marry and have children, some young women in Bidau wanted to gain an education, and a number who had the financial means enrolled in university. With the UN and international NGO presence in the country, gender issues became a focal point and women were encouraged to apply

for jobs. For some women, however, the delay in finding a husband caused them concern. They fantasised about romantic love, and one friend was so desperate to marry that she asked a friend in Australia to circulate her photo there to attract a husband.

## **Conclusion**

Local discourses about suffering gave positive value to it as part of the price paid for independence and through its connection with the suffering of Jesus. When I examined the suffering of Bidau residents, what unfolded was that “suffering” had many elements. Different people gave different examples, and the intensity of people’s burdens depended on their personal experiences. When asked about suffering, most focused on the destruction of their private homes as the most distressing experience and said that returning to the village to find their houses and personal possessions destroyed was what caused them the most misery. Many Bidau residents also focused on sickness and deaths from sickness. *Moras* (T) (sickness) was not only the general term people used for sickness, it was also the word they used to explain why their relatives died if they did not know the biomedical reason. Many residents described the deaths of kin attributable to different causes, including many cases of infant mortality.

Residents had a concept of mental illness, and used different terms to describe it, with *lakon hanoïn* (T) (lose thinking) being a more sympathetic expression than that of *bulak* (T) (crazy). Significantly, while residents spoke of mental problems as a form of suffering, they did not use the concept of “trauma,” a term for which there is no Tetun equivalent. While some residents had headaches, recurrent mental images, and sleeping problems, which in the West are included among trauma related symptoms, they did not dwell on these, nor did they want to take up offers of external assistance (such as counselling services) to alleviate them. Rather, Bidau residents looked to social support within their own groups and social networks as a way to live with suffering.

Those with mental health problems, such as Gaspar, were treated kindly by people in Bidau and had supportive kin and neighbours. Some families shared the responsibility of caring for children with disabilities, such as the family who incorporated a child with Down's syndrome into their household. Alberto emphasised the value of friendship, especially in light of the loss he had felt since several of his friends had died. Teresinha stressed that the support of kin and friends had comforted her after the deaths of her children, and Teresinha herself played a pivotal role in her kin group by extending much support to many of her relatives. While people found the financial obligations towards kin burdensome, some, including Madalena, relied on the monetary support that relatives and friends provided. For health problems, residents also relied on the assistance of a local nurse and a traditional healer rather than visiting a hospital or clinic.

The social support provided in response to experiences of suffering strengthened bonds between residents, so that, despite all that they had suffered, Bidau people were able to go about their daily lives – washing plates in the early morning, looking for food, sweeping their gardens, working, chatting under trees, playing guitars, taking afternoon siestas, going for late afternoon walks around the neighbourhood, joking with the children and watching television. Rather than focusing on their individual suffering, residents expressed outward needs to rebuild their houses, educate their children and develop the economy of the country. Instead of pursuing individual goals, they concentrated on collective goals. Significantly, they showed their capacity and determination to participate in rituals. This was not only important for those who had experienced delays in life cycle rituals due to the conflict, but for the whole village, because ritual life and the related exchange obligations were central to the repair of the social fabric in Bidau.

## PART TWO: LIFE CYCLE RITUALS

The second part of this thesis, focusing on life cycle rituals, illustrates not only how violence disrupts rites of passage, but also shows the ability and determination of Bidau residents to organise rituals despite all that they have suffered. The rituals surrounding marriage and death often reveal points of disagreement between kin; yet these same rituals have the potential to repair strained, and perhaps even ruptured, social bonds.

Chapter 5, in which I analyse a wedding delayed by the 1999 violence, details the complexities of exchange between wife-givers and wife-takers and the ritualisation of marriage. Some of the marriage events bring social interaction in public spaces (e.g. church services), others in private spaces (e.g. initial transactions) and others in intermediate spaces (e.g. bridewealth negotiations and *festas*). In Chapter 6, I examine funerary practices and describe rituals that mark major occasions for mourning. These rituals bring the kin group of the deceased and other mourners together in public spaces (e.g. the procession and burial, two rituals of placing flowers on the grave, and the ritual removal of black clothing), private spaces (e.g. the viewing of the corpse) and intermediate spaces (e.g. meals for mourners). Chapter 7 is built around an exegesis of a lamentation. This lamentation, which was performed after the death of Maria Soares, is not only a call to remember a grandmother and a social commentary about aspects of her life, but also details the exchanges between the descent group of the deceased and all that group's affines (both wife-givers and wife-takers).

Together these three chapters show how the strengthening of social ties through exchanges and interactions in public, private and intermediate spaces in marriage and funerary rituals can aid recovery after conflict. This leads into Part Three, which shows more generally how practices and activities in each of these three spaces provide opportunities for residents to reconstitute their social and physical worlds.

## CHAPTER 5: A WEDDING DELAYED

Because of the conflict in East Timor, we could not get married. It was also difficult because I was pregnant when the militia came to our village. (Filomena, Indonesian Period Settler, Bidau Motaklaran)

War ruptures ritual activity. Delays to rites of passage, though a less overt form of suffering than the deaths and destruction in Bidau, were setbacks that people had to overcome.<sup>1</sup> According to van Gennep:

“Marriage constitutes the most important of the transitions from one social category to another, because for at least one of the spouses it involves a change of family, clan, village or tribe, and sometimes the newly married couple even establish residence in a new house” (1960:116).

During turbulent times after the 1975 Indonesian invasion, some couples, such as Alberto and Luisa, organised their own weddings, which were simple private events conducted without the support of many kin and for which negotiations for *barlake* (T) (bridewealth) were set aside.<sup>2</sup> The wedding plans of other couples, such as Filomena and José, were abruptly interrupted at the height of the 1999 violence. Their wedding, which was initially postponed because of the conflict during 1999 and later because of protracted negotiations for *barlake*, eventually took place in 2001.

The marriage of Filomena and José highlights difficulties that East Timorese experience in organising celebrations and rituals and demonstrates the ability and determination of East Timorese to mobilise and hold rituals despite adversities. It shows how marriages expand support networks by forming new alliances and reveals the intricate network of exchange relationships that operate between kin groups. It also reveals tensions faced by couples and other members of their kin groups. The social connecting and tensions are seen in pre-marriage negotiations between wife-givers and wife-takers conducted in the private and intermediate spaces of the homes of wife-

givers, wedding day ceremonies in the public space of churches and the intermediate spaces of gardens, and social formalities in private spaces following the marriage.

### **Kin groups come together**

Hicks (1978:88) reminds us of the need to record the indigenous terms for marriage. Caraubalo villagers, the Tetun speaking people in Viqueque district, whom Hicks studied, have five terms, which in different ways refer to the institution of “marriage.” Hicks (1978:88-91) discusses each of these terms – *hafoli* (T) (*halo* to make, *foli(n)* price), *habani* (T) (*halo* to make, *bani(n)* wife’s father), *hafen* (T) (*halo* to make, *fe’en* wife), *fetosá-umane* (*feto*, female, feminine, woman, girl, *sá(un)* free, permitted, secular; *u(ma)* house, *mane*, male, masculine, man). Hicks also discusses for each term the implications for relationships between groups and bridewealth transactions. Hicks (1978:88) points out that “the Tetum language has no generic term for ‘marriage,’ which would subsume them [the various terms] under a single classificatory rubric.” However, in Bidau, the most common word used for marriage and marrying was *kaben* (T), which was also one of the words used for spouse. For the weddings I attended in Bidau, the terms residents used for wife-givers, wife-takers, and some of the rituals associated with marriage negotiations were relayed to me in Tetun, even for weddings of people from other ethnolinguistic groups.

The main wedding discussed in this chapter – that of Filomena and José – involved Mambai on both sides. Accordingly, I draw on Traube’s study of the Mambai people to help analyse aspects of the marriage. At the same time, many of the younger informants, who engaged in lengthy discussions with me about this wedding, although having affiliations with Mambai, did not speak Mambai, nor were they familiar with Mambai traditions. They sometimes responded to my questions by telling me what they knew to be true for any marriage, irrespective of ethnic affiliations. Generally, I found

that younger people whose parents neither maintained links to, nor conducted rituals at, *umaluliks* (sacred houses), were not as well versed in traditional practices as younger people whose parents had. Even then, it was mostly older people who were most knowledgeable about their traditions.

The arrangements and rituals of marriage call kin groups together. For Mambai, the ritual obligations are tied to the history and the regulations associated with a particular sacred house, what Traube (1986:70) refers to as a “cult house.” “At marriage a woman is formally presented to her husband’s cult house and ‘enters the cult of the man,’ taking on the observances specific to his group” (Traube 1986:72). Although some of the Mambai in Bidau have not maintained the upkeep of a sacred house in their place of origin, they consider the traditions linked to their sacred houses to be vital, and these traditions guide the proceedings for marriage and mortuary rituals.

Van Gennep reminds us that the stages of marriage – especially the major one, the betrothal – have significant economic aspects (1960:139). In Bidau, the acts of an economic nature (the negotiations for bridewealth, the prestations and the counter-prestations) are enmeshed within the rites of incorporation. Bridewealth was an important component of all Bidau marriages, irrespective of the ethnolinguistic groups to which the man and woman belonged, and even for marriages that were exogamous, as many in Bidau were. Bidau residents continued to follow virilocal patterns of residence after marriage, though there were a few exceptions. Although there were rules for marriage, these were sometimes applied with flexibility. When a marriage was being contracted without prior established links, the wife-givers and wife-takers were wary. They endeavoured to negotiate favourable transactions in terms of economics and social relationships, while at the same time assessing the possibility for cultivating future

alliances. Several residents commented that “East Timorese do much talking about these matters,” the reference being to the process for bridewealth negotiations.

For all marriages that were conducted in Bidau, the most important groups involved the wife-givers and wife-takers who face each other directly in negotiations. A marriage does not only join the two individuals in a union, but also merges the man’s group and the woman’s group in mutual obligations stretching over many years. When a person dies, obligations are demanded from a wider network of kin, including the deceased’s descent group and all affines, be they wife-takers or wife-givers. The deceased’s family is wife-takers to its wife-giving groups and wife-givers to its wife-taking groups. Affines are called upon to contribute to mortuary rituals by providing goods, cash and their labour. Although they do not have may have such a prominent role in marriages, they may nevertheless be involved. For the Mambai marriage detailed in this chapter, both consanguines and affines were engaged in the negotiations and preparations. Those I observed who were very active included the bride’s mother, eldest brother, eldest brother’s wife, eldest sister, mother’s younger brother, and mother’s sisters, and the groom’s parents and father’s brothers.

Discussions with a number of residents, including Alberto and Madalena, revealed that people expected the father of the groom, the father’s brothers and the groom’s married elder brothers to contribute towards bridewealth. However, residents also mentioned that sometimes a close maternal or paternal aunt of the groom or an unmarried brother, if he had a source of income, gave contributions towards the bridewealth required. If those expected to contribute did not have material resources, as was the case with some people after the 1999 conflict, there were plenty of opportunities for them to render their services, thereby exhibiting their generosity and willingness to assist. For example, they could attend the various ceremonies associated



with a marriage, and men could help with preparations, such as slaughtering animals for the wedding feast or setting up the tarpaulins and collecting chairs for the wedding party, while women could assist with the decorations for the church and wedding venue as well as cooking for the premarital ceremonies and on the wedding day. If relatives did not make any attempt to help, they could jeopardize their prospects for future support. Even if agnates were unable to give money or goods on a particular occasion, it did not mean that their kin group would not call on them in the future to contribute to other ritual obligations. If friends and neighbours offered assistance, it more than likely guaranteed them an invitation to the social event and maintained networks on which they could rely in times of future need.

*A change of plans: one wedding or another*

In January 2001, I was expecting to attend the wedding of Manuel, who was an Indonesian Period Settler and a member of the Mambai group. I had been told it was imminent, but I discovered that it had been postponed. However, plans for the marriage of his sister Filomena were underway. At that stage Manuel's girlfriend, Helena, was living in a different village in Dili with her sisters. Initially, members of his family were vague about the reasons for the change of plans. Manuel did not elaborate, nor did he seem disappointed that his wedding schedule had been altered. It became clear that his mother Aurora, a widow, would not consent to his marriage until he was "prepared," which meant having secure employment and sufficient means to support a family. In an interview with Aurora on 3 April 2001, she made the following comments:

I agree with Manuel getting married next year, but they [Manuel and his girlfriend] should get their own jobs. In East Timor, if a man wants to get married, he should prepare everything for getting married and for setting up a family. The man should get a good job and save money to be able to look after a family. The man and woman should prepare everything for the wedding day.

Aurora insisted that Manuel needed to wait until he was more established.

Some Bidau residents initially entered a “traditional marriage” and delayed a church wedding for several years. The postponement gave time to accumulate *barlake* and other resources to hold a *festa* (T) (party). By April 2001, Manuel had started living virilocally with Helena, even though no transactions had been entered into for *barlake*. His relationship was referred to by others in Bidau as a “traditional marriage,” though this term more commonly referred to a relationship in which bridewealth negotiations had at least been discussed between wife-givers and wife-takers.<sup>3</sup> According to Hicks’ categories, if negotiations had been initiated for bridewealth, their relationship would have been termed *hafoli* (T) (to make the bridewealth); however, that term was not used in Bidau.

Before Helena could be incorporated into the household of Aurora, Manuel had to organise sleeping quarters for Helena and himself as Aurora’s house contained insufficient bedrooms. Over several weeks, he constructed a separate brick bedroom at the back of the property adjoining the kitchen. He made this room an attractive space by tiling the floor and painting the outside. He and Helena used the communal bathroom and toilet facilities located outside the house. As in the case of Manuel and Helena, most couples in Bidau still practise virilocal residence and live with the husband’s family after marriage.

*Beyond the courtship: Filomena and José*

For Filomena’s marriage, there was much negotiation and planning, which had to be finalised before the wedding plans could be confirmed. Discussions over both the date for the Nuptial Mass and negotiations for bridewealth had to be settled. The initial date proposed for Filomena’s church wedding and *festa* was March 2001, which was later revised to April 2001, then May 2001, and the wedding eventually took place on 9 June

2001. Filomena was 26 years old when I interviewed her on 1 June 2001 about her impending marriage. She was residing virilocally with José's parents at that time, but returned for short intervals to Bidau, staying with Aurora's household.

Filomena, who had an infectious laugh and enjoyed mischievous banter, described her first encounter with José and told me that their relationship developed when she was at *Sekolah Menengah Atas* (I) (Senior High School). She disclosed that her consanguines did not deem José to be a suitable suitor because he had only completed *Sekolah Menengah Pertama* (I) (Junior High School). After commencing a relationship with José, she became engaged to another man. After a short period, she terminated this engagement. Later she searched for José, who had been distressed by being cast aside, to tell him she had broken her engagement. She convinced him that she was available to resume their relationship. Discussing her previous fiancé, she divulged that "the man was too silent, he was not a good partner. He came to introduce himself to my mother but he was not good – he was the silent type."

In an interview with José two months before his wedding, he gave me an account of how he met Filomena and the initial rejection by her family. He met her at an anniversary party in 1995, where they danced together, but at the time, he did not consider that any special relationship between them would develop. A few days after that party, José met Filomena again when she caught a taxi of which he was the driver. This became a regular arrangement with Filomena taking José's taxi to and from school every day. These short trips provided an opportunity for them to become better acquainted. José narrated aspects of their courtship and his initial difficulties with Filomena's nuclear family:

They rejected me at the beginning of our relationship because I did not have a regular job. When I first met Filomena, I was helping a friend by driving his taxi. Filomena's mother thought that I could not set up a family if I did not have a good job. My parents' reaction to their attitude was that if

Filomena's family rejected me, they [my parents] would also reject Filomena. Filomena wanted to know what I was going to do if the problems continued. My response was that it did not matter to me if her family did not accept me.

When I interviewed José, he was 25 years old and unemployed.<sup>4</sup> He told me about some of the problems he experienced early in his relationship with Filomena:

A short time after our relationship started one of Manuel's friends asked Filomena's mother for permission to become engaged to Filomena. Filomena's cousin confirmed this story and told me that the man was Filomena's fiancé. When I found out about this, I went to Tekkibae<sup>5</sup> for one month just to get her out of my mind. Prior to that, I had been living in Dili. I knew that in our culture when a man and woman were engaged, it meant they were going to get married. After one month in Tekkibae, I went to Dili to watch a friend playing in a football match. While I was in Dili, Filomena came to look for me to tell me that she was no longer engaged. After some discussions, we decided to resume our relationship. We had a baby girl, Mena, who was born on 9 October 1999 in Dili. Filomena's family wanted to know my intentions in relation to supporting Filomena and Mena. I confirmed that I would be responsible for the baby and mother. Her family had accepted me by this stage. When Filomena's family had learned she was pregnant, her older brother and sister-in-law visited my parents to tell them this news.

If Filomena's kin had not eventually accepted José, at least superficially, there could have been repercussions, such as those that other families in Bidau Motaklaran had experienced. A Tetun man in Bidau discussed difficulties that arose when his daughter had a child and her boyfriend's family rejected her. The couple continued their relationship, but no marriage negotiations were entered into and the daughter and child continued to reside with her parents.

Filomena said that some people gossiped about her because she had a baby before she was officially married in the church. Her mother warned her that because she already had a child she would have to forsake the idea of having a beautiful wedding dress and settle for a simple one. Aurora finally agreed that Filomena and José could marry when Filomena was pregnant for the second time. It would have been shameful if

she did not marry. Aurora would have wanted to ensure that José faced up to the responsibilities and financial obligations of caring for Filomena and their offspring.

Many couples in Bidau were very open about their relationships and did not appear to be embarrassed about having children prior to a church wedding or prior to the couple living virilocally or uxorilocally. Perhaps one of the reasons why people did not feel shame about having children before they married in the church was because they continued to follow systems for traditional marriages. Formerly, acceptable practices for couples included sleeping together to show their intention to marry (Forman 1980:159), consummating a marriage after bridewealth negotiations had been settled, or consummating a marriage after the first prestation had been made by the wife-takers to the wife-givers (Hicks 1976:89-97; Lazarowitz 1980:110). Hicks (1976:86) mentions that children of unmarried women are not bastards and that illegitimacy is unknown. “Children born out of wedlock become the legal children of their mothers’ fathers or mothers’ brothers. If their mother later marries, they are then adopted by her husband” (Hicks 1976:86). Some women in “traditional marriages” did not mention any plans they had for a future church ceremony. However, at many church weddings, the women getting married were in the later stages of their pregnancies, indicating that for the couples and their kin groups it was important to have this ceremony prior to the birth of the baby.

In the past, there was strong emphasis placed on the woman being a virgin at the time of her marriage. Teresinha, the woman who had buried eight of her children, stressed that, when she was growing up, being a virgin prior to marriage was important for a woman. Teresinha had had an arranged marriage. She had been called upon to replace a cousin who had died and had become the wife of the deceased’s widower. When she was growing up it was common for women to have no choice about their

future partner.<sup>6</sup> The custom in Baukau, where she married in the late 1950s, was for kin to inspect the bed for signs of blood after the marriage had been consummated. In her case, her sister-in-law and father-in-law inspected the matrimonial bed the day after her wedding to look for evidence that she was a virgin. Teresinha was not embarrassed about this practice and said that at the time it was part of the marriage customs. She said that nowadays kin no longer inspected bed sheets after the wedding night. She stated that her children had not wanted this tradition to continue and the issue of the woman's virginity in East Timor was now a private matter between the bride and groom.

Although there appeared to be a relaxed attitude towards women not being virgins before a church ceremony, there was some evidence of shame in some cases. Luisa, when asked what would happen if one of her daughters got pregnant before she married in church, responded that Alberto would be very angry. Alberto's friend, Eduardo, rolled his eyes in a matter of fact way the day one of his sons was getting married in the church and told me that the girl was already pregnant. That wedding was a quiet affair held mid-week in contrast to an extravagant event his kin hosted when his daughter, who was not pregnant, married on a Saturday. After Helena moved in with Aurora's household as Manuel's traditional wife and prior to their church wedding, she became pregnant. I observed that, at another wedding, Helena remained inside the house where the *festa* was being held and did not mingle with guests. This was unusual, because normally she would dance and enjoy herself to the full at such festivities. She stayed indoors more often. When, later in 2001, she and Manuel had a Nuptial Mass, she wore a light apricot coloured dress, in contrast to other brides, including many who were pregnant, who wore white.

Because of the militia violence during 1999, Filomena and José not only had to delay their wedding, but they also suffered the disappointment of not being able to have

their first baby baptised a few months after birth as is normally the case. Throughout 1999, they moved between two households, living with Aurora's household in the early months of the year and then spending intervals with the parents of José. Any plans for a wedding had to be aborted because of violent attacks by militia on villages throughout the country. José gave me his account of what they experienced in 1999.

Filomena came to live here [Tekkibae] with my family after the election on 30 August 1999. Our baby, however, was born back at Filomena's house in Bidau Motaklaran. We planned the wedding before the election in 1999, but we wondered how we would celebrate the party because there were many militia in Tekkibae and Bidau Motaklaran. On 20 September 1999, InterFET arrived in East Timor. On 25 September, militia came from Atambua and attacked Tekkibae. I was in the mountains in Fatumean. Filomena was here [Tekkibae] with my brother. When the militia attacked, people shouted and Filomena ran away; she jumped over the fence and followed me to Fatumean.

Filomena discussed her recollections of the events. "Because of the situation with the militia, everything was a problem at the time. We could not get married and have a celebration." She was separated from most of her kin group. Her mother Aurora and older sister Lola fled with the rest of their household to Atapupu and Kupang, West Timor. During this very turbulent time, Filomena remained in Tekkibae with José's brother. When it was almost time to give birth, she moved back to her mother's house in Bidau Motaklaran and gave birth to her first child, Mena, on 9 October 1999, with the support of only one aunt.

Before their wedding in 2001, Filomena and José spent long periods living in Tekkibae, approximately 30 minutes drive from Dili in the district of Liquica, but would return to live with Aurora's household for brief intervals. A few weeks prior to their wedding, they stayed with Aurora's household because Mena had contracted malaria and needed to be close to Dili hospital to access medical treatment.

*Household of the wife-givers*

The categories of wife-givers and wife-takers have been widely examined in the anthropological literature in marriage and funeral rituals. In East Timor the “*fetosá* denotes the wife-taking lineage; the *umane*, the wife-giving lineage” (Hicks 1978:88). In some districts, whole villages are involved in marriage transactions. Clamagirand (1980:141-145) explores marriage alliances of the Ema of Timor in terms of a core house – the minimal social unit of Ema society. The group of core houses are classified as either wife-givers (*uma mane*: “masculine houses,” that is, core houses from which brothers may choose their wives) or wife-takers (*mane heu*: “new men,” that is, core houses into which sisters may marry). In Bidau, the wife-givers were referred to as *umane* (T) (a compound of *uma*, house, and *mane*, man) and wife-takers were referred to as *fetosaa* (T) (a compound of *feto*, woman, and *saa*, permitted, free) or *mane-foun* (T) (new men). For “wife-givers”, Traube (1986:84, 257) uses the term *umaena*, which she states could “be described as a metathesis of Tetum *umane*,” and for wife-takers, she uses the Mambai term *maen-heua*, a literal translation of the Tetun *mane-foun*.

Aurora, who was 60 years old in 2001, was born in Dili and spent her early childhood in the neighbouring village of Bidau Lcidere. She was Mambai, as was her late husband, who was born in Ermera and died in 1996 from sickness. Aurora had been living in Bidau Motaklaran since 1980. She has three sons (including Manuel) and two daughters, Filomena being the youngest, Lola the eldest. During the fighting in 1999, Aurora’s house escaped destruction or damage by militia. The family managed to secure their household contents, and nothing was stolen because they had good relations with the militia. In addition, one of their next-door neighbours was an informer during Indonesian rule, and it was in this neighbour’s interests to keep on good terms with Aurora and her family. Although the informer moved to Kupang, members of his kin



group returned to live next door to Aurora. Had the neighbours destroyed Aurora's house, they would not have been welcome to return. In February 2001, there were 14 people residing in Aurora's household, including Filomena, José and Mena, who were staying there temporarily at the time. Members of the household included Aurora, Aurora's oldest son Chico, his wife, their two daughters, Lola, her husband, their daughter, their son, Manuel, Filomena, José, Mena and Aurora's youngest son, aged 23 years.

Filomena's kin agreed that she would follow a virilocal pattern of residence after she married even though some were upset about this decision because they would miss her. They felt that they had to follow what they regarded to be an important East Timorese tradition even though Filomena's move caused them sadness. Three weeks before the wedding, several women from Filomena's kin group, including her maternal aunts, Lola and Chico's wife, were sitting in Aurora's garden in Bidau, visibly upset and weeping because Filomena and her daughter Mena were being incorporated into the household of José's parents. Aurora endeavoured to comfort the women and told them not to be sad because José's parents should now be considered as Filomena's parents. Filomena's sister Lola agreed that the couple should move permanently to Tekkibae, but said that she would miss Filomena very much when she left. Lola did not care whether José was good or bad, but believed that it was crucial for them to get married because they already had a child. The marriage meant not only that Filomena would reside permanently with José's parents, but also that she would take on obligations to the wife-takers group. In addition, she would continue to have some obligations to her own kin group.

Although many residents in Bidau followed a virilocal pattern of residence, there were some exceptions. One exception was if the wife was an only daughter or the wife's

kin had a higher status and believed it was a better option for their daughter and her husband to remain within their household rather than move in with a poorer family.<sup>7</sup> In some other cases, the husband had to reside with the wife-givers until the wife-takers had paid bridewealth in full. A third exception was if parents required their eldest daughter to reside and care for them in their home, even after she had married. One of my neighbours told me he moved in with his wife's kin because they were old and they would be sad if their daughter left. The situation of Filomena's sister Lola appeared to be of this third type of exception, so while Filomena had to leave Aurora's household to live with the kin of her husband, Lola's husband moved into Aurora's household.

The traditional virilocal pattern of residence was also changed by the 1999 violence and its aftermath. Because of the destruction of many houses after the announcement of the results of the UN-sponsored plebiscite, people lived where they could upon their return. Over time, as houses were reconstructed, it became more possible for people to make choices about where they lived. However, not all young couples were happy about living with one or the other's parents. In 2001, a few were planning to live neolocally by building their own houses in different areas of Dili.

José preferred to reside in Dili, because he found Tekkibae too quiet and had many friends in the city, but he stated that this was not an option for him after his wedding because he had no accommodation there. His father owned a vacant block of land in Dili, but if he had offered this property to José, it is unlikely that José would have had the financial means to build a house on it.

Apart from following the pattern of virilocal residence, another possible reason why Filomena had to move was that Aurora did not like José at the time of the wedding. Aurora is a strong woman with firm opinions and all decisions in her family require her approval. Asked about her views on the wedding of Filomena and José, she replied:

I am very happy that they are getting married because they already have a baby. They cannot receive communion now, but when they get married they can receive communion and Mena can be baptised. They live in Tekkibae because José's parents wanted them to do so. Better to live there so José's parents can encourage him to be responsible for his family. José is a bit naughty, always getting into fights so his family will encourage him to be responsible. José's father had a good position when the Indonesians were here so he will be able to encourage José to be responsible. José is the oldest child. I will miss Filomena just a little since she is living in Tekkibae. I should understand now they are engaged. There is no way they can live here because I do not like José, as he is a troublemaker.

These comments shed some light on the fact that Aurora did not look at all happy during the wedding. Reflecting on her own marriage, Aurora recalled:

I got married during the conflict in 1975. At the time, Fretilin forced the priest to marry us. We also exchanged gifts. The man's family gave my family a buffalo and money.

As for Filomena and José, conflict had impacted on the wedding of Aurora and her husband.

By early April 2001, the wife-givers and wife-takers had entered into formal negotiations for bridewealth and proposed a date for the wedding. Filomena's older brother Chico supported his mother and took a leading role in the negotiations. The date they agreed upon was suggested to the parish priest who had the final say.<sup>8</sup> Because of this protocol, they did not know the exact time for the Nuptial Mass until a few days beforehand. There were no written invitations, in contrast to other more elaborate weddings, for which printed cards were distributed. A family member invited me verbally to Filomena's wedding.

#### *Household of the wife-takers*

In the case of Filomena and José's relationship, prior to the negotiations for *barlake*, the wife-givers and the wife-takers were not well acquainted. Aurora only met José's parents five months before the wedding. Because of the conflict, the two kin groups did not gather when Mena was born as José's parents had fled to West Timor. José's father

was born in Tekkibae and, like Aurora, was Mambai, but from a different lineage. He said that the residents in the village of Tekkibae were Mambai, whereas in other parts of Liquica district, including the town of Liquica where his wife had been born, people belonged the Tokodede ethnolinguistic group.

José's parents married during the Indonesian occupation in 1981. Due to the difficulties of living under the close gaze of the Indonesian military, his father said that they only had a church ceremony and did not celebrate the event with a *festa*. José's father recounted that the amount of bridewealth his kin had to pay to the wife-givers was Rp.700,000 and ten goats, though these were paid four years after he married.

For Jose's marriage, his parents had had trouble with the wife-givers when they initially expressed concern that he was not a suitable partner for Filomena. Yet, when the news of Filomena's pregnancy was disclosed to José's mother, she remained calm and voiced the view that José would have to be responsible for his actions. José's mother recounted the reactions she had when she was presented with this information:

I was all right. I was not shocked. I welcomed them [Filomena's relatives] and then Filomena's sister-in-law said, "I would like to tell you something, but you are alone. I am going to tell you when your husband comes." I said, "It is o.k., you can tell me." Filomena's sister-in-law said that Filomena was sick. They took her to hospital and the doctor said she was pregnant. When Filomena's relatives asked Filomena who was the father of the baby, she told them it was José. My response was that it was o.k. if Filomena is already pregnant.

José's mother talked about the difficulty of raising sufficient money for bridewealth payments and the increased daily living expenses that would come with the incorporation of Filomena and Mena into their household. José's father had had a responsible well-paid job during the Indonesian administration, but like many East Timorese of his age, he was now unemployed and his social position in Tekkibae was lowered due to the loss of his job. In addition, militia had stolen all the contents of their house during 1999.

## Marriage rituals

Marriage rituals included *tuku odamatan* (T) (get to know; literally: knock at the door), *barlake* negotiations, *bolu maun alin* (T) (calling brothers and sisters), *hatama sasán* (T) (putting things in), the Nuptial Mass, the *festa* and a formal visit by representatives of the wife-givers to the house of the wife-takers.

The following extract from one my meetings with Filomena just prior to her wedding notes difficulties she experienced, some details of *barlake*, plans for the wedding ceremony and her personal beliefs and hopes in relation to the forthcoming wedding:

- Ethnographer: What was the most difficult thing about the conflict in 1999 interrupting your wedding plans?
- Filomena: Because of the conflict in East Timor, we could not get married. It was also difficult because I was heavily pregnant when the militia came to our village.
- Ethnographer: What gifts did José's family have to give your family towards the wedding?
- Filomena: The first gift according to our culture from José's family is known as *bee manas* (T) (hot water) which is symbolic of water from the womb of the mother. This payment of Rp.500,000 (A\$100), beer and wine was given by his parents to my family when they first met. When they brought the birth certificate, they also gave Rp.2,000,000 (A\$400).
- Ethnographer: Did your family give any gifts in return to José's family?
- Filomena: No, only José's family gave money and gifts. My family did not present José's family with anything.
- Ethnographer: Who pays for the expenses of putting on the *festa*?
- Filomena: José's parents and my two brothers and sister also contribute towards the costs.
- Ethnographer: How much does a Timorese wedding usually cost?
- Filomena: More than Rp.10,000,000 (A\$2,000). Both families give money towards the cost of the wedding.
- Ethnographer: Who will prepare the food and do the cooking for the *festa*?
- Filomena: Members of both families. My sister Lola and our sister-in-law (BW) [Chico's wife] will supervise the cooking.
- Ethnographer: Who will make the speeches at the wedding?
- Filomena: José's father and my uncle (MB-).

- Ethnographer: How many people will be at the wedding?  
 Filomena: People will be coming from my family and from José's family. I am not sure of the numbers.
- Ethnographer: Can you tell me what is important about getting married?  
 Filomena: I feel happy that I will receive the graces and blessings from God and I will be able to receive communion when I go to Mass.
- Ethnographer: Could you describe the style of your dress for your wedding day?  
 Filomena: I want to wear whatever I like. I prefer a beautiful dress. I am going to wear a white dress.
- Ethnographer: How do you feel about living in Tekkibae once you are married?  
 Filomena: I am a little bit happy, a little bit sad.
- Ethnographer: After getting married how long will you live with José's family?  
 Filomena: Forever.
- Ethnographer: In Australia, the couple have a honeymoon. That is they go on a holiday. Do you do anything like that?  
 Filomena: We have a holiday, but we will stay at home. Some people during Indonesian times went away.
- Ethnographer: Do you want to say anything else about your wedding?  
 Filomena: I am very happy because after our wedding our daughter can be baptised.

*Ritual before the wedding: "knock at the door"*

A small party is hosted by the wife-givers when the prospective wife-takers "knock at the door" to formally seek permission for the betrothal of the bride to be. This is the first formal step when a marriage is being considered. In writing about the Tetun of Viqueque, Hicks (1976:56-66) describes the architecture of the Tetun house with one representation of the house being the body of a human being. The house also embodies the complementary contrast between male and female. Hicks argues that the knock on the door ritual carries the idea of the wife-takers entering "the womb of the house" of the wife-givers, with connotations of the womb from which the wife was born (1976:89). Van Gennep's analysis of rites of passage identifies the gateway and door as the boundaries "between the foreign and domestic worlds," such that when residents

cross these thresholds they unite themselves with a new world. To cross the threshold is an important rite in marriage and funeral ceremonies, and as van Gennep argues, are rites of preparation for union (1960:21).

The “knock at the door” is an occasion for the two parties to become better acquainted and to conduct formal discussions to decide whether a marriage will be contracted, and if so, negotiate the amount for bridewealth. José’s kin travelled to Bidau Motaklaran for this occasion five months prior to the wedding. Traditionally, at this gathering, the wife-givers are obliged to offer betel nut and betel pepper to the potential wife-takers. However, in Dili, drinks of tea and coffee have, in some instances, replaced these offerings. Sometimes the wife-takers hand around packets of cigarettes. In the case of Filomena and José, this party confirmed that there would be a wedding, but did not include details such as setting a date.

At the “knock at the door,” José’s kin gave the first prestation to the wife-givers. This prestation and subsequent counter-prestations are situated in and help constitute the wider social context of the alliance between wife-givers and wife-takers. Mauss (1967 [1954]), in an analysis of the gift, uses the term “total prestations” for the overall system of gift-giving and reciprocity, which includes exchange of a range of goods and services extending beyond things of economic value. Reciprocity does not necessarily mean equality. In the prestations and counter-prestations that take place during marriage negotiations between the wife-givers and the wife-takers in East Timor, the value of the prestations from the wife-takers is always higher than those from the wife-givers.

On 19 April 2001, José’s mother offered her account of the preliminary marriage negotiations:

In East Timorese culture, we have a term “to get to know” (*tuku odamatan*). Our family should get to know the woman’s family. We went there [Bidau Motaklaran] and took Rp.600,000 (A\$120), one goat and one carton of beer. This was about five months before the wedding. At the time, this was just to

get to know each other, but we did not talk about when they were going to get married. We went there to get to know Filomena's family. Filomena's family said we had to give Rp.6,000,000 (A\$1,200), one goat and wine. On 18 February 2001, we again took Rp.2,000,000 (A\$400) and a goat with the wine.

Mauss (1967 [1954]:3) emphasises that "although the prestations and counter-prestations take place under a voluntary guise they are in essence strictly obligatory, and their sanctions private or open warfare." The exchange of goods for Mauss was more than an economic transaction; it was also a moral transaction, generating and preserving relationships between individuals and groups. By contributing to exchange obligations as a moral duty, Bidau residents showed respect towards their kin group and their willingness to form new alliances. It also helped ensure that they would find support in the future.

*Barlake negotiations – barlake leaves us poor*

Exchange relations are complex, and José's kin and Filomena's kin held different opinions about the *barlake* negotiations conducted, including what constituted a fair amount for bridewealth. When José's mother was asked her views on the transactions, she gave the following response:

*Barlake* is when we give something to the woman's family. *Barlake* is usually a gift of money or presents such as a gold chain from the man's family to the woman's family. When we took Rp.2,000,000 (A\$400) Filomena's family accepted that and we talked about the wedding day. Filomena's family did not give us anything. Actually, they have to give something to us. They have to give us *tais* (traditional woven cloths) and a pig.

A pair of *tais* given in marriage negotiations consists of *mane/feto* (T) (male/female) pieces.<sup>9</sup> Domestic pigs are not normally consumed as part of the ordinary diet; they are more often part of "feasting food" and are kept for ritual exchange. The gold chains are another component of gift giving in Dili, and some women proudly wore gold pendants,



especially on their wedding day.<sup>10</sup> Gold chains were not given as part of the prestations for Filomena and José's wedding.

José's mother explained the contribution that the wife-takers would make towards the cost of staging the *festa*, and the financial strain of hosting this party in addition to paying *barlake*.

The man's family contributes more than the woman's family [for the *festa*].  
The amount of Rp.2,000,000 (A\$400) is what we have to give.  
Rp.2,000,000 is a lot of money! We gave all our money. It makes us poor.

The wife-takers did indeed have trouble accumulating the *barlake*, and some months after José's wedding, they entered into a contract to sell a vacant property to the bride's brother Manuel. In the bridewealth negotiations, Aurora was adamant that the wife-givers would make no concessions, even though José's father had not only lost his position as a high-ranking civil servant, but also experienced other hardships, including the damage to his house and theft of personal possessions by militia. Aurora said that it was the East Timorese custom to give bridewealth, and José's kin group had to pay no matter what their circumstances. The man's family had to give money to the woman's family as compensation for everything the woman's parents had done in raising her, educating her and generally supporting her.<sup>11</sup>

The account given by Filomena's eldest sister Lola of the bridewealth for Filomena and José's marriage, conflicted in some details with Aurora's version. According to Lola, initially the wife-givers asked for Rp.7,000,000 (A\$1,400), but the wife-takers would not consent to this. Because the total amount requested was not paid, the wife-givers did not give a pig and *tais* to the wife-takers. Lola indicated that her kin would give *tais*, a bag of rice and a pig before the wedding day, but these counter-prestations were withheld for some time, because Filomena was two months pregnant at

the time of the negotiations. When a woman is not pregnant, the wife-givers usually contribute a pig and *tais* to the wife-takers early in the marriage arrangements.

The procedures for payment of bridewealth for Filomena and José's marriage were in stark contrast to those followed for the marriage of Manuel and Helena later in 2001. While Aurora, as a wife-giver, did not want to make concessions to José's kin, she adopted a different attitude as a wife-taker when her son Manuel married. In that case, Manuel's kin group, as wife-takers, withheld the payment of *barlake* to Helena's parents, the wife-givers, for more than a year after marriage. Helena's parents did not attend the wedding, and it was only after the birth of the second child of Manuel and Helena that Manuel's kin group negotiated and gave cash to Helena's parents. Manuel believed that the wife-givers would demand his offspring if *barlake* was not paid. He, Aurora, and his older brother Chico, made the difficult distant journey to the district where Helena's parents lived to finalise payments for bridewealth.

Manuel's aspiration to build his own house reveals the tensions that many young East Timorese couples face between wanting their own financial independence and being bound by what seems to be a never-ending network of exchange obligations. Manuel disclosed that he wanted to set up his own home because of jealousy and friction between Helena and his female cognates. Approximately six months after his wedding, Manuel purchased a vacant block of land in Dili from José's father for US\$1,000. He entered into this transaction before his kin group paid *barlake* to Helena's kin. The cash payments that Manuel's kin received as wife-givers in respect of Filomena's wedding may have assisted Manuel to purchase the land. In addition, at the time he negotiated the deal, he and Helena had their own incomes, both having been in steady employment for several months.

A major expense in staging a wedding is the formality of holding a *festa*, which both wife-givers and wife-takers sponsor. As noted earlier, José's mother said the wife-takers contributed Rp.2,000,000 (A\$400) towards this. Manuel disclosed the amounts the wife-givers contributed – his share was Rp.2,000,000 (A\$400), his older brother Chico and his wife gave Rp.2,900,000 (A\$580), and Lola and her husband added Rp.3,000,000 (A\$600).

Other smaller expenses include the clothing for the bridal couple and a donation to the priest for presiding at the liturgy. The donation to the priest is made by the bride's kin, the groom's kin or in some cases is offered by the witnesses. For this wedding, an amount of Rp.20,000 (A\$4) was given by the witnesses. Filomena's wedding dress, which was ordered in Dili, cost Rp.250,000 (A\$50) and was paid for by the wife-givers.<sup>12</sup> José purchased a new suit and white gloves, a necessary part of the man's attire in Dili.

*Ritual before the wedding: celebration announcing the wedding to the wife-takers' kin*

Approximately three weeks before the wedding, José's parents hosted a party for their kin group involving agnates and affines in Tekkibae. This party, which involved the slaughter of a buffalo, was to announce to José's kin group that his wedding was forthcoming and to request contributions towards the bridewealth from José's father's brothers. Filomena attended, and her attendance deviated from Timorese custom. This event is more commonly a smaller affair, which only involves the bridegroom's kin and is celebrated with snacks, such as fried bananas, peanuts and a few drinks.

*Ritual before the wedding: "putting things in"*

On Thursday, 7 June 2001, two days before the wedding, members of both kin groups gathered at the house of the wife-givers in Bidau Motaklaran for an event known as *hatama sasán*, which can be glossed as "putting things in." The atmosphere in the

garden was one of excited chaos as kin brought their contributions of squealing pigs, bleating goats, scrawny chickens, cartons of eggs and other foodstuffs for transportation to Tekkibae in readiness for the *festa*. Filomena, excitedly chatting to relatives, was the centre of attention wearing a new dress. Throughout the afternoon, the wife-givers offered drinks and snacks to the attendees before the gathering disbanded to make their way to their allotted vehicles for the trip to Tekkibae. A bus had been hired, and other vehicles were available to transport people, animals and goods.

In the case of Filomena and José, the *hatama sasán* was a happy event, but this is not always the case. The *hatama sasán* is a significant public meeting between the two kin groups to call in contributions for the wedding feast. It is a time when relationships can be strengthened or strained depending on what people give. If members of the kin groups do not bring an adequate offering, those hosting the wedding are disappointed and tempers can flare. Kin who do not meet their obligations may be gossiped about afterwards, bringing shame to their immediate families. However, being generous does not necessarily guarantee that reciprocal relations will follow when another wedding is held.

#### *Initial preparations for the festa*

Generally, a *festa* is held in the garden of the home of the wife-givers; however, for this wedding the garden of the wife-takers was deemed more appropriate.<sup>13</sup> This was for several reasons. Filomena's kin did not think they would have enough privacy, as their house was located near a canal facing one of the main roads. Another possible reason was that they wanted to deter some of the local youth in Bidau from attending and thus restrict numbers and costs. The mother of José indicated that lack of space at the wife-givers' home and fear of violence were factors in the decision:

We decided to celebrate the party here [Tekkibae] because in Bidau Motaklaran there is not enough space and we are afraid of the problems there in relation to violence. We are not afraid of those whom we invite, but of the youth who always create problems. They can throw stones or fight if they get drunk.

Filomena's kin invited me to go to Tekkibae early on the wedding day to observe the cooking preparations for the *festa*. Many women, including consanguines, affines, neighbours and friends of both the wife-giving and wife-taking groups, had been working in the outside kitchen as early as 3.00 a.m.. A group of women were working at a large table chopping *karau* (T) (buffalo) meat. A whole buffalo was prepared, including the intestines and other portions of the animal displayed across the tables. Women were working in small groups around a meat grinder, making meatballs, cutting meat and preparing an assortment of meat dishes. Another group chopped vegetables at a different table. The food preparation continued in the outside kitchen throughout the morning and afternoon. A group of women washed up near the water tap, and another group, squatting outside in the open-air, fried food in large woks fuelled by firewood. The kitchen area was exclusively women's space. A few men worked in a separate area outside the kitchen where they cut the buffalo into smaller portions for cooking. For the feast, the women in the kitchen area did not join the main celebrations; they ate their meal in the kitchen space.

Though cooking was the major task on the wedding day, women had begun working for the celebration several weeks earlier. Lola, her sister-in-law and several aunts (MZ-) had been making paper floral arrangements. These decorated the aisles in the church as well as the banquet tables at the *festa*. There were also elaborate decorations where the bridal couple, parents and witnesses were to be seated. Above a lounge suite on a raised platform for the bridal party was a sign in Tetun made out of

blue coloured paper in a large heart shape, *La'ós ema nain rua maibe ida ona – Filomena ho José* (Not two people but now one – Filomena and José).

Some guests arrived five hours before the *festa* began. They chose their seats and patiently waited for the proceedings to commence. Frequently, guests arrive at *festas* long before the main activities start. They wait, chatting amongst themselves without being offered drinks or snacks. The seating arrangements did not reflect any hierarchical order for the guests. There were no rules that directed where people were to be seated, apart from the bridal couple, their parents and witnesses, who were all seated on a raised platform.

#### *The Nuptial Mass*

Church records were the official documentation of a wedding.<sup>14</sup> When militia went on their rampage, many official records for marriages were destroyed, as were academic records, and many other official records. On the 23 April 2001, José and his parents and Filomena and Aurora presented the couple's baptism certificates to the parish priest at St. Anthony's Catholic Church, located along the beachfront in Motael, Dili. This was the church where the Nuptial Mass would be held, and where the couple would sign the marriage registration book immediately following the ceremony. In the meeting with the priest, the couple expressed their desire to wed and the parents gave their consent in order that their names could be registered for the wedding. At church services during the next three weeks, their intention to marry was included in notices read to the congregation. The announcement included the names of the couple, their ages, their parents' names and the districts from which they came. To prepare for marriage, José and Filomena were required to attend lessons at the church twice a week for a few weeks prior to the church ceremony.

On the wedding day, the Nuptial Mass coincided with preparations for the *festa* in Tekkibae and began at 6.00 a.m. *Misa* (T) (Mass) was celebrated for two couples, Filomena and José and another couple whom they did not know. Both women dressed in white, and the other bride was noticeably pregnant. Filomena wore a long white beaded dress, lace gloves and a tiara in place of a veil. She carried a white fluffy fan and continuously fanned herself throughout the ceremony. José wore a light brown suit with artificial orange flowers in the lapel. Aurora was dressed in a traditional colourful *tais* worn in sarong style with a light blue embroidered blouse and a smaller *tais* draped across her chest. Filomena's eldest brother Chico, who was part of the formal bridal party, wore brown trousers and a light pink shirt without a tie. The witnesses, a married couple who were José's godparents, were formally dressed. The woman wore a long black velvet dress with long lace sleeves. The man's attire was a dark suit, business shirt and tie. José's mother dressed simply in a batik sarong with a blouse, and his father dressed casually in trousers and a shirt without a tie.

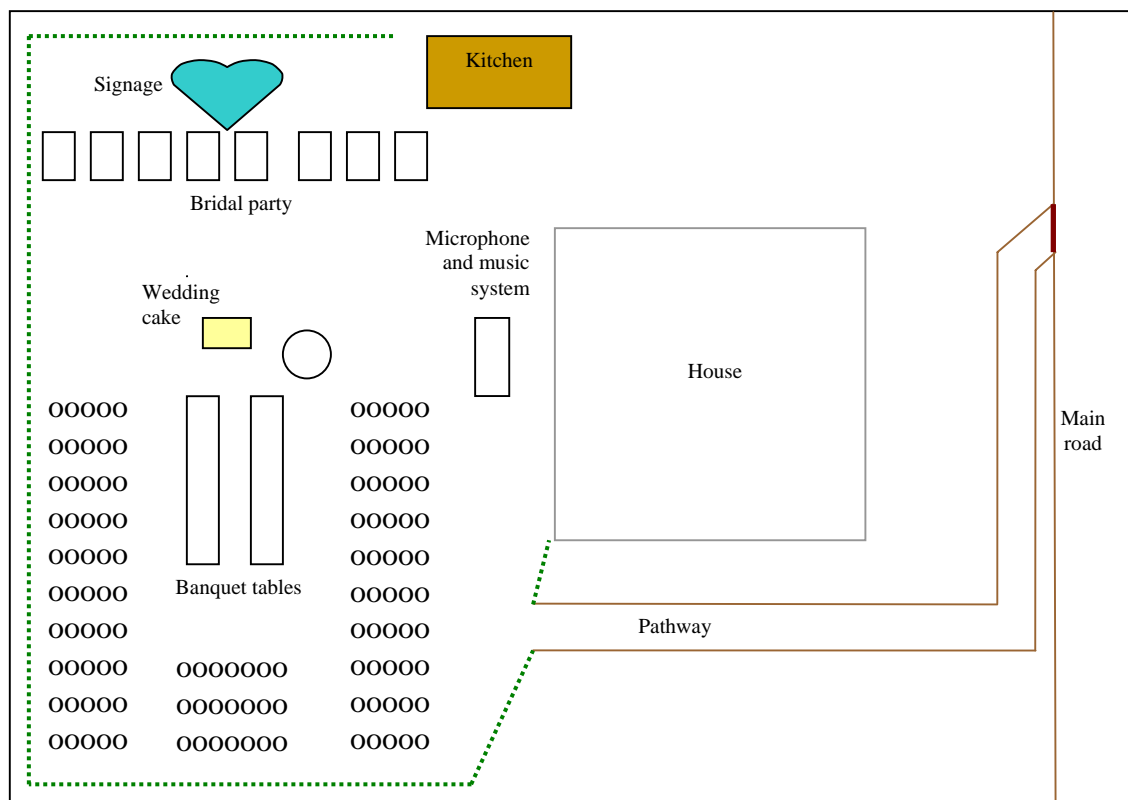
After the church ceremony, Filomena and José posed for photographs with different members of their kin groups on the front porch of the church. Having photographs taken was a special part of the proceedings. Many Timorese had lost precious photos during times of political unrest. Those who had managed to secure some photos kept them as prized treasures. In 2001, very few residents in Bidau could afford cameras, but gradually the number of people with cameras increased, and most couples could rely on kin or friends to photograph their special day.

### *The festa begins*

Most guests started arriving in Tekkibae for the *festa* around 1.00 p.m. Relatively few of those who came had attended the Nuptial Mass. For Bidau residents, there appeared to be very strong social obligations to send representatives to functions, but it did not seem

to offend the hosts if guests did not attend the Nuptial Mass and only attended the reception. As guests arrived, they were greeted by the two witnesses who stood at the entrance to the *festa* space. They handed wedding gifts to young women to take inside the house. Presents the couple could expect to receive from guests included glasses, cups, other household items and watches. Sometimes people preferred to give a cash amount, such as Rp.30,000 (A\$6), rather than buy a present.

The bounded space for the *festa* accentuates the social boundaries associated with the marriage. José's kin had cleared the back garden for the celebration in Tekkibae. A fence erected from palm fronds obscured the event from the prying eyes of neighbours, but did not prevent uninvited young people from peering at the proceedings during the afternoon. A tarpaulin covered this area, and hired plastic chairs were arranged in neat rows around two long rectangular tables for the banquet meal. Figure 6 shows the layout for the *festa*.



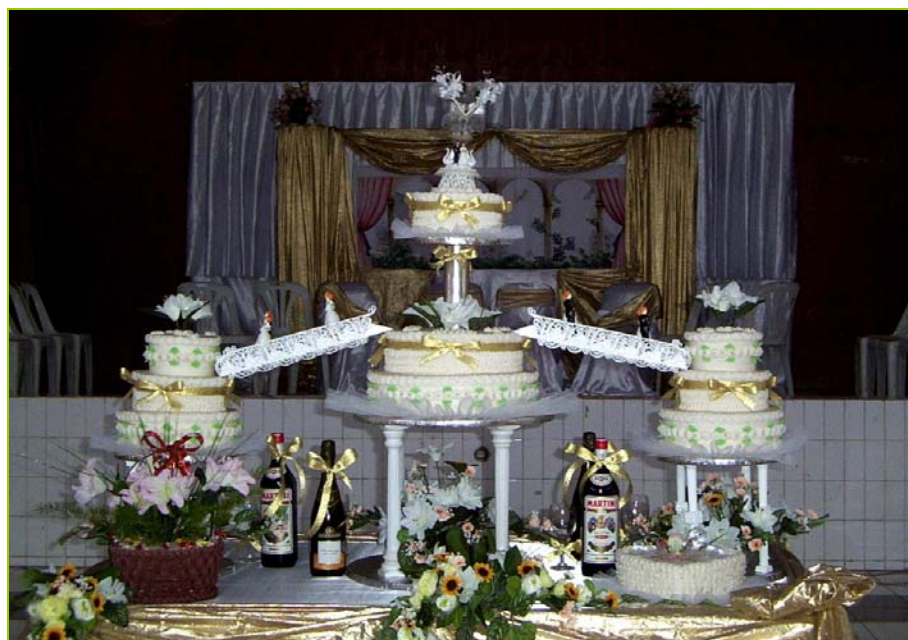
**Figure 6. Layout of a wedding *festa***



Wedding cakes are a central feature at Bidau weddings, and residents go to much expense and effort to create elaborate designs that they proudly display at *festas*. A wedding cake is made up of a number of smaller cakes, and the number of cakes and the overall design reflect the generosity of the hosts and their ability to provide a piece of cake for each person who attends the function. When Madalena reminisced about her wedding day for her second marriage, she would often revert to a story about her cake, which she remembered with great pride. At Filomena and José's wedding, between the banquet tables and seats for the bridal party, was a ten-tier wedding cake on a decorated wire stand. The assembled display stood approximately six feet high on the table. Each square tier was decorated with cream coloured icing finished with silver decorations. A plastic ornament of a bride and groom with beaming smiles and round rosy cheeks stood on the top tier. Filomena's sister-in-law, Chico's wife, prepared the mixture for the cake and, once it had been cooked at the local Chinese bakery, as was the practice in Bidau, she iced and decorated it.

A smaller round table covered with a white tablecloth and decorated with ribbons and colourful, paper flowers was erected next to the cake stand. On this table was a knife for the ceremony of cutting the cake, two wine glasses and a bottle of champagne for the bridal couple and bottles of Cinzano for decoration only. A microphone and music system was located to the side of this table. These elements highlighted the influence of Portuguese customs on the wedding ceremonies and a continuation of links to East Timor's colonial past. As these Portuguese customs were retained throughout Indonesian rule, whereas there were few Indonesian influences on Bidau wedding ceremonies, their retention may reflect a form of East Timorese resistance to their Indonesian occupiers.

The number of guests at a wedding adds status for the families involved and provides an opportunity to flaunt their wealth and social connections. East Timorese were keen to invite foreigners because their presence added status.<sup>15</sup> Most of the nine weddings I attended in 2001 and 2002 were preceded by written invitations delivered to households, and the celebrations were made very public in the hope of attracting many guests.<sup>16</sup> All of the weddings had a Nuptial Mass, six of the *festas* were held in the garden of the wife-givers, one *festa* – that of Filomena and José – was held in the garden of the wife-takers, and two were held in public spaces – one in the church hall in Bekora and one in the large hall of the former compound of CNRT in Dili.



**Plate 9. Wedding cakes are a centrepiece at *festas***

The approximately 150 guests who attended the *festa* for Filomena and José were adequate to make the occasion successful. However, this was not a large attendance, and many chairs were unoccupied. A few members of Filomena's family, including her brother-in-law, Lola's husband, were absent because they remained to guard the house in Bidau Motaklaran against burglary. Madalena, although a Mambai resident, did not attend. Informants thought that the 15 kilometre trip to Tekkibae from Bidau

Motaklaran might have been a deterrent for some people, especially those who did not own a vehicle and could not afford the *mikrolet* fare. As *festas* generally continue well into the night, some may have been fearful of travelling on the road back to Dili after dark. For José and Filomena's *festa*, the wife-givers and wife-takers may have welcomed the small attendance as it reduced the costs of catering.

After most of the guests had arrived, the bridal party joined the gathering and took their seats on the platform. The bridal party consisted of eight people – Filomena and José, the two witnesses, Filomena's mother and older brother Chico and José's parents. Guests then formed a line and proceeded to offer congratulations one by one to the bridal party. After this ritual concluded, José's father welcomed guests. His speech, in which he welcomed Filomena into their family, was followed by a speech by Aurora's younger brother, Ernesto. He thanked people for attending this happy event and included some humorous remarks about Filomena and José's courtship. The male witness then invited Filomena and José to stand next to the small table to cut the cake. After the bridal couple did so, certain rituals followed. The first was that both of them took a piece of cake and with interlinked arms fed the cake to the other. The second part of this ceremony involved the male witness opening the bottle of champagne and filling the two glasses. Filomena and José followed the same procedure as for the cake and, with their arms interlinked, put the glass bubbling with champagne to each other's lips. These cake and champagne rituals were always included in Bidau weddings and were normally followed by a prayer of blessing of the *festa* food. The couple would then walk around the *festa* space inviting guests to eat.

During the speeches, which were in Tetun, the hosts and their assistants began to deliver food to the tables. It was a buffet style meal featuring typical feasting foods, the types served at wedding and mortuary banquets. Roasted chickens were arranged

squatting with their heads and beaks intact as centrepieces surrounded by an assortment of fried vegetables including carrots and beans. Several meat dishes of buffalo and pork with fried potatoes were set on the tables. Other dishes included one made with eggs, diced vegetables and mayonnaise, an assortment of salads with lettuce, tomatoes and small onions, several containers of cooked white rice, and a special rice dish flavoured with tomato and small pieces of meat. A chocolate cake was designed in the shape of a basket and filled with three unpeeled apples, which were grabbed quickly when people were invited to eat. Another cake, decorated with blue and white icing, was in the shape of an opened Bible.

At the *fiesta* for Filomena and José, the process for guests to line up for food was much less orderly than is usually the case at *fiestas*. As usual, young women stood at the head of each table ready to pass plates with cutlery wrapped in serviettes to guests as they came to collect food, and there were small servings of drinking water and cans of drink at the other end of each table. However, at 3.00 p.m., when the guests were invited to take food, unruly children rushed to one table, grabbed plates and started shovelling food onto them. Adults stood behind them tugging at their shirts to scold them and attempted to make some room for others. People lined up in a more orderly fashion at the other table. Guests ate their meals with plates resting on their laps. Cans of beer and soft drink were served at room temperature. The hosts offered only a limited amount of alcohol to guests, and they secured the remainder of the drinks inside the house.

After the banquet, the tables were cleared, decorations removed and the tables taken away to make space for dancing. Music played from a tape deck set up near the house. The bride and groom performed the initial dance followed by the witnesses and other members of the bridal party who joined in the dancing. After that, anyone could dance. Between her supervisory duties in the kitchen, Lola made brief appearances on

the dance floor in her casual clothes, jokingly dancing with another woman much to Manuel's chagrin who thought guests would interpret her behaviour as disgraceful. Luisa and two of her daughters were among the guests, but Alberto remained in Bidau to guard their house. Dancing continued throughout the afternoon, but finished around 7.00 p.m., much earlier than for most *festas* in Bidau, which often continued until dawn the next day. *Festas* provided occasions for Bidau residents to participate in social exchange, opportunities to socialise with friends and enjoy hours of dancing, thereby reinforcing the feelings of membership within their social groups. These celebrations were also an important venue for people to make new acquaintances, and in particular, an avenue for unmarried young people to meet prospective partners.

*Post wedding visit by representatives of the wife-givers to the wife-takers*

After a wedding, representatives of the wife-givers usually visit the house of the wife-takers to show respect. In the case of the marriage of Filomena and José, the wife-givers were not treated with the correct etiquette. Ten days after the wedding, Aurora was annoyed because she and Lola had not been welcomed by José's parents who had remained sleeping when they had gone to Tekkibae to visit two days earlier. In addition to feeling insulted by José's parents, Aurora was aware that José and Filomena had been fighting a few days after the wedding, and this had upset her. Aurora was also still angry about the amount paid by the wife-takers for *barlake*. It took some time for Aurora to warm to the wife-takers.

*Birunbiru marriages*

No Birunbiru residents from Bidau attended Filomena and José's wedding. In general, few Birunbiru residents attended weddings of non-Birunbiru residents, and few non-Birunbiru residents attended weddings of Birunbiru residents. When Birunbiru residents engaged in rituals, they usually did so in their rural district where they had strong

concentrations of relatives. Interviewees emphasised that marriages in Birunbiru included most of the village, as the wife-givers and wife-takers had extensive kin networks. Nevertheless, the responsibility for raising bridewealth rested with the groom's father and his closest agnates. In the past, the amount of bridewealth was calculated in corn seeds. Six corn seeds might be recorded as the total payment required, with one corn seed representing, for example, one buffalo.

Public memory has been an important part of both marriage and mortuary transactions in villages in Birunbiru district and other districts where most of the residents of villages are involved in exchange negotiations. Barnes (1974:288) discusses the issues of recording bridewealth in Kédang district on the Indonesian island Lembata and notes that when the whole transaction is conducted entirely within a village the process is much simpler and more easily settled. He points out that when the final details are settled they become a matter of public record. If no written record is maintained then what obligations are acquitted and what are outstanding becomes a matter of public memory (Barnes 1974:288). Record keeping for bridewealth payments in East Timor has become more complicated as more marriages take place between people from different parts of the country.

## **Conclusion**

The Mambai marriage of Filomena and José helped restore order for the kin groups involved by drawing them together in rituals, which had previously been postponed due to the 1999 conflict. To conduct marriage rituals in post-conflict Bidau was a sign of confidence, showing that Bidau residents felt that stability had been restored. The rituals marked a return to the rich ritual life that was central to the life of Bidau, and through them, residents exhibited their reliance upon kin relations and the strength of their social networks. Connections reactivated during marriage negotiations had historical roots and

stretched across a web of relations, including kin and non-kin who gave support during 1999 and those who had contributed generously for earlier marriage and mortuary rituals.

Reciprocity and exchange relations are the foundation of human sociality and social networks in East Timor. The various ceremonies associated with a marriage call upon the wife-giving and wife-taking groups to fulfill formal exchange and reciprocal obligations, which include not only economic prestations, but also such things as signs of respect, feasts, music and dancing, as Mauss (1967 [1954]:3) has emphasised. To focus only on the economic obligations of marriages would be a serious oversight, as this downplays the complex system of relationships that East Timorese are able to call upon during times of need. The exchange relations between wife-givers and wife-takers that commence with a marriage alliance continue over a lifetime, and the broad networks of support developed through the alliance are most evident when kin come together to organise and conduct mortuary rites. When a kin member dies, the descent group of the deceased and all that group's wife-givers and wife-takers are required to make mortuary payments. Thus, a complex network of obligations and support develops. In the period between marriage and mortuary exchanges, "[w]ife-givers may call upon their wife-takers for material assistance in meeting demands imposed by their own wife-givers; and wife-takers depend upon their wife-givers for ritual services necessary to their well being" (Traube 1986:91). Having entered into an alliance at marriage, José and his father's lineage group, as wife-takers, can be called upon to contribute towards mortuary rituals of Filomena's deceased father's lineage group, as wife-givers, when a member of that group dies.

Marriage involves social exchanges that bind kin groups together, even though *barlake* entails significant hardship. For the marriage of Filomena and José, Aurora was

adamant that the wife-takers had to meet their obligations, and there were tensions between the wife-takers and wife-givers. Nevertheless, they were able to conduct *barlake* negotiations and host a wedding according to traditional practices. They were able to do this despite the difficulties brought about by the disruptions that both kin groups experienced in 1999. This highlights the resilience of East Timorese and their traditions.

The connection between *barlake* and social alliances in most parts of East Timor may be one of the reasons why attempts to terminate the custom of bridewealth payments have not been successful. According to Pinto and Jardine (1997) activists challenged some East Timorese traditions such as polygamy and *barlake*, but their efforts to change these practices were hindered by war. One such attempt was made by Fretilin in its *Manual Politico*; Fretilin aimed to ban such practices, but it was unable to during its brief term before the Indonesian invasion (Pinto *et al.* 1997:47). While the practice of polygamy is now relatively rare, the payment of *barlake* continues to be very common.

Marriages, in addition to initiating formal alliances, open up avenues for wider social interaction and support. An invitation to a wedding *festa* provides an opportunity for social exchange, which renews friendships, as well as presenting an occasion to make new acquaintances. The work of friends and neighbours who mobilise to assist at weddings creates a bustling atmosphere that adds to the excitement of the main celebrations. In the future, these supporters who have contributed the gift of their time and labour can expect those they have assisted to reciprocate. Thus, the network of friends and neighbours strengthened through working together at *festas* may be called upon at other times, such as during sickness, when house repairs are required, or when a family celebrates a birthday or baptism and requires help with the preparations. In



particular, Bidau residents depend on the support of friends and neighbours as well as kin to be able to conduct mortuary rituals.

## **CHAPTER 6: FLOWERS AND FEASTS – FUNERALS AND RITUALS OF REMEMBRANCE**

We had difficulties when we buried my father and brother. We were not sure what to do, so we took what parts of the bodies that remained for burial. (Indonesian Period Settler, Interview, 3 February 2001)

Egregious outbursts of violence in recent decades have disrupted traditional mortuary rites in East Timor. During periods of instability, some burials happened immediately without adequate time for some members of the kin group to be notified and view the corpse. Traditional memorial rites, which bind relatives in obligations and other forms of exchange, were attenuated, because lack of security and other difficulties obstructed the gathering of kin. Such breaks in ritual life were especially pronounced during 1999, and were extremely unsettling. They magnified social dislocation resulting from the fragmentation of families, as people sought refuge in different places.

Burial sites varied. Some residents in Bidau interred kin at the cemetery at Bidau Santa Ana. Others dug graves and buried relatives at unmarked locations in the mountains. People's suffering was compounded when no corpse was recovered or only partial remains were discovered. In those situations, families had to create meaningful memorial services later. When family members or friends disappeared, the uncertainty about their fate caused much distress. A few held out hope that their kin might still be alive somewhere. Most residents, however, faced the reality that people who had disappeared were most likely to be dead.

Pollack (2003:136-137) addresses the situation in Scebrenica for Bosnian Muslims when the body of a deceased was missing and unidentified remains precluded many of the funeral rituals. As Pollack states: "Missing bodies, lack of identification, the traumatic nature of the death, and the scope of the tragedy all challenged the

survivors' abilities to properly care for the dead" (2003:136). This was the case in East Timor as well.

Analysis of loss and bereavement should not be restricted to the context of funeral rituals alone without considering informal aspects of everyday living to identify ways in which deaths contribute to fractures in the social fabric. Connor (1995:537) notes that anthropological studies of death customs have tended to confine analysis of bereavement to ritual contexts and have been strongly criticised for such narrowness.<sup>1</sup> As well as other work on death customs, Connor analysed one case of corpsewashing in north Bali to examine "ways in which experiences of death and bereavement may be constituted through multiple and contested discourses in shifting contexts of sociality" (1995:538). Renato Rosaldo's writing on grief, rage and headhunting among the Ilongot of northern Luzon, Philippines, is widely cited in anthropological literature because of his understanding of the expression of anger in bereavement and reflection on his own experiences after the death of his wife. He warns:

Ritual and bereavement should not be collapsed into one another because they neither fully encapsulate nor fully explain one another. Instead, rituals are often but points along a number of longer processual trajectories; hence, my image of ritual as a crossroads where distinct life processes intersect. (Rosaldo 1989:20)

In this chapter, I explore the rituals that residents engage when a person dies and examine the relation between these ceremonies and everyday life. For some Bidau families, funeral rituals were disrupted during the Indonesian occupation, especially when East Timorese were under heavy attack by Indonesian military from the time of the invasion in 1975 until the early 1980s. The mortuary rites for Madalena's husband, Vicente, illustrate the usual sequence of rituals following a death in the absence of such disruption. Vicente was Mambai, but most of the mortuary rituals held in Bidau followed a similar sequence, whatever the ethnolinguistic group of the deceased.

### **Mourning the loss of kin, friends and neighbours during conflict**

During the period of Indonesian rule, residents had to make difficult decisions about funerary rites for kin and friends who disappeared. After they collected facts from trusted sources or a long time had passed without any contact, the first step was acknowledging that death was a possibility. Following this decision, a family arranged for a Catholic Mass or offered sacrificial animals and shared a meal at an *umalulik* (T) (traditional sacred house). When no body was recovered, there could be no rituals for washing the corpse or lamentations or processions to the cemetery. How residents came together and supported each other and those who were left out of rituals during times of conflict raised issues that could be addressed only after order was restored in the country. East Timorese were very concerned that the spirits of their dead have a peaceful resting place, and this required the proper rituals. This connects with van Gennep's observation:

Like children who have not been baptized, named, or initiated, persons for whom funeral rites are not performed are condemned to a pitiable existence, since they are never able to enter the world of the dead or to become incorporated into the society established there (1960:160).

Bidau residents had to find ways to mourn when they lost family members through disappearances. In East Timor when a corpse is not recovered, people write the name of the deceased on a piece of paper and take this with offerings of flowers and candles to the large cross situated in the cemetery grounds.<sup>2</sup> One woman related a story of her brother-in-law being seized from the *xefe-suku's* office by five men whose faces were covered. It was not known where he was taken, and his body was not found. The family, presuming that he had been killed, celebrated Mass for him at church and then went to a cemetery where they placed flowers around the large cross.

Bidau residents related stories of relatives who had died and were buried quickly in unmarked graves during Indonesian occupation. The exact date of death and place of

burial were not always recorded. In a number of cases, residents could recall the district where a family member or friend had died and had been buried, but they had not subsequently been able to visit the site.<sup>3</sup> For residents who had failed to recover the remains of a lost relative, the notion of “grave” was transformed from a known, sacred site of remembrance to an unknown imagining of horror of what might have been a massacre or dumping ground in the sea.<sup>4</sup> Some residents in Bidau, reflecting on shocking events, recalled seeing many dead bodies floating in the sea near Bidau Santa Ana after the 1975 Indonesian invasion. Knowledge of such violent deaths has fuelled wild visions of what might have been the destiny of kin who have disappeared.

Francisco, a 43 year old resident, remembered not being able to carry out the prescribed rituals after the deaths his father and brother:

The Indonesian military killed my father in 1976. They came to our house, burnt it, and took everything. They shot him and burnt our house. I ran away. I was separated from my family for one day. When I came back a day later to see what had happened, we only found the torso of his body. His head and his feet had been burned. I was only able to bury the trunk of his body. I also had a brother die in 1977. He was 24 years old when he died. They took him to work for the Indonesian Army as a servant. When the Indonesian Army was fighting, they used him as a shield at the front. We only recovered his head to bury. We do not know what happened to his body. We had difficulties when we buried my father and brother. We were not sure what to do, so we took what parts of the bodies that remained for burial. Everyone was fighting so we had to take shelter for ourselves. There was no church service. We only buried them. We buried them in the cemetery in Ermera. One year later, we took flowers to the cemetery and had a Mass said for them. (Interview conducted 3 February 2001)

Francisco’s story illustrates how, though traditional rituals were lacking, his family was still able to create meaningful rituals to bury the body parts of his father and brother and commemorate their lives at a later period.

A group of university students, Post-ballot Residents, who witnessed the gruesome shooting of a woman in Birunbiru on 12 September 1999, buried her, and only later did the woman’s kin find out about the death. The woman was feeding her

two day old baby when militia attacked her house. When the militia withdrew, the students returned to the site and found that she had been shot in the legs. A nurse from the neighbourhood attempted to assist the woman by bandaging her leg wounds; however, she had lost too much blood and died later in the day. Her two day old child was unharmed. Because of the militia's presence, the group took the woman's body to another place and buried her in a cemetery without the knowledge of other relatives who were then unaware of what had happened. The 27 year old man interviewed about these events said that when they celebrate the anniversary of the woman's death, he is reminded of what happened. Joana, also a Post-Ballot Resident, who was born in Atambua, is now living in a relationship with the victim's husband. She cares for three of the deceased woman's surviving children and takes them to her grave in Birunbiru district twice a month.<sup>5</sup> This trip is a four hour journey one-way by bus. The family also celebrates the anniversary of the woman's death in their *umalulik*.

During my fieldwork, some people were in the process of arranging for the secondary disposal of the remains of deceased relatives, because due to the conflict, the remains were at places other than the birthplace of the deceased or the burial sites of other kin. For example, one family had been searching for kin who had been killed in 1979. They had obtained information from Amnesty International that their relatives were among 15 people who had been massacred. The local villagers at the site of the massacre had collected and cared for the remains of those killed, and the family was in negotiations with these villagers to retrieve the bones of their relatives. It was important to the family that they are able to complete their obligations and bury the bones in a place where they could visit on important dates, especially on All Souls' Day (2 November). One family member had had a dream in which one of the deceased appeared to her and said, "Have you prepared my bed? Have you prepared my bed –

because I have no place to sleep?” While interviewees in Bidau did not discuss secondary burials, it may be of concern in the future. People may want to retrieve the bones of their kin and relocate them in a place where they can visit and take flowers and burn candles on anniversaries and memorial days.

### **Funerary rites**

Funerals involve the descent group of the deceased and that group’s wife-givers and wife-takers as well the wider networks of friends and neighbours. Funerary rituals commence with the preparation of the corpse on the day of the death and the prescribed period of mourning in the house of the deceased; culminating twelve months later with the ritual of *kore metan* (T) (removing the black). They include the viewing of the corpse, the burial, and the rituals on *loron ai-funan moruk* (T) (day of bitter flowers), eight days after the death, and on *loron ai-funan midar* (T) (day of sweet flowers), 14 days after the death.

#### *The day of the death*

During the Indonesian occupation, there was an increase in the number of widows in the country.<sup>6</sup> Deaths of husbands altered the composition of families, with a number of households in Bidau becoming matri-centred as a result. Madalena’s household was one such household. She had buried two husbands.<sup>7</sup> When Vicente, her second husband, died suddenly on 24 May 2001, Madalena had to immediately notify kin, join in discussions of funeral obligations, host kin and friends, prepare Vicente’s corpse for viewing, participate in prayers and lamentations, and help organise the burial that would be the following day.

Vicente had sold vegetables in the old central markets when supplies were available from family members in Aileu. On days when he had nothing to sell, he stayed home pottering around in his garden or just sitting quietly smoking near Madalena’s

poorly stocked *kios*. He had a sallow complexion and was a heavy smoker. He had a gentle nature and according to Madalena was a loving and patient partner who provided as best he could for her and their three children. On 24 May 2001, he was feeling a little off colour so he stayed at home. Gradually feeling more unwell, he decided to take the ten-minute walk to the hospital for a consultation. He returned home on foot in the afternoon, but died suddenly a few hours later. He was 43 years old and his unexpected death was a shock to his family. Believing his death to be the result of “sickness,” his kin and friends did not view his death as suspicious or blame it on any treatment he received at the hospital.

Following Vicente’s death, preparations for his burial began. Family members living close by relayed the news to neighbours and other relatives in Dili. An announcement was broadcast on *Radio Timor Kmanek* (RTK) to alert relatives, in particular members of the wife-taking lineage (*fetosaa*) living in Same, Manufahi district. Kin group members in Dili began discussing funeral obligations and assistance required, and Madalena, Vicente’s nephew and relatives from Madalena’s first marriage played the main roles in these discussions. It was not strictly obligatory for the relatives from Madalena’s first marriage to give financial contributions or goods towards Vicente’s funeral, as her first marriage was not based on the *umane-fetosaa* exchange. Her first husband Chung-Chin was a Buddhist, and even though he and his kin group paid bridewealth, it was only to satisfy the requirements of Madalena’s kin. Madalena continued to maintain good relations with Chung-Chin’s relatives after he died, and they provided emotional and financial support to her on several occasions. For Madalena’s marriage to Vicente, the wife-givers waived the giving of bridewealth. Therefore, there was no formal alliance of kin groups with complex prestations and counter-prestations.



However, Vicente's agnates called upon affines to make contributions to the funerary rites when Vicente died.

Vicente's descent group was responsible for collecting all the prestations for the funerary feasts and also had to contribute some of their own livestock. This responsibility was carried out by Vicente's closest agnates, his four older brothers. Of the affines, the wife-giving groups were smaller in number than the wife-taking groups, the closest affine being Madalena's deceased brother's wife. The wife-takers (*fetosaa*) were required to contribute buffaloes and cash, while the wife-givers, (*umane*), had to give pigs, *tais*, rice and money. Madalena, after the funerary rites had been completed, stressed the importance of kin facing up to their obligations, saying that if relatives did not assist they would be isolated from the kin groups. Madalena also discussed the generosity and goodwill of relatives from her first marriage, and of friends and neighbours who gave her cash. The relatives of her first husband gave Rp.2,000,000 (approximately US\$220), and many neighbours who lived close by contributed amounts such as US\$20, US\$30 or US\$50.

When there is a death in Bidau, most households who know the deceased send one or more representatives to pay their respects and take packets of candles for burning throughout the night or give small sums of money towards the funeral expenses. As residents and kin arrived at Vicente's house, members of the extended family greeted guests and accepted the offerings. Very shortly after Vicente's death, cooking preparations began. His two daughters, Noi and Evangelina, worked in the kitchen preparing black coffee and tea, along with other women who were preparing food for visiting relatives and friends. It was the custom for members of the descent group of the deceased and all that group's affines (both wife-takers and wife-givers) to remain at the home of the deceased for eight days until the installation of the cross on the grave on the

day of bitter flowers. After Vicente's death, many people stayed at his house, using space inside and all around it. Tarpaulins were quickly set up to provide some shelter for those staying and for seating for other visitors. Some relatives, including Vicente's four older brothers and their wives, travelled to Dili from Same, staying with Madalena or with other kin in Dili. This entailed great expense for Madalena and her kin, as meals were required for the extended family and friends. Some of the contributions towards the funerary feasts were used to feed those at the house for the week from the burial to the ceremony of bitter flowers.

As is the custom in East Timor, Madalena, her two daughters and her son were dressed in black mourning clothes. As members of the nuclear family of the deceased, they were to wear black to public events for one year until the ritual of *kore metan*. A sign of mourning worn by both men and women to acknowledge the death of more distant relatives is a black patch of material about one inch square in size and pinned to a shirt or blouse with a safety pin or holy medal. Many people from rural districts, rather than wearing a patch of black material, wear a twisted piece of ragged black cloth, tied as a scarf around their necks. Some of the Makassae in Bidau acknowledged the death of a relative in Birunbiru in this way. To acknowledge the death of a close relative or an *ema-boot* (T) (glossed as important person), men sometimes wear black armbands. People wore these smaller signs of mourning for varying periods, from two weeks to six months.

As people were dressed for mourning, so too was Madalena's house decorated. The bedroom doorways were draped with black curtains, and there was a black drape over the feature wall in the front room. Madalena and her close friend, Julietta, attended to washing Vicente's corpse within the private space of the house. When asked about the positioning of corpses in houses, Bidau residents said that it did not matter which

direction the head of the corpse pointed.<sup>8</sup> Vicente's faced east. Vicente's corpse was dressed in good clothes and prepared for viewing in the front room under the cover of a black *tais* as it lay on a special table decorated with an assortment of religious icons. Candles were burning on both sides of the table near the head of the corpse. There was also a small table displaying a silver-framed black and white photograph of Vicente, other personal items, including his tobacco, vases of artificial flowers and candles that remained burning on either side of his photo. Guests, including men, women and children, intermittently came into this private space of the front room to pay their respects before returning to the garden area. A small group prayed the Rosary in this room, and these prayers were later interspersed with lamentations performed by Madalena, her eldest daughter and other women. The lamentations mourned the loss of a good husband and father and commented on the difficulties that the family would now face. Lamentations were performed simultaneously by a number of women during the night.

The following is an excerpt of the lamentation sung by Madalena who relayed it to me some months later:

*Vicente bá ne'ebe?*  
*Ó so'i hela ami.*

Vicente where are you going?  
You deserve to stay with us.

*Ó bá subar ó nia oin.*  
*Kuidadu saseon uma aat.*

You go hide your face.  
Be careful hovering in the bad house.

*Laiha ema halo uma hotu-hotu aat.*  
*Osan iha, ema hararak servisu.*

Without people building, all houses are bad.  
[When you] have money, people want to work [for you].

*Osan laiha, ema lakohi servisu.*

[When you] have no money, people refuse to work [for you].

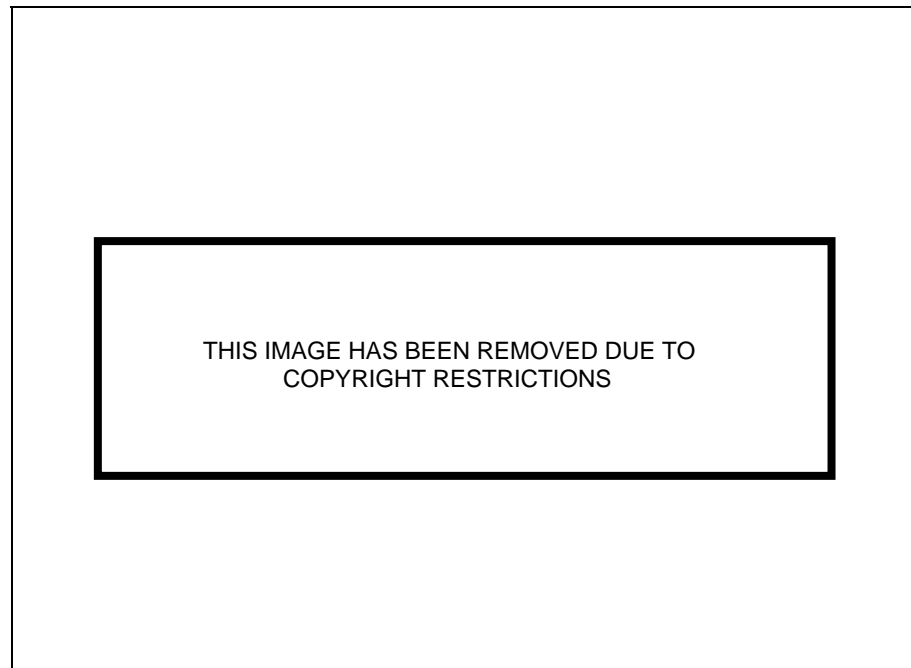
In this part of the lamentation, Madalena stresses the difficulty of living in a bad house. She cautions that Vicente should be careful because the house is bad, and he

should help her get money to repair it. Although Madalena had a network of supportive relatives and friends, she quite often referred to the poor condition of her house, which was in need of repair. However, the reference to “house” in the lamentation is not only referring to the material structure, but also to the situation of the house group, stressing the poverty of household. The lamentation contains the idea that if people have money, and therefore the means to reciprocate, they can more easily mobilise others to assist them.

### *The burial*

Vicente’s corpse remained indoors that first night and most of the next day, until the burial late in the afternoon on 25 May 2001. Due to the heat in Dili, the usual practice is to keep the body for only one evening, with the burial organised for the next day. Sometimes, however, a corpse remained in the family home for longer periods before burial, to allow time for relatives from distant districts to attend. For Vicente’s burial, a simple wooden coffin was purchased for US\$150 from the local carpenter’s workshop in Bidau Lecidere. Vicente’s corpse was placed in the coffin just prior to the procession to the cemetery. Also put into the coffin were three extra shirts and three extra pairs of trousers. Residents sometimes put clothing or items in the coffin to assist the deceased in his or her journey to the afterlife.

Madalena, her children, relatives, friends and neighbours were ready to commence proceedings for Vicente’s burial at around 5.00 p.m. Rituals for Vicente’s burial took a different form to those that Madalena undertook for her first husband, who was a Buddhist and was buried in the Chinese cemetery in Taibesse. That funeral had been a simple affair without any procession to the burial site, whereas proceedings for Vicente’s burial followed the usual format of a procession to the cemetery, followed by various rituals at the cemetery, before a meal back at the house of the deceased.



**Plate 10. Commencement of a procession for the burial of a Bidau resident**

As the distance from the house to cemetery at Bidau Santa Ana was only about 600 metres, everyone walked. This differed to some other processions, where the coffin and some of the mourners travelled by vehicle. In all, twelve people were involved in carrying Vicente's coffin; all were young men who were kin or friends of Madalena's family. Six carried the coffin for some distance until they were tired, then swapped with the other six. They changed over several times before reaching the cemetery. In the procession were old and young, women and men. They carried flowers and candles and prayed the Rosary as they walked, with Madalena's uncle leading the prayers. At the head of the procession was a large wooden cross carried by the son of Madalena's brother-in-law. The cross had a black inscription of Vicente's full name and the dates of his birth and death. Those who participated in the burial rituals numbered well over 100 and included many members of Madalena's and Vicente's kin groups, and many friends and neighbours, including the Dominican sisters. Once the procession arrived at the cemetery, Mass was held in the cemetery chapel, celebrated by a priest from the church that Madalena attended in Bekora.

It is not always the case that priests attend funeral rituals. Although a few residents wished to include a Mass at the cemetery when a relative died, most of the mortuary rituals were led by the deceased's kin group without the input of priests and religious sisters. Nor was the Catholic sacrament of "The Anointing of the Sick," (formerly called "Extreme Unction" or "The Last Rites") administered to East Timorese whose funerals I attended.<sup>9</sup>

Before Vicente's corpse was buried, the bones of Madalena's kin that were in the same *rate* (T) (grave) were dug up. These were the bones of Madalena's father, her younger brother and her niece, who died as a child. The coffins that had contained these bones had rotted away, and kin respectfully gathered the bones together and wrapped them in a new white cloth. They lowered Vicente's coffin into the grave and placed the cloth containing the bones on top of it before putting soil back in to cover the coffin and bones. Mourners then put flowers and candles on the gravesite. In contrast to many gravesites in the cemetery, this one had no cement or stone covering, though Madalena said that she planned to have one made in the future. Some graves were left with a wooden cross or left unmarked for several years until kin could afford a headstone. It is worth noting that there were no obvious differences in distinguishing gender in the marking of gravestones.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes, both male and female members of a kin group are buried together in the one grave.

When the burial rituals at the cemetery were completed, relatives and residents walked back to the Madalena's house for a ritual feast. At the entrance to the garden was a large tub of water and towel for guests to wash their hands, a sign of removing the pollution after being to the cemetery. After washing their hands, guests tossed water off their hands over their heads, casting off any wandering souls that may have followed

them from the cemetery. The practice of washing hands to cast off ghosts and deter them from following people home has been long observed (Frazer 1886).<sup>11</sup>

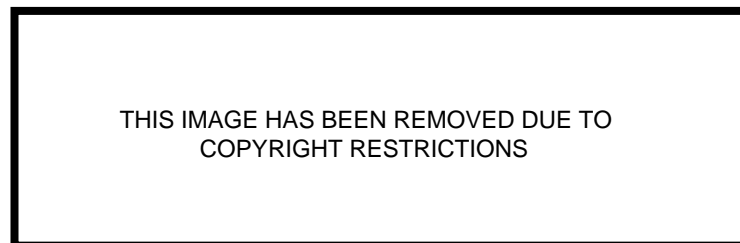
Kin and friends had helped provide the food for the feast; some giving what they were required to as part of their obligations (for example, rice, pigs, buffaloes or cash) through ties of kinship and marriage and some choosing to assist with preparations. Later, Madalena would in turn assist the friends who had helped her on this occasion. The banquet resembled a formal wedding feast; however, there was no dancing. Long tables were elaborately set with white tablecloths and food consisted of large containers of rice, chicken, buffalo, pork, fish and an assortment of vegetable and salad dishes. Two young women stood at the head of the tables and passed plates and cutlery wrapped in serviettes to guests who formed two lines to serve themselves. Usually, more people attended the funerary feasts in Bidau than the cemetery rituals, some arriving just for the meal. A number of residents regarded this as disrespectful behaviour.

#### *Day of bitter flowers*

The week that mourners spend at the house of a deceased from the day of the burial until the ritual of bitter flowers is a liminal period. Turner (1987:25) describes liminality as being a “threshold between secular living and sacred living,” though he argues that “the whole ritual process constitutes a threshold.” The mourners are in a period of transition between social states, removed from their everyday living, in a time of waiting. The soul of the deceased can also be said to be in a liminal state at this time, as many residents believe that it hovers for the first few days close to the house and may not have made its journey to the afterlife.

Each evening from the day of Vicente’s death to the day of bitter flowers, there were prayers at the house from around 6.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. Different people would

lead these evening prayers. Madalena said that these prayers were so that the soul of the deceased could go in peace from the house. The gathering of the many people at the house during this eight day period was quite social. Groups of men played cards in the garden, and women chatted in small groups chewing betel nut. The atmosphere was at times jovial, and children played in the garden. However, in accordance with tradition, no music was played during this period.



**Plate 11. Card playing at the house of the deceased**

On the day of bitter flowers, at around 4.00 p.m., approximately 80 relatives and friends began assembling at Madalena's house in readiness to process to the cemetery to recite prayers and place the cross and *ai-funan moruk* (T) (bitter flowers) on the grave. Flowers mostly include large purple, red and white bracts of bougainvillea bushes, which people scatter on a grave. Some people make elaborate floral designs, such as crosses and circular wreaths, using fresh flowers from their gardens. The ceremony of the bitter flowers represents the discarding of sad emotions.

A young man who led the procession carried the wooden cross at an elevation for all to see. Next, a young girl carried a small floral wreath made in the shape of a cross, and she was followed by other members of the kin group carrying large baskets of



flowers covered with white crocheted doilies. One man started chanting decades of the Rosary, leading with the first line of the prayers and the gathering joined in the second part, as the procession moved along the streets to the cemetery. A few people came out of their houses, blessed themselves by making a sign of the cross and stood by the roadside to show reverence. Passers-by stopped and made an acknowledgement of respect by lowering their heads or blessing themselves.

Once the group had arrived at the cemetery, the group prayed additional prayers at the graveside. The cross was then erected at the head of the grave. Flowers and candles were distributed amongst the crowd, and as at the burial, each person took a turn to place flowers on the grave and light a candle, which was placed in the sand around the edge of the grave. The gathering collectively recited prayers consisting of an “Our Father,” “Hail Mary” and “Glory Be” as well as intercessions to several saints; then the ceremony finished. People were visibly sad, but it was a quiet ritual where very few people cried, in contrast to the emotional outpourings and lamentations inside the house on the days of the death and the burial.

After the placing of bitter flowers, the gathering disbanded into small groups of people who walked back to Madalena’s house to share a meal, similar to the one on the day of the burial. That same evening, two other rituals were carried out at the house. In the first, known as *hasai meza* (T) (take out the table), relatives of the deceased remove the cloth coverings off the table on which the corpse had lain and take both the cloths and table outside. The table is then turned upside down on the ground. At a later date, both the table and cloths are used again for everyday purposes, after being cleaned. In the second ritual, a relative of the deceased uses a small leafy twig to sprinkle *nuu-been* (T) (coconut water) inside and outside all the rooms of the house, for purification. The coconut is then left outside. At Madalena’s house, Vicente’s oldest brother sprinkled the

coconut water, and both rituals followed prayers, but preceded the meal. In some other cases, these rituals followed the meal.

#### *Day of sweet flowers*

Two weeks after a death another smaller ceremony is conducted. It involves placing *ai-funan midar* (T) (sweet flowers) on the grave and is attended only by members of the deceased's nuclear family.<sup>12</sup> The same types of flowers are used for the ritual of sweet flowers as for bitter flowers. The sweet flowers ritual does not culminate in any feast for kin and friends. It marks a return by the mourners to a supposedly balanced emotional state after they have cast away their sad feelings with the bitter flowers.

As well as staging the rituals of bitter flowers and sweet flowers, some residents believe it is important to place flowers on a grave three months and six months after the death. At these times, members of the kin group of the deceased have flowers blessed at Mass before they install them on the grave. Kin, friends and neighbours attended on such occasions. The three month memorial is a smaller affair with restricted numbers and usually does not include a meal, whereas the six month memorial may include a banquet meal after the group returns from visiting the grave.

#### *Ritual of removing the black*

The *kore metan* (T) (removing the black) ritual, conducted one year after a death is one of the most significant mortuary rituals conducted by East Timorese. It is the time to celebrate the end of the mourning period. The *kore metan* for Vicente's death deviated from the standard procedures in two respects. Firstly, only women conducted it, whereas usually *kore metan* rituals include both men and women. Secondly, there was no mortuary feast after the proceedings at the cemetery to reincorporate mourners back into society, due to a lack of finances to host a large celebration.

Before the *kore metan* for Vicente there was much activity, with Madalena and her children choosing black clothes to discard at the cemetery. Madalena selected a plain black dress that she pulled over her skirt and blouse. The eldest daughter, Noi, seemed to have no difficulties making a decision on what to wear as she had already decided on an old black T-shirt that she wore over another blouse and a cream skirt with white sneakers. For her sister Evangelina, the choice was more difficult. Evangelina tried on different items of apparel before selecting a black T-shirt with “Merry Christmas” inscribed in the middle of a floral decoration of holly that she wore with faded light-coloured trousers and brown sandals. The son Dionisio wore a blue and green checked shirt, dark blue trousers and black sports shoes. This appeared to be a joyful affair with other women from the neighbourhood congregating at the house. They engaged in joking and assisting the children to prepare baskets of flowers and floral tributes, some small bunches being tied with black cloth.

The procession to the cemetery commenced again at Madalena’s house and took the same route as previous rituals, winding through the back streets of Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Santa Ana. This time, however, only a small group of women and children, probably no more than 30 in number, participated in the procession to the cemetery. The procession commenced with much frivolity, the women striding out along the path laughing and joking, with the children at the front. After walking down the cobbled path, and turning into the main street in Bidau Motaklaran, the party settled into a quieter mode while chanting the Rosary. At the gravesite, which was still only soil, rocks and the cross, the party laid floral wreaths, burned candles and recited prayers. At this point, three men who were friends of the deceased joined the group. After formal prayers, the women lit cigarettes and smoked what remained of tobacco that had belonged to Madalena’s husband. Some women lit two or three cigarettes at the

one time and put these on the grave. Then Madalena and her two daughters stood reverently at the foot of the grave with their backs turned towards the wooden cross with Vicente's name. They removed the outer layer of black clothes and threw them over their heads onto the grave. The group then left, leaving the black clothes there. This particular commemoration ended just outside the cemetery gates where the women shared betel nut and burst into much laughter, joking and posing for photographs.

The way the *kore metan* for Vicente was conducted blurred the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, women's participation and men's participation, and poverty and affluence. Madalena was not restricted by other people's expectations of how the rite should be undertaken, nor did the lack of money prevent the women from performing what they judged an appropriate re-entry for Madalena and her children into full social life. Offerings at the graveside by the women included not only prayers, flowers and candles, but also cigarettes they believed Vicente would enjoy. There was a conviviality shared by the women outside the cemetery gates as they chewed betel nut together, which replaced the more formal and expensive feast that was normally inclusive of many people.

Funerary feasts in East Timor appear to be in accord with the ideas proposed by Robert Hertz regarding the liberation of the living. The object of the funeral feast, according to Hertz (1960:62), is to end the mourning of the relatives of the deceased and to bring these back into communion with society. At the *kore metan* for Vicente, the sharing and chewing of betel nut by the women served this function.

### **Ritual space and roaming spirits**

Mortuary rites are organised in terms of private, public and intermediate spaces. In the private space inside the house, kin wash and prepare the corpse for viewing and conduct prayer vigils. It is into this private space that relatives and friends come to pay their

respects, and from this space that the corpse and the table and cloths on which it rested are taken from the house. It is the private space of the house that is protected from bad spirits through the nightly prayers held within it and the purification with the coconut water.

The intermediate space of the garden and verandas is the space where most people gather prior to processions, where the feasts are held, and where most kin socialise and stay in the week following the death. The coffin is carried through this intermediate space to the public space of the street for the procession to the cemetery.

In the public space on the road in front of the house, a small pile of rocks supports a pole from which hangs a black piece of fabric – or in the case of a child or teenager's death a white cloth – as a sign that there has been a death in the house. The various processions through the public streets lead to the public space of the cemetery, which is the site of other important ceremonies and practices, including Sunday visits by kin and the annual memorial service on All Souls' Day, which involves a Catholic liturgy.

### *Spirits of the dead*

Beliefs of Bidau residents about the nature of spirits after deaths in the village was difficult to access, as many residents would merely comment that they believed that after death the soul went to heaven. These answers were the standard responses by residents who were Catholic. Some residents believed that the *klamar* (T) (soul) remained on earth for three days, roaming close to the deceased's house before making its journey to heaven. They did not elaborate on the significance of the three days; however, there is a connection with Christian theology in the belief of Christ rising from the dead after three days. Some people said that the soul remains on earth for 40 days, and in these cases, people delayed the placing of sweet flowers on the grave until 40 days had passed. This too may have been connected with Christian theology, given the

significant biblical references to 40 days (e.g. Jesus' 40 days in the desert). One Indonesian Period Settler remarked that they were not allowed to cry when someone died; otherwise, the deceased's soul would not be free to go to heaven. A few residents stated that while they were Catholics, they still believed in *lulik* (T) (sacred) traditions. Those who followed traditional practices believed that the spirits of their ancestors went to their *umalulik*. These residents joined in ceremonies with kin at these places.

A small number of people said that spirits of the dead roamed around Bidau. Even Alberto, who normally gave a standard Catholic response, conceded that this could be the case. A resident who was born in Maliana, but who had resided in Bidau Motaklaran for fifteen years, hung a dried cactus over the windows of his house in 1999 to prevent the souls of dead people entering the house and harming members of his family. This man who had a university education believed in traditional practices, and the cactus still hung over his windows in 2003. He said that around 30 people died in Bidau during the carnage of 1999 and that their souls were wandering around the area.

A 27 year old resident who had been born in his family house in Bidau Motaklaran combined his Catholic beliefs with traditional practices and hung a dried seashell over the front door and another over the back door of his house to protect it from entry by bad spirits. He said that instead of a shell they could use other items such as a bone and that they had to recite special incantations before they installed the items over the doors. None of his family members or friends were killed during the troubles of 1999, and when his family returned to their home, only their outside kitchen had been burnt. The contents of their house had not been stolen, and the house was still intact, and they attributed this to both the shells over the doors and "God's miracle."<sup>13</sup>

People were connected to the spirit world through their dreams, and many people reported that, after they dreamed of a relative, they would visit the cemetery. One man

said that whenever he had a bad dream he feared that he might have an accident so he would go to the cemetery. His father was buried in Bidau Santa Ana cemetery, and he would take flowers, put these on his grave and pray. Other residents had positive dreams about their friends and relatives, and would dream of them smiling and contented. They interpreted this as meaning their souls were at peace, and they said that these dreams enabled them to forget about their suffering and look forward to future pursuits. On the anniversary of the Santa Cruz massacre in 2002, a day when many people go to the Santa Cruz cemetery, one resident related how she had found peace through a dream the previous night:

I dreamt last night about my friend who was killed in Santa Cruz. He was smiling, which made me feel good. I do not want to go to the cemetery today. I have had enough of thinking about the killings. I want to put it behind me now and think about the future.

Other studies in East Timor have found differences in people's beliefs about the spirit world. Hicks (1976) writing about villages situated in the principdom of Caraubalo, Viqueque district, describes a funeral ritual of a 70 year old man. Clans within these villages at the time of Hicks' fieldwork in 1966-67 believed that, as a spirit, the dead soul did not reach its "ancestral ghosts' world" until one year from the date the coffin was interred (Hicks 1976:145). During that year until the ceremony of *keta mate* (T) (glossed as the final rite of a death ritual), villagers believed that the soul flitted around the hamlets seeking an opportunity to re-enter the body (Hicks 1976:145). In Hicks' study, women wailed continuously over the body for five days, with men chanting a warning to the soul as they carried the coffin to the place of burial. Forman (1980:163) records that the Makassae he studied believed that the soul dies seven times in as many years and has to be reburied six times by its fellow souls before ascending to the clouds.

In Birunbiru, the sacred houses are the places where the ritual specialist makes contact with the ancestors. Formerly, residents believed that the souls of their ancestors

were dispatched to Matebian mountain, and while some still hold this belief, others have been influenced by Catholic ideas on heaven. One of the most important Makassae rituals is *umu gini* (M) (making of the dead) and entails the dispatch of the soul of the departed to the land of the ancestors on Matebian mountain, thirty years after death (Forman 1980:164). According to informants, the *umu gini* is conducted in Birunbiru, but it was difficult to establish how often it is held. Ricardo said villagers from his origin place perform this ceremony after several generations, but he was unable to elaborate on details, because he had not witnessed one.

As the Makassae practise the collective ritual of *umu gini* to despatch their dead, so too do the Mambai practice a similar ritual called a *maeta* (to die). Traube (1986:208) describes the various stages of a *maeta*, which is organised by a core group of male agnates, “usually genealogical brothers who unite to honor their deceased parents.” A *maeta* involves a series of exchanges between the hosting wife-takers and wife-givers held over a timeframe from one week to three months and includes continuous ritual performances culminating in the *maet tolin* (despatch the dead) performance, during which time the spirits of the dead are sent on their journey to the sea (Traube 1986:200-235). Madalena said that she had attended *maeta* rituals on two occasions, more than 14 years ago, one in Aileu and the other in Same.

#### *Birunbiru deaths*

Some Bidau residents from Birunbiru believe that the spirit of the deceased travels to the *umalulik* where it remains, and when a Birunbiru resident in Bidau died, kin would sometimes arrange for the body to be taken to Birunbiru and conduct the funerary rites there. When Celestina’s husband died in 1983 from tuberculosis, he was buried in the cemetery at Bidau Santa Ana. Celestina said she did not have any money to transport the body of her husband back to his origin village. According to people from Birunbiru,



if people had resided in Bidau Motaklaran for long periods, the kin of the deceased were more inclined to hold the funeral rites in Bidau and bury the person in the cemetery in Bidau Santa Ana. If they had only resided for a relatively short time in Bidau, the body was more likely to be transported back to the deceased's origin village.

Mário, an Indonesian Period Settler from Birunbiru, collapsed in the small *kios* he operated at approximately 1.00 a.m. on 18 August 2002. His friends did not find him until 7.00 a.m. when his body was already cold. They took him to the hospital in Bidau Tokobaru where the doctor on duty administered oxygen, but this treatment was unsuccessful. His relatives took his body back to his house in Bidau Motaklaran that afternoon. In the evening, an ambulance transported the coffin containing his body to his village of birth in Birunbiru, arriving there at approximately 2.00 a.m.

Mário's corpse was kept for a week inside the house of his cousin, his closest living relative in Birunbiru. During this one week period, residents from his origin village in Birunbiru as well as relatives from other districts came and paid their respects. To prevent offensive smells from the decomposing corpse, the body was washed with salty water and then wiped with palm wine. In addition to these treatments, coffee was sprinkled over the corpse. Women sang lamentations while Mário's body remained in the house, and men sang when his corpse was carried in a procession from the house to the burial ground. His grave was situated some distance from the main road in an isolated area in his origin village. It was next to another grave within close proximity to a few houses.

Forman (1976:12) states that the Makassae "invoke a strict taboo against naming the dead except in ritual contexts." However, this taboo now appears to have exceptions, as Bidau residents from Birunbiru mentioned Mário's name quite freely after his death.

*Interpretations of good and bad deaths*

A number of anthropologists have analysed the meaning of good and bad deaths (Fox 1973:342-368; Barnes 1974:175, 195-199; Seremetakis 1991:69-81; Scheper-Hughes 1992:252-258; Malarney 2001:59-61). In Bidau Motaklaran, residents believed a good death was one where a person died from old age or sickness. If a baby died during childbirth, it was not considered a bad death. “Bad deaths” were known as *mate mean* (T) (red death). They are deaths that involve violence or bloodshed. Bad deaths included being murdered, suicides and death from accidents, such as falling from a tree. Residents from Birunbiru informed me that when a person has died a bad death, similar rituals are performed as for a person who has died a good death, but the place of burial is changed, with the corpse buried in a location at the edge of the village.

*A ritual to commemorate a death in Portugal*

Purification practices were not evident in Bidau in the case of a memorial service held for a relative who had died and been buried overseas, though other aspects of funerary rites were conducted. One month after the death of his older brother in Portugal at the age of 92, Alberto’s friend and neighbour Sergio organised a mourning ritual one Saturday in May 2003 to commemorate the death. Sergio is an Indonesian Period Settler who has resided in Bidau Motaklaran with his wife and children since 1978. He was originally from Condar, Manatuto district, and is a member of the ethnolinguistic group of Galoli. The day before, members of Sergio’s household had arranged rows of plastic chairs and erected a tarpaulin in the space in front of their house, and a buffalo had appeared in Alberto’s garden, signalling a banquet meal was being organised. At 8.30 a.m. on the Saturday, a special memorial Mass was held in the Catholic Church in Balide. During the Mass, children placed baskets of flowers at the altar to be blessed. At the end of the liturgy, Sergio, his two brothers and a son-in-law stood at the church door

and shook hands with the congregation thanking people for attending. One of Sergio's sisters, a Canossian sister, organised a group photograph on the front steps of the church. Relatives attended, including some from Laklo in Manatuto district, and they were joined by friends, neighbours and the Canossian sisters from Bekora.

The group then returned to Sergio's house for morning tea. Cakes made with *tali-akar* (T) (sago palm) were provided as well as coffee and cans of soft drink. Women had been busy working in the kitchen and grounds behind the house since 3.00 a.m. when the buffalo had been slaughtered. Around 1.00 p.m., there was a ritual feast, which included desserts as well as the usual savoury foods. After lunch, a small group of men and a woman were involved in a serious card game, gambling for money. Children who gathered to watch were ordered to the back of the house. A group of religious sisters from the Canossian order sat on the veranda fanning themselves.

At 4.00 p.m., a convoy of vehicles, including a *mikrolet*, made a slow and solemn procession to Santa Cruz cemetery, about three kilometres away. One of Sergio's grandchildren stood in the back of Alberto's utility vehicle and held up the photograph of the deceased for public viewing. At the cemetery, everyone walked to the memorial black cross at the right hand side of the cemetery, where they prayed and placed floral tributes and lighted candles at the base of the cross. When this ritual was completed, the group went to the section of the cemetery where one of Sergio's sisters was buried. As this sister had been in the Canossian order, her grave was with those of other deceased Canossian sisters. At her grave, the group recited prayers, arranged flowers and lit candles. Small flower petals were scattered over Sergio's mother's grave which was in close proximity. After the graveside proceedings, Sergio invited the gathering to his house to participate in a second banquet meal. Most of the people who attended the

lunchtime meal also stayed for this dinner and were joined by some other Bidau residents.

### **Conclusion**

When asked about why they performed particular funerary rites, some Bidau residents provided explanations, but most simply said that they performed them because it was their tradition. Thus, what Frazer argued more than a century ago was pertinent to practices in Bidau: “customs often live on for ages after the circumstances and modes of thought which gave rise to them have disappeared, and in their new environment new motives are invented to explain them” (Frazer 1886:76). The main motives for Bidau residents were having a suitable resting place for their dead and fulfilling customary social obligations related to deaths. Mourning was not concealed, and grief was expressed through lamentations and wailing.

Bidau residents said that it was distressing for them if they were not able to perform traditional mortuary rituals. Some residents experienced difficulties during the period of Indonesian occupation when only parts of a corpse of a kin member were recovered, and they had to adapt rituals according to the situation. Bidau residents strongly believed that it was necessary to conduct appropriate funeral practices, that is, according to *adat* (customary law). If some rituals could not be performed at the appropriate time, residents attempted to complete the rites at a later stage.

When an East Timorese dies, the descent group of the deceased and all the wife-givers and wife-takers in relation to that group assemble. They negotiate arrangements and exchanges required to hold mortuary rites for the burial, the day of bitter flowers, the day of sweet flowers, and a major celebration on the first anniversary of the death, including the various funerary feasts. All of these death rituals link individuals to wider networks of kin, friends and neighbours, relationships that can be supportive or strained

depending on a person's past efforts and their current willingness to participate and contribute. These rituals also reveal the special and meaningful ways that East Timorese pay homage to their dead, even when circumstances during periods of conflict create complications.

Senior agnates of the deceased's descent group call upon their closest agnates and affines from the wife-giving and wife-taking groups to contribute material resources and their labour. The obligations the groups are required to meet depend on their resources and on previous prestations and counter-prestations that have been exchanged between the various kin groups. Whether alliances are sustained and strengthened depends on whether economic obligations have been fulfilled and, just as importantly, on whether relationships have been maintained through the offering of social and emotional support to relatives and friends in times of need. Upon the death of Vicente, Madalena's second husband, the support that kin, friends and neighbours gave was evidence of well-maintained relationships. Even though bridewealth was not required when Vicente and Madalena married, kin associated with that marriage gathered to conduct rituals that respectfully honoured his death and supported Madalena and her children. Kin associated with Madalena's first marriage also participated and gave support. In addition, neighbours and friends in Bidau gave cash as well as labour. The contributions were sufficient to bury Vicente with dignity and host a communal mortuary feast after his burial, which was attended by many people.

Van Gennep's ideas of incorporation in rites of passage identify healing aspects for individuals in mourning rituals. In funeral ceremonies, transition rites take place over a long period. Van Gennep claims that mourning "is a transitional period for the survivors, and they enter it through rites of separation and emerge from it through rites of reintegration into society" (1960:147). The preparation and viewing of the corpse in

the deceased's house marks the start of the transitional period in funeral rites. For funerals in Bidau, the transition stage is subdivided into several parts. These include the burial, the installation of the cross and the placing of bitter flowers on the grave after one week, and the placing of sweet flowers on the grave after two weeks. The length of time for mourning and the appropriate dress for mourners is based on degrees of kinship. During mourning, social life is suspended for all those affected by it, and though mourners in Bidau may be allowed to attend *festas*, they are not allowed to dance.

Among the rites of incorporation are the communal meals shared after funerals and at commemoration celebrations. These communal feasts, like wedding banquets, are occasions for significant social exchange. Their purpose is to reunite all the surviving members of the group with each other. Kin, friends and neighbours feel incorporated into the larger group.

The removal of mourning dress after the death is a rite of reintegration into the life of the society. The *kore metan* conducted at the twelve month anniversary of Vicente's death was evidence of this, while it also showed some flexibility in how funerary rites are conducted. When Madalena and her friends sat outside the cemetery gates and chewed betel nut instead of holding a communal feast at the house of the deceased, they modified the usual practice. Vicente's descent group was unable to collect livestock or cash from affines for a *kore metan* feast, as the earlier funerary feasts after the burial and day of bitter flowers had exhausted their resources. Lack of funds, and hence lack of material support from kin, prevented them from hosting the feast, yet Madalena felt satisfied that she had completed a final rite.

## **CHAPTER 7: LAMENTING THE DEAD – REMEMBERING AND RECONSTITUTING MARIA SOARES**

Meat you eat, but Maria Soares wants flowers with Mass, prayers, only, with Mass only for Maria Soares. Can quarrel because of meat, Maria Soares says. Must pray for Maria Soares. (Lamentation, January 2003)

Prior to a burial, while the corpse is inside the house of the deceased, female and male mourners who are experienced in performing lamentations compose and sing such songs on their own initiative. Filomena's eldest sister Lola is one woman in Bidau Motaklaran recognised by other residents as extremely gifted in performing lamentations because of her ability to voice deep intensities of pain, which encourages mourners to express their grief, and because of her skills in reconstructing historical knowledge through her singing talents. In a lamentation, the performer sings about aspects of the deceased's life and the events surrounding the death. After the death of her maternal grandmother Maria Soares, Lola sang a lamentation at different times, especially during the night, taking breaks when other relatives came into the room. In addition to this dirge, other kin, including some of Maria Soares' daughters and sons, also performed lamentations, sometimes singing in unison.

Lola sang parts of her lamentation for me three months after the death, and then dictated all the verses.<sup>1</sup> This version performed by Lola was an adaptation of what she originally composed at the death of Maria Soares. She reconstructed it to include new information about significant events that happened after the death, including the funeral feast, conflict between her mother Aurora and Aurora's brothers at the graveside, and references to later visits to the grave. When asked whether she was able to recall other lamentations that she had composed, she sang one about her father who had died in 1996. During this recital, Lola engaged in stylized sobbing with noticeable changes in breathing as she sang. Towards the end of the performance, she wiped tears from her

cheeks. Lola's performance of lamentations thus had similarities with what Seremetakis (1991:117) describes when writing about Greek lamentations, where she states that in the "movement from nonlanguage to language to nonlanguage, the sob occupies a pivotal position; it functions as a hinge in the soloist's improvisation." Although Lola's performance appeared to evoke feelings of sadness in her, when asked about this, she regained her composure immediately and burst into laughter. Both Lola and her sister-in-law, who was listening at the time, were puzzled by my interest in such matters, and afterwards when they would see me in the street, would laugh and joke with me, imitating lamentation performances by bending over, stretching out their arms and pretending they were singing over a corpse.<sup>2</sup> They were subsequently reluctant to perform additional lamentations for me to record, but were willing to discuss family relationships and were eager that I attend the six months' remembrance ritual for Maria Soares.<sup>3</sup>

An exegesis of Lola's lamentation for Maria Soares reveals the possibilities for a cathartic release of grief, not only of the performer, but also of others who are present. This lamentation is not only a call to remember a grandmother and a social commentary about aspects of her life. It also details the obligations of relatives towards the funerary expenses and reflects the conflict that can occur between relatives when some kin do not meet demands made by other kin. While funeral rituals benefit the kin of a deceased in providing companionship and support and bind kin together, they entail obligations that may be financially burdensome.

The descent group of Maria Soares' deceased husband and all the wife-givers and wife-takers in relation to that group were the significant kin required to meet exchange obligations. It was the responsibility of the descent group to host the funeral rituals and collect all the prestations. Groups bonded by prior affinal ties, whether as wife-givers or



wife-takers to the descent group, were required to give contributions, and the exchanges of gifts given were consistent with the types of prestation they exchanged at marriage. José, as a consequence of his marriage to Filomena, one of the granddaughters of Maria Soares, became an affine to the descent group of the deceased, and was required to give a buffalo or cash equivalent towards the funeral rituals. The other affines were also required to contribute a buffalo, goat and cash if they stood as wife-takers to the descent group, or pigs, rice and cash if they stood as wife-givers to the descent group.

### **A death and a call to remembrance**

A lament is an expression of mourning – often, though not necessarily, mourning for the dead. Some laments, including those in the biblical book of Lamentations, are songs for the fall of great cities (Holst-Warhaft 1992:1). In relation to death, lament has been defined as “a song for the dead, produced when one is immersed in and inspired by pain” (Caraveli 1986:172). Caraveli (1986:177) describes the different categories of laments in rural Greece, including laments that are simply recited as poetry, those that are sung in a heightened emotional context in an ordinary setting such as one’s home or in the fields, and those laments that are performed both in a heightened emotional context and on a ritual occasion. In Bidau, the practice of performing lamentations took place after a death, and I did not witness residents singing lamentations in their homes or gardens on other occasions.

The Tetun words used to refer to lamentation include *halelir* (to wail), *konta* (to recount) and *tanis-mate* (wailing, keening). Through oral renditions of poetic songs, which can be recalled at later periods, mourners are encouraged to remember the deceased. In this way, the process of mourning, while including different intensities of grief depending on the individual’s relationship to the deceased, also includes a collective expression of grief.<sup>4</sup> When asked about the relevance of lamentations, and

whether the practice was diminishing with the development of Dili as a modern city, Bidau residents were steadfast in their responses that the performance of lamentations continues to be an extremely important part of funeral rituals for East Timorese and emphasised the spontaneity of such practices.<sup>5</sup> In a different context, an East Timorese from another district emphasised the importance of sincerity in composing lamentations. At one funeral, his relatives had scoffed during the performance of a lamentation, muttering to others that those singing did not care about the deceased when he was alive so why were they faking concern for him now he was dead.

The performance of lamentations was not restricted to older women. Some younger women also composed lamentations, and a number of men in Bidau stated that they participated in the performance of lamentations. They joined in these mourning chants which ranged in length from short verses to longer orations about the life of the deceased and obligations incumbent on the deceased's kin. People from western districts of East Timor who have lived in Bidau for several years confirmed that men as well as women in their origin villages compose lamentations. The performance of lamentations differs in Birunbiru with clear demarcations by gender and place. Birunbiru residents in Bidau told me that women usually lament the dead in the private space of the home, where the corpse may be kept for a few days, whereas men sing lamentations in public as they carry the coffin to the burial place. Some residents from Birunbiru stated that lamentations are sacred songs performed inside their *umaluliks*.

#### *Maria Soares dies*

Maria Soares was 80 years old in January 2003 when she passed away in her home in Bidau Lecidere.<sup>6</sup> Because she died in old age and in her own home, she was deemed to have had a "good death." She had been born in Camea, Dili, and was Mambai. Her husband Luis, a member of the Mambai from Ersoi in Ermera district, had died in 1983.

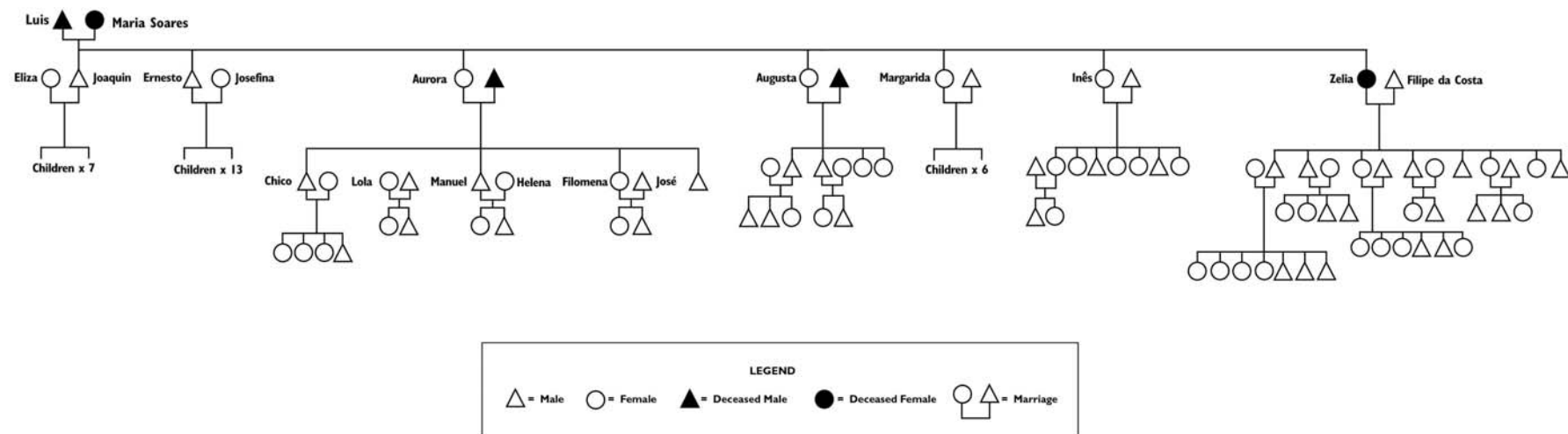


Figure 7. Maria Soares' kin

Luis had worked as a carpenter during the Portuguese administration in the village section known at that time as “China Macau” located near Santa Cruz cemetery. The couple resided in Bidau Lcidere where they raised their seven children – five daughters, one of whom had died, and two sons. At the time of her death, all of Maria Soares’ children lived within close proximity to her house, which she shared with her eldest son Joaquin, his wife and their seven children. Her second son, Ernesto, lived next door in the same compound, and her daughters and the household of her deceased daughter lived a short walk away in Bidau Motaklaran. Maria Soares had 50 grandchildren, one of them deceased, and many great grandchildren. Her family, like the majority of residents in Bidau, mostly follows virilocal patterns of residence and principles of patrilineal descent.<sup>7</sup>

After Maria Soares died, Paulina – a relative described as an “aunt” who lived next door – washed her body, and following further preparation, laid the body out for viewing on a table in the front room of the house. Maria Soares’ corpse was clothed in a white dress. A crocheted white bonnet covering her grey hair framed her serene pale face, and from her chest was draped a white embroidered cloth. A clean white neatly folded handkerchief covered her mouth. Photographs of the deceased with family members, vases of colourful artificial flowers and burning candles decorated the bench above the table.

Lola was the lead singer of the lamentations, with others joining in at various times. The lamentation commenced with Maria Soares’ children and grandchildren gathered in the room as a call to remembrance, not only of Maria Soares, but also of her deceased husband.

*Ami hanoin avó.  
Ami barak, ona avó.  
Maka avó foin mate.*

We remember grandmother.  
We are many, grandmother.  
Grandmother has just died.

*Ami, moris, mai la haree avó mane, avó  
feto de'it.  
Ami kontente. Ami, bei-oan kontente  
avó.*

We, born, do not see grandfather, only  
grandmother.  
We are happy. We, the grandchildren,  
are happy grandmother.

The reference to earth in the next section of the lamentation concerns the preparation of the gravesite and assurances by Maria Soares' descent group, and the wife-givers and wife-takers to that group, that they would organise a good place for her burial. In accordance with her instructions, Maria Soares' children organised a priest to preside over a Catholic Mass held at Bidau Santa Ana cemetery at 4.00 p.m. on the day of her burial. The burial site was one of shared space. The caretaker of the cemetery, for a fee of US\$30, was engaged to re-open the plot where her husband and a nephew had been buried. The two coffins already in the grave were taken out and prayers said before Maria Soares was buried, and the order of the coffins put back into the grave, from bottom to top, was grandfather, grandmother, then nephew. Lola reminisces what it will be like when they look for their grandmother, but cannot find her, and sings of the separation when their grandmother goes to God.

*Ami hanoin ami nia inan.  
Ami kalan kalan bá foti rai, avó.*

We remember our mother.  
Every night we go and get earth,  
grandmother.

*Hakarak avó di'ak.  
Derrepente avó mate.  
Bainhira mak haree avó nia oin?  
Ami bá kampung, la haree avó.*

[We] want grandmother well.  
Suddenly grandmother died.  
When can we see grandmother's face?  
We go to the village, we do not see  
grandmother.

*Haree uma laran, haree avó nia foto.*

[We] see inside the house, see  
grandmother's photo.

*Buka, tuir avó ain fatin; buka la hetan.*

[We] look, [we] follow grandmother's  
footprints; look, but do not find.

*Bainhira, loos maka hasoru avó?  
Avó bá iha Maromak nia oin.*

When, truly will we meet grandmother?  
Grandmother goes to the face of God.

The lamentation emphasises the theme of “searching” for the deceased. The family’s ordeal of constantly looking for their grandmother, but coming to the realisation that she is no longer part of their community, is similar to grief responses of people from western societies who have to go through a period of adjustment.

When Maria Soares’ body was being carried from inside the house to a vehicle to lead the procession to the cemetery, her granddaughter Lola and one of her sons ran after the coffin, crying and calling: “Avó (T) (grandmother) please do not leave us.” Lola and her uncle Ernesto displayed strong emotions, lamenting with their arms outstretched running towards her coffin.

Time is required for Maria Soares’ children to face the shock of the death of their mother. As Hertz (1960) observed, in some societies, death is considered a process rather than an instantaneous event. According to Hertz (1960:82), it is difficult for people to acknowledge immediately that the deceased is dead. The image of the recently deceased is still part of the system of things in the world of the mourners. The person participated in the same social life, and ties were created that cannot be severed in one day. Hertz argues that prescribed periods of mourning assist the society to regain its balance and the deceased to move into a new world. The series of mortuary rituals that East Timorese observe assists them to mourn their dead.

#### *Maria Soares remembered*

After referring to a period of searching for Maria Soares, the lamentation describes her surviving four daughters and two sons as remembering their mother, and each is named as requesting her assistance through the intervention of prayers. This transition of Maria Soares leaving her earthly abode and going to what her family believes is a journey to meet God identifies her as an intermediary who intercedes for help for her children. In addition to her children, her two daughters-in-law are included in these petitions.

*Reza, husu tulun ba oan feto na'in-haat,  
ho mane rua.*

*Oan feto na'in-haat ne'e hanoin sira  
nia inan.*

*Sira nia inan naran Maria Soares.*

*Aurora hanoin barak inan, Maria Soares.*

*Tuir fali, Augusta hanoin inan.*

*Tuir fali, Margarida.*

*Tuir fali, Inês Rebeiro hanoin Maria  
Soares.*

*Tuir fali, mane rua.*

*Joaquin da Silva hanoin Maria Soares.*

*Ernesto hanoin Maria Soares.*

*Tuir fali, Eliza hanoin banin-feto.*

*Eliza hanoin Maria Soares.*

*Tuir fali, Josefina da Silva hanoin Maria  
Soares.*

Pray, asking for help for four daughters  
and two sons.

These four daughters remember their  
mother.

Their mother's name is Maria Soares.  
Aurora remembers very much mother,  
Maria Soares.

Next, Augusta remembers mother.

Next, Margarida.

Next, Inês Rebeiro remembers Maria  
Soares.

Next, two men.

Joaquin da Silva remembers Maria  
Soares.

Ernesto remembers Maria Soares.

Next, Eliza remembers mother-in-law.

Eliza remembers Maria Soares.

Next, Josefina da Silva remembers Maria  
Soares.

Gossip continues to transmit details about people even after they die, sometimes altering or exaggerating facts. In the case of Maria Soares, residents invoked positive thoughts of her. Neighbours who knew her well recalled her habits.

*Maria Soares hahalok iha rai moris hela.*

*Joaquin hanoin barak Maria Soares.*

*Maria Soares nia hahalok moris, ko'alia  
barak iha kampung.*

*Moris halo ko'alia barak iha kampung.*

*Agora ami buka inan Maria, buka la  
hetan.*

*Halo ona fulan tolu.*

*Ami bá rate, hateke ai-funan iha rate  
leten.*

*Hateke; avó la ko'alia.*

*Bainhira Aurora hein fali, fulan neen,  
Joaquin bolu fali.*

Maria Soares' activities on earth are  
living.

Joaquin remembers very much Maria  
Soares.

Maria Soares' activities are living, much  
talked about in the village.

Living, doing, much talked about in the  
village.

Now we look [for] mother Maria, look  
but do not find.

[We] have done [the] three months  
[ritual].

We go to the grave, [we] look at the  
flowers on top of the grave.

[We] watch; grandmother does not talk.

When Aurora waits again, [at] six  
months, Joaquin calls again.

Representatives from Maria Soares' family, including Lola and Lola's eldest brother's wife, visited her grave and placed flowers there three months and six months after the death. These references to the three and six month ceremonies at the grave were facts that Lola added in the version of the lamentation she recited for me. They were not in the original version she performed over the corpse. From the different renditions that Lolo performed and recited, it can be deduced that lamentations are fluid. This inclusion of additional information shows how lamentations become more than performances at the time of death.

The lamentation records instructions that Maria Soares left for her kin in terms of her religious beliefs and practices (i.e. wanting a Mass said for her) and her attitude about caring for children without hitting them. Other traits about Maria Soares were described after her death. Informants told me that Maria Soares assisted women with fertility concerns. She had knowledge of traditional medicine and was therefore able to assist women with pregnancy problems. She was experienced in massage and used this skill to treat women who visited her for consultations. This expertise of Maria Soares existed within a body of knowledge preserved within a rich tradition of oral narratives. Maria Soares shared her experiences with her children and grandchildren and was very much a respected figure in her family and in her neighbourhood. While she was skilled in medicinal practices and her children and some of her grandchildren were aware of her abilities, few of them had adequate knowledge to continue her practices.

For many older people, oral narratives they constructed or had preserved contained valuable insights into particular descent groups and were central in keeping alive certain ritual practices. One such practice, which Maria Soares' grandson Manuel insisted his relatives follow, is the killing of a chicken and the sprinkling of its blood on the foundations when a new house is constructed. He firmly believes that, if they do not



perform this ceremony, residents of the dwelling will become ill. The sacrifices associated with laying the foundation for a house and constructing a house come within the category of rites of passage. According to van Gennep (1960:23-24) often a new house is taboo until appropriate rites “to make it *noa* (secular or profane)” have been performed. Some residents in Bidau perform cleansing ceremonies when building a residential house to ensure the health of the occupants, though house building rites in East Timor are more commonly performed in relation to *umaluliks*.

In the urban setting of Bidau, people from Birunbiru district often commented that they knew about some practices performed by their parents in their *umaluliks* in rural districts. One practice entailed elders dabbing spittle from chewed betel nut on participants’ foreheads. However, younger residents were not able to articulate the meaning of these practices, nor were some of the people who took part in them. Many Makassae from Birunbiru who participated in these rituals said that only the ritual specialist had knowledge of the sacred words.<sup>8</sup>

### **Obligations of mortuary exchange**

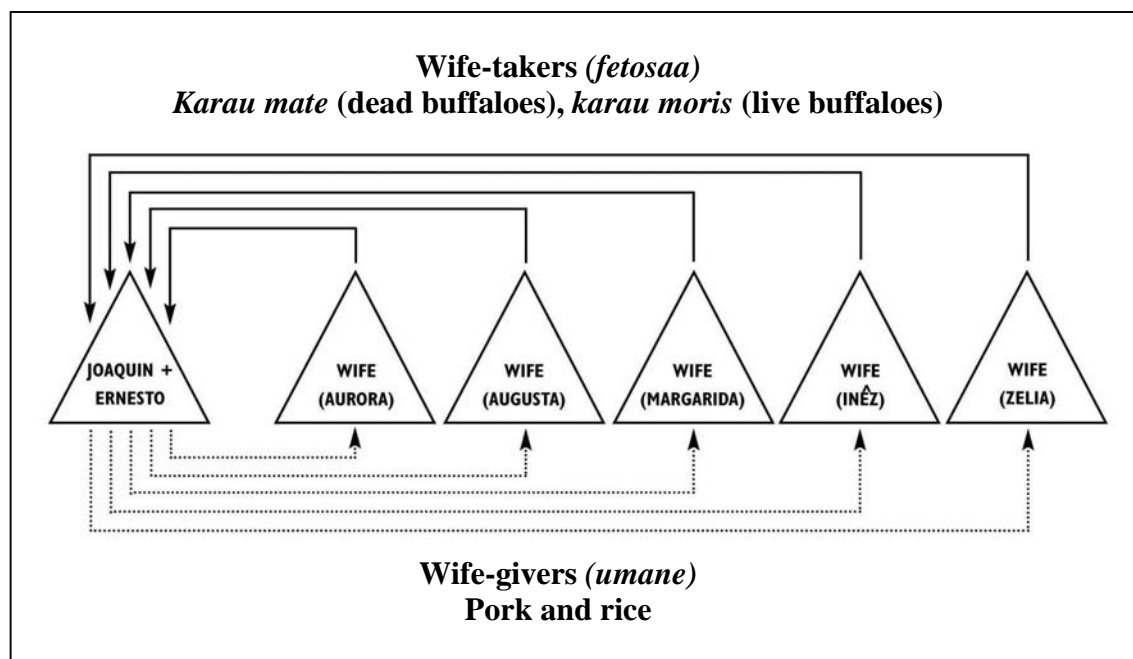
In the lamentation, there is a discussion about the contribution required from each of Maria Soares’ children towards the funeral feasts for the day of the burial and the day of bitter flowers. Because of the proximity of these two feasts, which can be costly to prepare, contributions from wife-takers and wife-givers in the form of outstanding bridewealth payments, or obligatory mortuary payments are demanded. Contributions were also needed for the meals required to feed relatives and friends who stayed in the house of the deceased during the one week period from the burial to the ritual of placing the cross and bitter flowers on the grave.

After Maria Soares’ death, her kin group met and discussed what the wife-givers and the wife-takers had to contribute towards funeral expenses. The lamentation focuses

on the obligations of the wife-takers in relation to the descent group of Maria Soares' husband and on the obligations of the descent group. It does not look at the obligations of the wife-givers in relation to the descent group, such as the families from which the wives of her two sons, Joaquin and Ernesto, have come. Maria Soares, her deceased husband and her sons are *umane* (wife-givers) to the households into which her daughters have married. *Fetosaa* (wife-takers) are the patrilineal groups represented by the households into which Maria Soares' daughters have married virilocally. The wife-takers have the major obligations of funding the mortuary feasts of the wife-givers. The content of the lamentation emphasises the obligations of the wife-takers by naming and detailing the responsibilities of each of Maria Soares' daughters. The wife-taking households are required to contribute buffaloes for the funeral banquet and additional buffaloes by way of exchange for rice and pork, which are given by the wife-givers. These goods follow the same pattern as for marriage transactions.

The complexity of exchange relationships for the burial of Maria Soares is investigated by an analysis of the ceremonial currency described as *karau mate* (T) (dead buffaloes) and *karau moris* (T) (live buffaloes), which pass from the wife-takers to the wife-givers, the latter being the household of Maria Soares' deceased husband now represented by the two sons, Joaquin and Ernesto. Although the designation of these payments is a reference to meat (i.e. dead and live buffaloes) and what is owed and paid is calculated in reference to dead and live buffaloes, pork and rice, actual payment may be expected in cash. However, there is some distribution of meat and rice after the banquet. Immediately after the death, the *karau mate* is required, while the *karau moris* contributions are made later. In the case of Maria Soares' death, this latter contribution was made after three months. At the placement of bitter flowers, one week after her death, the wife-takers paid US\$100 each to the wife-givers. Smaller amounts

of US\$10 were contributed by the children of Maria Soares' daughters, at the sweet flowers ritual two weeks after the death. In return, the wife-givers gave a pig and rice to the wife-takers. The movement of these transactions is tracked in Figure 8. The triangles represent the households of the wife-givers and the households of the wife-takers and identify the wives named in the lamentation. Pigs and rice are classified as "female" goods, while buffaloes and cash are considered to be "male" goods.



**Figure 8. Flow of mortuary exchange showing responsibilities of households**

Several arguments over mortuary payments are revealed in the lamentation. The contributions from the household into which Maria Soares' eldest daughter Aurora married are deemed inadequate. Aurora is being called upon to make payments towards the funeral and it would seem that the household she married into is in debt to the wife-givers. It may have been that her deceased husband's household through marriage to Aurora had outstanding bridewealth payments owing to the wife-givers. Both of Aurora's brothers become angry with her and accordingly rebuke her for not fulfilling that household's obligations in full. Any outstanding bridewealth payments would have been inherited by Aurora's eldest son, Chico. Traube points out that if "a man who has

pledged ritual assistance to his affines dies before the pledge can be fulfilled,” his obligations “are inherited by his eldest son, who ‘stands in his mother and father’s place’ at his allies’ mortuary ceremonies” (1986:89). The lamentation records what each of Maria Soares’ children gives and receives. Several references relate to the contribution and distribution of meat. The formula for receiving meat is calculated proportionally to the financial contribution towards the funerary expenses. Another consideration in the calculations is the number of people in each household.

*Aurora bá ko’alia, hodi osan, bibi, juta ida, karau ida, serveja kaixa ida bá ko’alia ho Joaquín.*  
*Joaquín hirus Aurora.*  
*Aurora fó sasán lato’o.*  
*Ernesto istori malu ho Aurora.*  
*Aurora tanis.*  
*Hanoín, tanba Ernesto duni Aurora, tamba fó sasán lato’o.*  
*Ai-suak tau ba rai para tau Maria tun bá.*

*Aurora hatun ai-suak bá para Joaquín la bele hirus.*  
*Joaquín hakarak Aurora kaer karau mate, karau moris, osan, juta rua.*

*Karau mate iha avó sira meza.*  
*Depois Joaquín, umane sira, oho fahi sanulu foti tali lima ba feto na’in-lima.*  
*Kada feto na’in-lima simu na’in karón ida.*  
*Aurora, karón ida.*  
*Augusta, karón ida.*  
*Margarida, karón ida.*  
*Inês, karón ida.*  
*Tanba Zelia mate ona, depois fó ba Filipe da Costa karón ida.*

Aurora goes to talk – with money, goats, one million [rupiah], one buffalo, one box of beer – to talk with Joaquín.  
 Joaquín is angry with Aurora.  
 Aurora gives insufficient things.  
 Ernesto quarrels with Aurora.  
 Aurora cries.  
 Thinks, because Ernesto hounds Aurora, because she gives insufficient things.  
 Put the digging stick to the ground so that Maria can be lowered.  
 Aurora drops the digging stick to stop Joaquín from being angry.  
 Joaquín wants Aurora to bring dead buffaloes, live buffaloes, money – two million.  
 Dead buffaloes on grandmother’s table.  
 Then Joaquín, the wife-givers, kill ten pigs, give five cords to five women.<sup>9</sup>  
 Each of the five women receives one sack.<sup>10</sup>  
 Aurora, one sack.  
 Augusta, one sack.  
 Margarida, one sack.  
 Inês, one sack.  
 Because Zelia is already dead, then [they] give to Filipe da Costa one sack.

Aurora casts aside the digging stick, a metal implement used to dig the grave, but also a tool widely used in agricultural activities, rather than using it as a threatening weapon. She wants to put aside their differences and focus on the process of burial of

her mother. However, this may well be an attempt by her to deflect attention from her reluctance to pay. The fact that her own daughter Lola is publicising this through the lamentation is of interest, especially because so much is made of the counter-prestation in pork and rice due to Lola's children.

Usually *karau moris* are given any time before or at the *kore metan* (removal of black) ceremony. In the case for Maria Soares' death, the sons are very strict, demanding that *karau moris* be given after the funeral or at the same time as *karau mate*. This could be because the sons had experiences in the past when their sisters' households did not bring buffalo (the required contributions) when someone died in their family. The distribution of meat, including meat to be given to some of Maria Soares' grandchildren, is recorded in the next section of the lamentation.

The lamenter recalls place names such as Bairo Pite, a village in central Dili. There is a conversation about the meat, with members of the family enquiring as to where it originated. This section, however, goes beyond the discussion of meat and is a reference to family origins. Bairo Pite is the village where the parents of Maria Soares' husband came from. The importance of place is emphasised, denoting villages where family members had established roots. This link to places is a way of remembering those who have died and their movements with their associates while they were alive. Traube has recorded the sequence of place names recited in ritual speech among the Mambai to banish the dead (Traube 1986:218-219). Anthropologists elsewhere have also documented this phenomenon. For example, Weiner (1991:106) reports that in the song poetry of the Foi of Papua New Guinea there is a sequence of place names, which conjure up images of the movement of the deceased during his lifetime. Similarly, Feld (1990:124) notes that place name sequences in Kaluli weeping poetics are used by the performer to reminisce about places that were experienced with the deceased.

*Depois hodi neen mai umane.*

*Umane fó Arika tali neen.*

*Fó Lola tali neen.*

*Fó Manuel tali haat.*

*Fó Filomena tali neen.*

*Augusta fó Francisco tali haat.*

*Augusta fó fali Again tali lima.*

*Augusta fó fali Adelina neen.*

*Ba Filomena, tali lima.*

*Agora Augusta fó fali na'an ba Again.*

*Agora Augusta fó fali na'an ba Adelina, tali hitu.*

*Agora Inês fó na'an ba Francisca, tali walu.*

*Inês fó na'an ba Aboa, tali sia.*

*Inês fó fali na'an haknoin.*

*Inês fó fali na'an ba Martina, tali sanulu.*

*Hotu, Inês fó fali na'an ba Ana.*

*Depois Inês haruka masin-midar ida ho biskoit ba tiu oan mane.*

*Depois Inês haruka na'an ba Báiro Pite, na'an sembilang.*

*Depois ba na'an, Inês nia kuñada simu husu nia mai husa ne'ebé.*

*Depois Inês hatan na'an mai husi kampung.*

*Filipe da Costa na'an karau ida, mai husi kampung.*

*Filipe da Costa fahe na'an.*

*Ba Antonio da Costa, na'an tali sanulu.*

*Depois Filipe da Costa fahe fali ba Lourenço da Costa, tali walu.*

*Filipe da Costa fahe fali na'an ba Simão.*

*Depois Filipe da Costa fahe fali na'an.*

*Manuela, na'an tali walu.*

*Filipe da Costa fahe fali na'an.*

*Ba Maria, Filipe da Costa na'an tali haat.*

*Filipe da Costa fahe fali na'an.*

*Ba Beatriz, tali rua.*

*Filipe da Costa fahe fali na'an.*

*Cipriano, tali rua.*

Then with six [cords] come the wife-givers.

[The] wife-givers give Arika six cords.

[They] give Lola six cords.

[They] give Manuel four cords.

[They] give Filomena six cords.

Augusta gives Francisco four cords.

Augusta gives back to Again five cords.

Augusta gives back to Adelina six.

To Filomena, five cords.

Now Augusta gives back meat to Again.

Now Augusta gives back meat to Adelina, seven cords.

Now Inês gives meat to Francisca, eight cords.

Inês gives meat to Aboa, nine cords.

Inês gives back meat in small portions.

Inês gives back meat to Martina, ten cords.

Also, Inês gives back meat to Ana.

Then Inês sends one [bag of] sugar and biscuits to uncle's (FB) son.

Then Inês sends meat to Bairo Pite, nine [cords of] meat.

Then for the meat, Inês' sister-in-law (HZ) receives [it] and asks where it comes from.

Then Inês responds that the meat comes from the village.

Filipe da Costa gives meat of one buffalo, which comes from the village.

Filipe da Costa distributes the meat.

To Antonio da Costa, ten cords of meat.<sup>11</sup>

Then Filipe da Costa distributes again for Lorenzo da Costa, eight cords.

Filipe da Costa distributes the meat again for Simon.

Then Filipe da Costa distributes the meat again.

Manuela, eight cords of meat.

Filipe da Costa distributes the meat again.

To Maria, Filipe da Costa gives four cords of meat.

Filipe da Costa distributes the meat again.

To Beatrice, two cords.

Filipe da Costa distributes the meat again.

[To] Cipriano, two cords.

The distribution of meat follows a pattern according to the number of people in each household. For example, Arika receives six cords, one cord for each member of her family. She is married to Maria Soares' grandson Chico, who is Aurora's eldest son. Lola receives six cords because she is Aurora's eldest daughter. Filomena receives six cords to represent herself, her husband, their two children and her parents-in-law. The amount of US\$600 contributed by Filomena's husband towards the funeral costs also determined the quantity of meat she is stated to receive. Augusta gives contributions of meat to her children, and likewise Inês and Filipe da Costa give meat to their children.

There is reference to more conflict when Filipe da Costa, a son-in-law (married to Zelia, Maria Soares' deceased daughter) goes to meet his wife's family. This conflict was related to the *karau moris* owed by the wife-taker households of Aurora, Augusta, Margarida, Inês and Filipe da Costa (standing for Zelia) to Joaquin and Ernesto. As noted earlier, Maria Soares' daughters' households were required to make this payment at any time from the death of the deceased until the *kore metan* ritual, twelve months later. Joaquin, however, was demanding Filipe da Costa pay both *karau mate* and *karau moris* immediately after Maria Soares died, but Filipe did not want to comply with the request. There was a call for him not to be angry because of this demand. Joaquin was insisting on payment so preparations could commence for the ritual meal after the burial. A question arises as to why Joaquin considers that Filipe has no right to delay payment until the customary twelve months. Perhaps Filipe has still not fully paid bridewealth for Zelia.

Some residents discuss the distribution of property when they are dying and choose to divide their wealth between various members of their kin. As the eldest son, Joaquin inherits the land and property of Maria Soares.<sup>12</sup>

*Filipe da Costa bá hasoru umane sira, la hatan.*

*Hakarak Filipe da Costa fó kedas karau mate, karau moris fó kedas, avó sei toba iha meza.*

*Selae, Filipe da Costa karau ida.*

*Joaquin la simu Filipe da Costa nia karau ida, rai hela bá tinan.*

*Joaquin hakarak karau rua hatama dala ida bá kampung nian.*

*Labele hirus Filipe da Costa.*

*Joaquin hakarak mane-foun sira hatama karau kompletu, karau ida, serveja kaixa ida, osan empat juta.*

*Joaquin harakak feto nain lima, sira ida-ida hatama ida-ida nia sasán primeiru.*

*Filipe da Costa nia sasán, karau ida, osan juta rua ho serveja kaixa ida osan.*

*Aurora da Silva hodi nia sasán, karau ida, osan juta ida.*

*Tuir fali, Augusta hodi karau ida, osan juta ida ba serveja kaixa.*

*Depois, Margarida da Silva hodi fali karau ida, serveja kaixa ida, bá kampung hasoru Joaquin sira.*

*Inês Reberiu hodi karau ida, serveja kaixa ida, bá hasoru Joaquin.*

Filipe da Costa goes to meet the wife-givers, but [they] did not respond.

[They] want Filipe da Costa to give a dead buffalo immediately, a live buffalo immediately; grandmother is still lying on the table.

If not, Filipe da Costa [gives] one buffalo.

Joaquin does not receive Filipe da Costa's [other] buffalo; [Filipe] keeps [it] for a year.

Joaquin wants two buffaloes brought at the same time to his village.

Do not be angry Filipe da Costa.

Joaquin wants the brothers-in-law to put in complete buffaloes: one buffalo, one box of beer, money – four million.

Joaquin wants the five women, each one of them, to put in their things first.

Filipe da Costa's things: one buffalo, money – two million – and money for one box of beer.

Aurora da Silva brings her things: one buffalo, money – one million.

Next, Augusta brings one buffalo, money – one million – for boxes of beer.

Then, Margarida da Silva brings again one buffalo, one box of beer, [and] goes to the village to meet Joaquin's family.

Inês Reberiu brings one buffalo, one box of beer, [and] goes to meet Joaquin.

On the night of the death of Maria Soares, Aurora, the eldest daughter, stood by the corpse to greet people when they entered the house to pay their respects. Both Aurora and Margarida hugged people when they entered the room to view the corpse. A number of people handed Aurora envelopes with a cash contribution towards the funeral feast. She placed these envelopes in a container. The women were not permitted to take money from the container. It was the responsibility of the two sons to oversee the money collected and supervise money allocated for the purchase of goods required for the funeral feast.



*Joaquin mane sira foti osan, legadu.*

*Joaquin ho Ernesto foti osan lima ribu  
iha kaleen, legadu, bá merkadu.*

*Hola sasán mai tein.*

*Avó mate.*

*Hola foos, mina, masin, xá ho kafé,  
masimidar, fehuk, hodi mai tein.*

*Avó mate.*

*Halo tein modo oin sanulu, depois hola  
aqua kaixa, xá sanulu, depois hola mina,  
simbu dos haat, karau ida, mai tein.*

*Oho fahi tolu, bibi haat ho manu sanulu,  
tein ba parente sira, hodi bá tein ba avó.*

*Depois oho tia karau.*

*Tein parente sira.*

*Tein ho ba ema sira hakoi-mate.*

*Han depois fali hosi rate.*

*Parente sira han, hemu aqua, hemu kafé.*

*Depois hasai ema fila bá uma.*

*Ita uma-na'in, mesak bei-oan.*

Joaquin and his brother take the money,  
the bequest.

Joaquin and Ernesto take the money, five  
thousand, in the tin, the bequest, to the  
market.

[They] buy things for cooking.

Grandmother is dead.

[They] buy rice, oil, salt, tea and coffee,  
sugar, potatoes, to cook.

Grandmother is dead.

[Then] cook ten types of vegetables, then  
buy boxes of water, ten [packets of] tea,  
then buy oil, four [boxes of] soy sauce,  
one buffalo to cook.

[Then] kill three pigs, four goats and ten  
chickens, [then] cook for their relatives,  
bring to cook for grandmother.

Then kill aunt's buffalo.

Cook for their relatives.

Cook for the people [who go to the]  
burial.

Eat after returning from the grave.

The relatives eat, drink water, drink  
coffee.

Then people return home.

Your householders, only the  
grandchildren.

## **Life without Maria Soares**

### *A plea for Maria Soares to return*

The lamenter moves the kin group to remember what it will be like without Maria Soares. She recalls the advice Maria Soares offered when she was alive. She instructed her children to send her grandchildren to school and emphasises that she wants them to be educated. She reminds the grandchildren to look after the house when they return from school. She also directs them to pray when they come home by burning candles and placing these in the *oratóriu* (T) (shrine) located in the front room.

Maria Soares believed it was important not to hit the children. This reflects her attitude to disciplining children. Many residents in Bidau slapped their children and saw

it as a necessary part of teaching them discipline. While Maria Soares did not beat her children, she reminds Ernesto to control and look after his children.

The lamentation highlights that when Maria Soares died she did not take one of Joaquin's children with her. In Forman's (1980:167) account of Makassae funerals, two affinal women at a funeral similarly respond: "We do not die all at once, but one by one." Maria Soares requested her relatives to offer Catholic Masses for her after her death. In East Timor, a cash donation sealed in an envelope marked with the name of the deceased is given to a priest in order that Mass be offered for the soul of the deceased. The priest sometimes recites the name of the deceased aloud during part of the Eucharistic proceedings.

*Ita tuur hanoín avó, buka la hetan, kalan kalan.*

*Ita hadeer, buka avó nia meza, buka avó bá ne'bé?*

*Buka avó, fila fali, mai tuur ita han hemu, fila kalan, fila mai uma.*

*Aurora tanis, hanoín avó.*

*Depois, filafali, avó hatete haree feto na'in-lima.*

*Haree halo didi'ak.*

*Joaquin tenke haree feto na'in- lima.*

*Haree halo didi'ak kuñada Eliza.*

*Tenke haree feto na'in-lima halo didi'ak.*

*Kuñada, haree katuas Joaquin halo didi'ak.*

*Avó mate ona.*

*Avó kuñada haree avó.*

*Halo didi'ak kuñada sira.*

*Tenke haree avó halo didi'ak.*

*Depois Aurora kalan kalan tenke reza.*

*Kuñada Aurora hatete kuñada Eliza tenke reza para avó bá lalehan.*

*Halo ida inan diak mai bei-oan sira.*

We sit and think about grandmother, look but not find, every night.

We stay awake, look for grandmother's table, look for grandmother, where has she gone?

[We] look for grandmother, [we] return, [we] come [and] sit, we eat [and] drink, [we] return at night, [we] return home.

Aurora cries, remembers grandmother.

Then, again, grandmother says to look after the five women.

Look after [them] well.

Joaquin must look after the five women.

Look after [them] well, sister-in-law (BW) Eliza.

Must look after the five women well.

Sister-in-law, watch old Joaquin well.

Grandmother has died.

Grandmother's sister-in-law, look after grandmother.

Do it well sister-in-law.

Must look after grandmother well.

Then Aurora every night must pray.

Sister-in-law Aurora tells sister-in-law

Eliza [she] must pray so that

grandmother goes to heaven.

[Tells her to] make a good mother for the grandchildren.

*Ernesto hatete mana Eliza tenke haree.*

Ernesto tells older sister<sup>13</sup> Eliza she must look after [her children].

*Joaquin tenke haree nia oan sira.*

Joaquin must look after his children.

*Avó mate.*

Grandmother is dead.

*Ba ne'e diak ona, agora Joaquin tenke haree fali Eliza oan sira, oan na'in hitu.*

For this well-being, now Joaquin must look after Eliza's children, seven children.

*Tenke haruka sira bá eskola.*

[He] must send them to school.

*Avó moris lakohi bei-oan lakohi beik.*

Grandmother [when] alive did not want [her] grandchildren to be stupid.

*Haruka sira bá eskola.*

Send them to school.

*Avó moris dehan sira bá eskola para aban-bainrua haree Joaquin ho Eliza.*

Grandmother [when] alive said they go to school so that in the future [they can] look after Joaquin and Eliza.

*Bá eskola, mai, tenke haree uma.*

Go to school, come [back], must look after the house.

*Avó moris, avó hatete lao, bele lao, tenke mai, sunu ahi-oan ba oratóriu.*

Grandmother [when] alive, grandmother said walk, can walk, must come, burn candles at the [household] shrine.

*Avó moris avó, hatete tenke lao, tenke husu misa ba Maria Soares.*

Grandmother [when] alive, grandmother said must walk, must ask for Mass for Maria Soares.

*Ernesto hatete mana Eliza tenke kuidadu.*

Ernesto tells older sister Eliza (BW) [she] must be careful.

*Ernesto nia oan tiga belas.*

Ernesto has thirteen children.

*Main dehan Ernesto tenke serbisu.*

Mother tells Ernesto [he] must work.

*Ernesto ho Josefina tenke haree oan ne'e halo didi'ak.*

Ernesto and Josefina must look after these children well.

*Avó moris, Maria Soares moris, lakohi baku bei-oan tiga belas.*

Grandmother [when] alive, Maria Soares [when] alive, did not want [them] to hit the thirteen grandchildren.

*Avó hatete Ernesto tenke kontrola labarik sira.*

Grandmother tells Ernesto [he] must control the children.

*Agora avó mate ona, Ernesto ho*

Now grandmother is dead, Ernesto and Josefina, [you] must look after these your children, four female children and nine males, so that in the future [they will] look after you.

*Josefina, tenke jaga imi nia oan ne'e, oan fetu haat mane sia, para aban-bainrua haree imi.*

*Maria Soares mate la hodi.*

Maria Soares died alone.

*Joaquin nia oan ida Maria Soares mate la hodi.*

One of Joaquin's children, Maria Soares [when she] died, did not take.

*Maria Soares mate temi ba imi nia naran Ernesto nia oan para aban-bainrua.*

Maria Soares died to leave her name for Ernesto's children in the future.

*Maria Soares hatete, tenke fulan fulan husu misa ba Maria Soares.*

Maria Soares said, every month, must ask for Mass for Maria Soares.

*Maria Soares hatete ba Aurora tenke husu misa.*

Maria Soares said to Aurora [she] must ask for Mass.

*Ba Augusta tenke husu misa.*

*Ba Margarida tenke husu misa ba Maria Soares.*

*Ba Inês tenke husu misa ba Maria Soares.*

*Fulan fulan tenke husu misa.*

*Bolu bei-oan para tuir misa Maria Soares, bá reza ba Maria Soares.*

To Augusta, [she] must ask for Mass.

To Margarida, [she] must ask Mass for Maria Soares.

To Inês, [she] must ask for Mass for Maria Soares.

Every month must ask for Mass.

Call the grandchildren to attend Mass for Maria Soares, go to pray for Maria Soares.

*Keep good relations and do not quarrel*

When she was alive, Maria Soares stressed that it was important for her kin to speak well to each other and not to fight amongst themselves. She noted that the family might argue because of the contributions that they had to make and referred to these contributions as meat. Forman (1980:165) points out that “considerable bickering and occasionally even fist fights among lesser lineage figures” erupts over death payments among the Makassae. Similarly, Waterson (1997:81) writing about the Sa’dan Toraja of Sulawesi claims that the division and distribution of meat at funerals can be sources of conflict. She states:

It can be fraught with tension, which has on rare occasions been known to explode in physical violence where a person believes himself to have been insulted by not receiving his due. More than any other procedure, this one establishes and maintains claims to precedence. Partly, one’s prestige and the size of the share to which one is entitled depends upon the “boldness” of one’s own sacrifices; the more pigs and buffaloes one is known to have slaughtered, the more meat one will receive. But it is also based upon inherited rank; the recitations of the meat-divider here become a repository of historical and genealogical memory, continually kept alive in performance and having real social consequences in the present. (Waterson 1997:81)

Lola’s role is not only as a skilled performer in the singing of this lamentation. She also possesses extensive genealogical knowledge of the family. Her ability to recount the lamentation at later periods, with variations from the original performance, contributes to keeping the memory of her grandmother alive and provides a commentary about the dynamics of relationships among Maria Soares’ kin. In the final section of the

lamentation, Maria Soares outlines the process for her family to meet in six months' time. At that time, she wants her kin to organise a Mass and to put flowers on her grave.

*Bá ona, labele istori malu.*

*Maria Soares moris dehan labele istori,  
tenke koalia halo didi'ak.*

*Maria Soares hatete Aurora labele istori  
malu ho Ametu,  
Ametu, Abílio para halibur imi malu.*

*Maria Soares moris, hakarak na'in-lima,  
tenke haree malu halo didi'ak.*

*Maria Soares hatete tenke haree oan fetu  
sira nia oan para nakonu iha oin.*

*Lia ruma Maria Soares hatete ba  
Joaquin, tenke bá hatete ba oan fetu sira,  
para sira mai atu ko'alia ba avó nia  
fulan neen.*

*Avó hatete, Maria Soares hatete, fulan  
neen bolu malu, tuur hamutuk, bolu ema  
bá mai avó nia fulan neen.*

*Avó hatete, Maria Soares hatete, labele  
istori malu naran, ko'alia halo didi'ak,  
labele istori malu, hotu oan.  
Ita mak han, ita mak hemu, lakohi imi  
istori malu, tuur hamutuk, ko'alia de'it.  
Avó moris, avó hatete Joaquin tenke bolu  
sira na'in-lima mai ko'alia, tuur koalia.*

*Maria Soares, besik ona fulan neen.  
Joaquin tenke ko'alia ho fetu na'in-lima,  
ko'alia oras tuku neen iha kampung.*

*Bolu Augusta hatete tuku neen tenke mai  
tuur ko'alia ba avó nia fulan neen.*

*Margarida tenke mai tuir ba Maria  
Soares nia fulan neen, tenke hodi osan,  
mai tan hodi ko'alia ba Maria Soares nia  
misa, hahan.*

*Imi bele hau parte nia halo misa ba  
Maria Soares.*

*Na'an bele diak, Maria Soares la han.*

Go, do not quarrel.

Maria Soares [when] alive said do not  
quarrel, must speak well.

Maria Soares says to Aurora do not  
quarrel with Ametu,  
[To] Ametu, Abílio, stop, bring  
yourselves together.

Maria Soares [when] alive, wants the five  
[children of Aurora], to look after each  
other very well.

Maria Soares says must look after the  
daughters' children to the full.<sup>14</sup>

Some words Maria Soares says to  
Joaquin: [he] must go [and] speak to the  
daughters, so that they come to talk for  
grandmother's six months [ritual].  
Grandmother says, Maria Soares says,  
[at] six months, call together, sit together,  
call people to come to grandmother's six  
months.

Grandmother says, Maria Soares says, do  
not call each other names, talk well, don't  
quarrel, end [it] children.

You eat, you drink, refuse your  
quarrelling, sit together, just talk.

Grandmother [when] alive, grandmother  
tells Joaquin [he] must call the five, [to]  
come and talk, sit and talk.

Maria Soares, nearly six months.

Joaquin must talk with the five women,  
talk [about] the time, six o'clock in the  
village.

Call Augusta, tell [her] six o'clock [she]  
must come, sit and talk about  
grandmother's six months.

Margarida must come for Maria Soares'  
six months, must bring money, come and  
talk for Maria Soares' Mass, food.

You can my part [to] do Mass for Maria  
Soares.

Meat can be good, [but] Maria Soares

*Aurora tenke haree ai-funan ba Maria Soares, mate la han na'an.*

*Ita hodi ai-funan ba tau Maria Soares nia rate leten.*

*Tenke kuidadu ai-funan hodi ba rate.*

*Na'an imi han, ba Maria Soares hakarak ai-funan ho misa reza de'it, ho misa de'it ba Maria Soares.*

*Bele istori malu tanba na'an.*

*Maria Soares hatete tenke reza ba Maria Soares.*

*Agora Joaquin hatete besik ona ita atu tuur iha Maria Soares nia uma kampung laran.*

*Besik oan la tuur, ita atu bá tuur.*

[does] not eat [it].

Aurora must look after flowers for Maria Soares; the dead do not eat meat.

We bring flowers to put on top of Maria Soares' grave.

Must be careful with flowers [that we] bring to grave.

Meat you eat, but Maria Soares wants flowers and Mass and prayers only, and Mass only for Maria Soares.

Can quarrel because of meat.

Maria Soares says [we] must pray for Maria Soares.

Now Joaquin says [that] it is near the time for us to sit inside Maria Soares' village house.

Near, children do not sit, we go to sit.

## Conclusion

According to Seremetakis (1991:3), "the lament performance, given the scope of its affective dynamics, cannot be treated only as an individuated psychological or literary artifact. The construction of self and sentiment in the lament performance is an ongoing social process." The lamentation of Maria Soares is not just an expression of mourning and release of emotion at the time of her death, but it also calls upon those gathered to remember her, details the obligations that are ongoing between members of her kin group and directs her kin to carry out the funerary rites and to live harmoniously according to her wishes. The contextual and dynamic nature of the lamentation for Maria Soares, initially composed after her death and later reconstructed for me, allows for commentary on and response to any issues in relations between kin, in this case conflict over mortuary payments.

Durkheim proposed that when people come together to mourn, the intensity of emotions that some express by screaming and beating themselves may be painful but not depressing; these emotions "indicate a state of effervescence that suggests a

mobilization of all our active forces and even an influx of external energies” (2001:303). Durkheim argued that:

when collective life reaches a certain degree of intensity it awakens religious thought, because it determines a state of effervescence that changes the conditions of psychic activity. Vital energies become overstimulated, passions more powerful, sensations stronger; there are even some that are produced only at this moment (Durkheim 2001:317).

Such vitality is manifested during the performance of lamentations in Bidau when the corpse is inside the house and some mourners release built up emotions by wailing. There is much activity, with others gathering around the corpse reciting the Rosary and a large crowd socialising in the garden. The mourners move between various states, expressing their grief at different mourning rituals and returning to regular patterns of life in between rites, until the final ritual twelve months after the death. “Once mourning is over, the domestic group is calmed by the mourning itself. It regains its confidence, individuals are relieved of the painful pressure exerted upon them, and they feel more at ease” (Durkheim 2001:308).

The lamentation for Maria Soares highlights the centrality of exchange obligations when a person dies and thus how mortuary rituals play a significant role in maintaining alliances between wife-givers and wife-takers. The complexity of the exchanges relies on the past affinal ties. The descent group of the deceased is the main negotiator for the funerary rites calling upon its wife-giving groups to contribute what are symbolically seen as female goods of cooked rice and pork and the wife-taking groups to give what are determined to be male goods of buffaloes and cash.

The sense of alienation and disconnection experienced by some East Timorese who have had relatives and friends die in violent upheavals may be alleviated through the strengthening of social bonds in mortuary practices and memorial rituals. At the same time, the financial burden of complex mortuary payments required over a long

period of time can cause disputes within the kin group requiring much negotiation. As was identified in the lamentation for Maria Soares, some members of the kin group argued about the contributions they were obliged to make towards her funeral costs; however, after much discussion, the problems were resolved.

The display of coffins within the public view in the open-air factory in Bidau Lecidere is a reminder that death pervades this society. The conduct of death rituals in East Timor continues to be a link between the historical and ancestral past and the future. In the recovery from the death and destruction of 1999, participation in funerary rites and other rituals assisted residents to reorder their lives and their social world. The composition and preservation of lamentations, such as the one for Maria Soares, gives voice to the deceased after her or his death by recalling instructions about ways that kin, close friends and neighbours should act. How funerary practices will be modified in the future is uncertain. One certainty is that the lamentation of Maria Soares performed by Lola standing next to her grandmother's corpse, and later for me, helps to keep her memory alive in Bidau.



### PART THREE – RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION

The three chapters of Part Three examine the ritual and everyday activities of Bidau residents in public space, the private sphere, and intermediate spaces, to show how each of these spaces is important for individual and social healing, and how the reconstruction of these spaces has been a necessary part of post-conflict recovery. After the destruction of 1999, Bidau residents lived in a temporarily expanded public space, which was conducive for extensive social interactions. Over time, they gradually reshaped social spaces to better accommodate their ritual and everyday life. As residents focused on the reconstruction of their houses and gardens, they redefined their social boundaries. In Bidau, as elsewhere in East Timor, the constant surveillance by the Indonesian military during Indonesian rule had imposed restrictions on the spaces used for social and ritual performances. Because their freedom of movement had been so restricted in the past, it was understandable that Bidau residents prioritised the reordering of social spaces. Of particular importance, was the “house,” a category that denotes both social groups and dwellings. The Birunbiru Makassae gave priority to rebuilding their *umaluliks* in their origin villages, whereas most other residents focused on claiming, rebuilding or recreating their residential dwellings in Bidau.

In Chapter 8, I explore the importance of rituals and practices conducted by Bidau residents in public places, including the streets, the grotto, and the local cemetery. I analyse how their participation in activities in these public and sacred spaces contributes to a sense of well-being. Most residents follow Catholic traditions, and churches are important public places of worship for them. Many residents from Birunbiru district return there annually to participate in rituals at their *umaluliks*. Residents engage in recreational activities that provide opportunities to commune with friends and exchange news and gossip.

Events during 1999 changed the private space inside homes. Some residents returned to Bidau Motaklaran to find their houses destroyed, while newcomers to Bidau Tokobaru sought abandoned houses to live in. In Chapter 9, I examine the reconstruction of the home environment, especially repairs to residents' houses, and the practices residents conduct within the privacy of their homes. These activities identify insiders and outsiders and reveal how networks of support can develop and strengthen.

Chapter 10 looks at practices conducted in the intermediate spaces of verandas and gardens. These venues are the spaces where guests are often entertained during informal meetings and are spaces of importance during funeral rituals and wedding celebrations. These spaces are where many residents engage in "Bidau talking therapy," which assists them in their daily lives. Such talking is perhaps one of the most important means of healing through everyday living in Bidau.

## CHAPTER 8: OUTSIDE CAVES – PRACTICES IN PUBLIC PLACES

I have lived in Bidau Motaklaran for 15 years. We can do anything now that we have freedom. We can go to any place. We can go and visit our families. (Indonesian Period Settler, Interview, 28 January 2001)

After militia destroyed Bishop Belo's residence in Bidau Lecidere during 1999, it was rebuilt in a grand style with imported floor and roof tiles, and many residents from Bidau were happy to attend a movie night there to celebrate its completion. The rebuilding of this church property, the school SD Tiga Bidau and high schools, and the renovation of the grotto, preceded the repairs to many residents' houses, as donor funding was available for these public structures whereas it took time for residents to save money to repair their houses.

This chapter concentrates on practices of residents in public places. My focus is on rituals and practices of Bidau residents and how these have a spatial dimension. During the 1999 violence, streets were dangerous places, with militia parading through them and causing havoc, but as stability was established, residents gradually reclaimed the streets. By October 2002, people had a more relaxed approach to life. It was as though the lid of oppression had been lifted. Residents more frequently inhabited the streets and appeared to have confidence to congregate openly in public places. Bidau residents were able to freely gather at sacred places, such as cemeteries, the grotto, churches and *umaluliks*. Residents were also able to use public places for leisure activities, including sporting competitions, picnics and cockfighting, all of which provide opportunities for social interaction. Residents reported that these activities helped them to forget about their worries.

## **Rehabilitation of public spaces**

### *The reconstruction of schools*

In 2000 and 2001, major renovation of school classrooms was conducted through the Emergency School Readiness Project funded through the Trust Fund for East Timor (TFET) from donor money administered by the World Bank. Teachers were recruited for all grades, the curriculum was developed to include more subjects than just the teaching of the Portuguese language, and school hours were extended. By mid-2001, the principal of the local primary school SD Tiga Bidau had also obtained assistance from the Ministry of Health to repair the toilet facilities.

Many residents discussed the centrality of education for children in Bidau when I asked them what they wanted for the future of their country. While the physical environment for education had been destroyed during 1999, over time programs were restored with modifications to the curriculum and teaching staff recruited. A few residents proudly boasted that their young children had commenced school for the first time. In 2001, one of the most important aspirations people voiced was for good quality education for their children. Many parents in Bidau Motaklaran saw their children as the hope for the future. They wanted their children to become leaders in the new nation, be well educated, obtain gainful employment, earn a decent wage and care for them in their old age. Of those interviewed, more than three quarters (78%) had completed primary school themselves and just over a third (34%) had completed senior high school. However, 23 people (15.5% of those interviewed) had not attended school at all.

### *Repair to streets and utilities*

Repair of the streets and bridges in and around Bidau following the destruction in 1999 recreated public spaces essential for ritual processions, leisurely walks, shopping at kiosks and for the gathering of the youth. In particular, the repair was important for the

youth in Bidau who are a visible presence in public spaces as they socialise in front of shops, at snooker venues by the roadside and at the bridges.

The difficulties that residents experienced with the water were alleviated when a town water supply was installed and connected to houses in November 2002. Although residents did not take responsibility for cleaning blocked drains in the streets, i.e. outside the boundaries of their properties, government workers wearing orange safety jackets and gumboots were occasionally seen to be doing this.

Power lines were reconnected, and the power supply gradually became more reliable. It had worked well for much of the time during the UNTAET administration, but deteriorated after independence, especially around October and November 2002, when a day's supply in Bidau Motaklaran averaged only about three hours. This made sleeping difficult, and some residents walked late of an evening to the beach to get some respite from the heat. Residents used kerosene lamps and candles when there was no power. The lack of working generators was remedied by the installation of new generators financed by the Norwegian government, and just prior to Christmas 2002, a more regular electricity supply was in operation. The supply was then limited not so much by the problems of infrastructure but by the lack of government revenue. It was up to individuals to go to the appropriate department and pay for electricity; however, few people in Bidau, or for that matter elsewhere in Dili, did so.

#### *Small enterprises in the streets*

New developments fostered social interaction. As more kiosks opened in the streets of Bidau, social exchange in the streets increased. Makassae people from Bidau Massau constructed new brick houses and businesses along the footpaths of Estrada de Bidau. What had previously been a narrow strip of land between the road and the canal with four fruit and vegetable stalls and a few other shops was transformed by early 2003 with

many *bebak* dwellings and other shops being constructed. A new business opened, which manufactured glass *oratóriu*. Some Birunbiru people from Bidau took advantage of the new opportunities and set up small shelters where they fried fish, chicken and satay. As more restaurants and other eating places opened along the main road, it became a popular location for buses and taxis to refuel and drivers to eat at the local venues. At small stalls near these venues, boys sold cigarettes and music cassettes.

Not everyone in Bidau welcomed the developments on the main road. Some residents were very annoyed that these buildings existed and thought people should move back to their own places. Building on this area was illegal because the land was state property. It was possible that government regulations in the future would require people who built on this land to move. However, the developments increased opportunities for Bidau residents to make money and provided homes for people who had been living in cramped conditions.

### *Renaming of streets*

Kaviraj (1997:95) notes that in European cities with the emerging of modernity, public spaces play an important role in political life. In particular, he points out that: “A ... process by which a nationalistic history is inscribed on popular memory is by marking the streets with the names of the battles of the nation and the heroes who fought in them” (Kaviraj 1997:95).<sup>1</sup> After independence, some streets and public places in Dili were renamed to honour East Timorese freedom fighters. One of the main streets in Dili leading to Bidau Motaklaran was renamed Av. Presidente Nicolau Lobato in memory of a national hero. Nicolau Lobato was a founding member of ASDT (Timorese Social Democratic Association) and Fretilin’s president following the detention of Xavier do Amaral.<sup>2</sup>

### **Events in the streets**

The public space of the streets is important for funerary processions from houses to the cemetery for burials, the day of bitter flowers, and the *kore metan* ritual. When a coffin is transported to the cemetery, people stop at the roadside and bow their heads in respect, and traffic halts to allow the procession to pass. The streets were also important for Bidau residents who participated in religious gatherings. In addition, many residents engaged in recreational activities by taking late afternoon walks around the neighbourhood.

### *Religious processions*

A number of health professionals have pointed out that religious rituals can play a significant role in maintaining good mental health. Jacobs (1992) emphasises the psychological benefits of religious rituals. She argues that participation in religious ceremonies can reduce “anxiety and isolation as emotions are acknowledged, expressed and resolved within a social milieu of attachment and connection with significant others” (Jacobs 1992:268). Reeves *et al.* (1990:281) propose that “ritual can be used to assist individuals to move from a maladaptive to an adaptive style of grieving.” They provide examples of the use of ritual for maladaptive reactions to bereavement focusing on the liminal stage of ritual. One example they describe involves a woman whose grief was so intense after the death of her son that she suppresses the loss. Siddhartha, the Buddha instructs the woman to visit households and collect mustard seeds from those households in which there has never been a death. After visiting many households the woman realises that death touches everyone because in each household at least one person had died. The woman was then able to grieve and come to terms with her own loss. Reeves *et al.* (1990:288-290) advocate the inclusion of ritual in therapeutic tools

such as cross-cultural counselling, but acknowledge the warnings of therapists that for the ritual to be beneficial “it needs to be experienced as meaningful” by that person.

Rites of passage are a particularly important type of ritual. Arnold van Gennep (1960:11) showed that all rites of passage could be “subdivided into *rites of separation*, *transition rites*, and *rites of incorporation*,” although, according to van Gennep, the three subcategories are not developed to the same extent by all peoples or in every ceremonial pattern. Turner and Turner (1978:2) comment that “by identifying liminality van Gennep discovered a major innovative, transformative dimension of the social.” They argue “that liminality is not only *transition* but also *potentiality*, not only ‘going to be’ but also ‘what may be’” (Turner, Victor *et al.* 1978:3), and they apply the idea of liminality to the transformations people undergo in religious pilgrimages. Religious processions, though not as intense, as long, or as difficult as religious pilgrimages, can nevertheless involve some similar transformative processes.

In East Timor, the majority of religious processions focus on devotion to Mary and Jesus. This differs from some other Catholic countries where there are more processions for saints. For example, in some parts of Mexico, even though there is a strong devotion to Mary since the appearance of the Virgin at Guadalupe in 1531, the “great majority of religious fiestas are in celebration of saints; relatively few are in celebration of Jesus or Mary” (Lewis, Oscar 1960:13).<sup>3</sup>

Processions start and end at significant locations. Some processions on Catholic feast days commence at Motael Church and follow the coastal road to Lecidere Park, next to the Bishop’s residence where they end. There are also processions from churches to cemeteries, one of the most significant held on 12 November in remembrance of the Santa Cruz massacre. On the feast of Christ the King in November,



people walk from church services to the statue of *Kristu Rei*, praying the Rosary along the route.

Marian devotion constitutes a major component of Catholic religious observance in East Timor.<sup>4</sup> Statues of the Blessed Virgin are placed at strategic locations visible from the roadside in many villages. They are housed inside caves (grottos) or other public places, such as the parks near the Bishop's residence and opposite the Dili port. During the months of May and October, Bidau residents participate in Marian processions that commence at the grotto in Bidau Motaklaran. The focus of these processions is devotion to the Mother of God with a strong emphasis on praying the Rosary. The participants are adults and children from Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru.

On the last evening in April, residents bring a statue of Mary from Bekora Catholic Church and install it at the grotto in readiness for the procession the next evening. The catechists or the Dominican sisters organise children to lead the procession, which usually commences around 6.00 p.m. and involves approximately 50 to 80 people. A young boy carries a wooden cross, followed by young men carrying the statue and people carrying burning candles. Other residents join the group and carry lighted candles as they walk to the nominated house for the first evening. The leader commences a decade of the Rosary with the group praying the second stanza of each prayer. After each decade, the group sing a hymn. Upon arrival at a house, there is a blessing at the gate and prayers before the bearers carry the statue inside for communal prayers. The next evening the procession moves from this house to another, and so on each night until the last evening in May when the statue is returned to the grotto for prayers to close the ceremony. The process in October is similar. People throughout Dili follow this practice. It is also common practice in rural areas for people to participate in

Marian processions. In Birunbiru district, there were no Marian grottos, and there was only one grotto devoted to St. Francis. However, even without these public religious structures, many villagers from Birunbiru participated in processions taking a Marian statue from house to house as well as from village to village.

A few weeks prior to 20 May 2002, Portugal despatched a statue of Our Lady of Fatima to East Timor to be used in religious processions in the lead up to the country's independence celebrations. On 1 May 2002 there was a pilgrimage with this statue from Dili to Oekussi, and subsequently pilgrimages were conducted throughout the country to Lospalos, Viqueque, Baukau, Manatuto, Same, Ainaro, Aileu, Liquica, Maliana and Suai, before the statue was returned to Portugal on 31 May 2002. Many of the Catholic rituals in East Timor and the strong devotional aspects of prayers and processions held to commemorate important dates in the Catholic calendar and for Marian devotion have been adopted from Portuguese traditions. In contrast, in Australia, there are very few public religious processions; churches are more likely to encourage families to show devotion to Mary during May through the tradition of praying the Rosary together in their homes.

Another major religious procession, which attracts large crowds, is held in Bidau and throughout the country every five years in June. The focus of devotion for this event is on the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On 6 June 2003, a gathering of several hundred people congregated at the bridge in Bidau Tokobaru in the late afternoon for the commencement of the procession to carry the statue of Jesus from village to village. The ritual commenced with a traditional ceremony performed by elders dressed in traditional costume of *tais* and headdresses, waving small sheets of leather and invoking the ancestors. It was followed by a dance performance by children to the beat of traditional drums. As well as the statue being elevated for all to see, another man also

dressed in traditional costume waved a large national flag amongst the crowd. At the end of the dance, the appointed bearers carrying the statue of Jesus, which was adorned with a *tais* around its neck and artificial flowers at its base, led the procession along the coastal road to a new chapel *Capela Becari, Santa Margarida Maria Alacoque*, in the village section of Becari, a few kilometres east of Bidau.<sup>5</sup> It was an emotional experience for many participants and several women cried during the performance, because they were happy the statue had come to Bidau. For others, this procession triggered memories of the past, reminding them of the previous procession of this kind, which was held during Indonesian rule in June 1998. On that occasion, they had received information from East Timorese involved in the clandestine independence struggle, and were able to pass money and supplies to clandestine members. Every other year, a statue of Jesus is carried in a procession around Bidau in June in the same way as the Mary statue is carried in May and October.



**Plate 12. Start of the procession for the Sacred Heart of Jesus on 6 June 2003**

The public space of the streets is also used for the Stations of the Cross held on Good Friday and each week in Lent, the 40 days leading up to Easter. In this ritual, people process from one station to the next, tracing the passion of Jesus. The fourteen stations may be designated by crosses or small shrines. In rural areas, crosses used for these stations can be seen on hillsides and in towns.

#### *Candles in the streets*

Two evenings a year, the streets come alive with pinpoints of light as residents burn candles and place them in front of their houses. One evening, 4 September, is to commemorate the announcement of the 1999 ballot results and to remember those who died in the struggle. The second evening, 12 November, is to remember those who died in the Santa Cruz massacre. In 2000 and 2001, many people lit candles along many streets in Dili. While the practice continued in later years, the numbers of candles and people participating diminished. This may have reflected a process of healing and people wanting to leave sadness behind to focus more on their future.

#### *Building nativity scenes in the streets*

For a few weeks prior to Christmas, in each village, residents, especially young people, work together to build a *prezepiu* (P) (nativity scene). These are quite elaborate structures with life size figures, flashing lights, and in some cases even a Santa Claus. People pass by to inspect the creativity in the variations of the Christmas theme. For some people the sociability that these activities provide is just as significant as any spiritual meaning.

#### *Leisurely walks*

Going for late afternoon strolls, *ba pasiar* (T), is a leisure pursuit many residents enjoy. In Bidau, young women dress in their fashionable clothes and parade up and down the

streets flirting with young men who congregate at the bridges. These youths sometimes play soccer or relax by smoking cigarettes or playing their guitars and singing. Walking in the streets was the way some couples met. Alberto and Luisa had first noticed each other while strolling in the street, and later regularly met in this public space. Going for walks in the street was another way for people to find out news and exchange gossip as they met friends and neighbours while doing so.

Others have noted the importance of this type of activity in public spaces. Thus, Kaviraj (1997), when discussing the practice of Bengali residents in Calcutta taking evening strolls in the park, notes that public spaces “were characterised by sociability in which the relation between people was not the transient reciprocity of interests but more stable common pursuits, temperaments, social bonding” (Kaviraj 1997:102).

### *Displaying flags*

Symbols are also visible in the public spaces. Whereas some Bidau residents felt compelled to display Indonesian flags during 1999, after security was established they were free to fly flags of their choosing. During August 2001, when political parties held rallies to attract votes for candidates for the Constituent Assembly, residents in Bidau openly decorated their vehicles with flags of the parties they supported and joined rallies in the streets. Alberto sometimes gave the impression that he did not like to discuss politics and had suffered enough under the Indonesian regime, yet he was a Fretilin man and would enthusiastically embrace Fretilin celebrations by adorning his car with the party's flags and banners and participate in rallies around the city. When the new national flag, which was based on the Fretilin flag, was approved at the time of independence in May 2002, many Bidau residents proudly waved and displayed the flag as they celebrated independence.

Flag raising ceremonies were very important in rural districts in the lead up to elections, and these involved not only political parties participating in elections, but also CPD-RDTL, *Conselho Popular de Defesa da Republica Democratica de Timor Leste* (Popular Council for the Defence of the Democratic Republic of East Timor), which rejected the election processes. As Traube (2001:2) noted in relation to Aileu district, “flags were a more compelling symbol of nationhood than either elections or constitutions, and people engaged in heated arguments over what constituted their proper or improper display.”

In this context, a flag raising ceremony in front of the village office in Celestina’s village in Birunbiru on 31 May 2003, just after the first anniversary of independence, was very significant.<sup>6</sup> At this communal celebration in Birunbiru, which attracted approximately 1,000 people, including residents who travelled from Bidau Motaklaran, Bidau Tokobaru and Komoro, two buffaloes and a pig were killed for the banquet that followed the flag-raising ceremony and speeches. Preparations for the event had commenced seven days beforehand. Dancing continued from 9.00 p.m. until 8.00 a.m. the next day. The *xefe-suku* said the flag-raising ceremony was an extremely emotional event and that many people cried during it because they remembered those who had died and because they felt they had not attained full independence because of economic problems.<sup>7</sup>

### *Graffiti*

Some Bidau residents expressed themselves in the streets through graffiti. Prior to the Constituent Assembly election, graffiti scrawled across a few fences appeared with the name of Kota, *Klibur Oan Timor Asuwain* (T) (Association of Timorese Heroes), a political party originally formed in November 1974 and which was primarily an association of *liurai* (T) (traditional kings) and Fretilin. The graffiti “AS Bidau” was

popular, the “AS” referring to the name of an Italian soccer team. Satan and sex also received much attention in the form of graffiti around the neighbourhood, and a number of slogans with sexual overtones appeared on fences and buildings. Elsewhere in Dili reactions to political developments received comment through graffiti, and it was not long after the September 11 tragedy in America that a colourful, well-designed painting of Osama Bin Laden appeared on a wall of a ruined building along Estrada de Bidau with the caption in English, “most wanted by the FBI.”

Graffiti communicates a message, and some of the graffiti in Bidau was an expression of residents’ association to the place of Bidau and their local identity. In several places were the words “*Mamoclar*” and “city boys,” these being the work of members of the local youth group. The name *Mamoclar* is associated with the name of Bidau Motaklaran. *Ma* stands for *maun alin* (T) (in this instance referring to elder and younger brothers), *mo* for *mota* (T) (river) and *clar* (T) shortened for *klaran* (middle). What is reflected in the drawing of graffiti is a generational identity, an outward orientation expressed by the young male graffiti-makers. Similarly, Birunbiru people express their identity as inward-looking guardians of tradition who return to their *umaluliks* to participate in various ceremonies. Residents take on diverse identities depending on their participation in different rites. Ricardo, for example, participates in Catholic rituals reflecting a Catholic identity and participates in rituals with his kin group at their *umalulik* taking on the identity of his Birunbiru house group.

### **Public sacred places**

Cemeteries, grottos, churches and *umaluliks* are places where Bidau residents frequently go to find solace by praying, gathering with others, and remembering their deceased relatives through various rituals. Cemeteries, churches and *umaluliks* feature prominently in funerary rites and memorial services.

*Cemeteries as sites of memory*

Cemeteries form part of the collective memory of what has occurred in the country. The potency of the dead becomes part of the national identity. This is evidenced in the Santa Cruz cemetery, the site of the horrific massacre on 12 November 1991. Each year, relatives and friends of the deceased take flowers, offer prayers and burn candles at the cemetery. In addition, since 1999, annual commemoration services have been held in Dili commencing with a Mass at Motael Church followed by a procession to this cemetery. The proceedings at the cemetery in 2000 included a re-enactment of the event, people carrying photographs of those who had been killed in 1991, and speeches. In 2001, there was a similarly large procession and speeches. Proceedings in 2002 were smaller. That year, small groups took flowers to the cemetery, and participants in the first public hearings of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) placed floral wreaths inside the chapel at the cemetery. In 2003, the government declared November 12 a national holiday. That year approximately 3,000 people gathered in front of the government buildings to remember the victims of the massacre with a one-minute silence as well as demands for an investigation to identify the perpetrators (De Wet 2003). The crowd, mostly young people and relatives of the victims, then marched to Santa Cruz cemetery.

In the days leading up to All Souls' Day (2 November), people in Bidau, as throughout the country, are busy painting tombstones, rearranging artificial flowers on graves and cleaning cemetery grounds. On All Souls' Day, people visit graves and attend Mass at the cemetery. During the service, people are invited to pray for those who have died, and many people place candles and fresh flowers on graves and at the base of the large memorial cross in remembrance of the deceased. Although All Souls' Day is included in the Christian calendar, in East Timor it has more prominence than in



the some western countries, because death of kin and friends has been so frequent and central in many people's lives. In Australia, a few more people than usual may attend a Mass in a church and pray for their deceased relatives on this day, but there is no other communal activity or special visits to the cemetery.



**Plate 13. At the cemetery in Bidau Santa Ana on All Souls' Day 2002**

Engaging in culturally relevant mourning rituals, such as those held on All Souls' Day and at Santa Cruz cemetery, contributes to mitigating experiences of loss. People benefit from the social solidarity and support found through participation in these public rituals. At a broader level, social mechanisms for reconciliation and forgiveness, as embodied in the CAVR, help promote public acknowledgement of past human rights violations, and through communal ceremonies, which may include aspects focused on healing for survivors of serious human right violations, some people may be assisted to come to terms with their experiences. However, caution is required when considering whether victims of human rights violations are able to be reconciled with those within their communities who committed atrocities. As Pigou (2004:10) points out, while there

has been no rejection of the community reconciliation process that has been part of CAVR's work, "there is clearly no uniformity in terms of responses, whether victims felt reconciled or were able to forgive." The work of the Commission, once finalised, needs to be considered when evaluating processes and authorities that may facilitate healing. The importance of its work in the public recording of historical events should not be underestimated. Residents in Bidau took little interest in the first CAVR public hearings on *Rona Ami Nia Lian* (T) (Hear Our Voice) held in Dili on the 10 and 11 November 2002. Many residents thought reconciliation was vital and, being curious, they liked to know what was going on, but they accorded greater priority to other matters. What had happened was a long time ago (for many people as long ago as the Indonesian invasion in 1975 and for others at least three years since 1999) or so it seemed to some who were now prospering.<sup>8</sup>



**Plate 14. Decorated tombstones in Birunbiru district**

In addition to the annual public remembrances, cemeteries are important places for various rituals, including burials, the placing of bitter flowers and sweet flowers, *kore metan* and memorial visits. Sundays are popular days for visiting cemeteries, and people take bunches of flowers, light candles and offer prayers at the gravesides. Some

residents in Bidau said that they visited a grave when the deceased family member or friend came to them in a dream.

In rural districts of East Timor, small cemeteries are scattered throughout the countryside. In Birunbiru district, people are buried in small cemeteries and burial sites near houses. As in the city, people take great care of the graves of kin. Plate 14 shows a cemetery set on a hillside that had 77 visible graves, 30 of which belonged to the “da Silva” family. Many of the tombstones were decorated with similar patterns of red and white diamonds, white stars and black colouring. One tombstone was colourfully painted with a Fretilin flag identifying that the kin of the deceased had allegiances with that political party. It appeared that this grave was used as a model from which parts of the flag were copied on other tombstones, which displayed variations of diamond designs. Residents in the closest village on the road, approximately 30 minutes drive away, said that the designs were for decoration only. People in Bidau who came from that district also confirmed this. Near the cross on the grave of a baby named Gil were a baby’s bottle, a bottle of medicine (125mg Erythromycin) and a packet of small red and white tablets. These medicines had not prevented her death at the age of 20 months. Such personal and political details are indicative of how people remember and continue to care for their kin.

### *The Grotto*

The grotto, which serves as the starting place for religious processions, is a public structure set among houses in the midst of Bidau Motaklaran (see Figure 3 on page 62). The Dominican sisters funded the renovations, and a resident (a carpenter and catechist) who lived within close proximity carried out the reconstruction. Following the renovations in 2002, the grotto in Bidau Motaklaran was used more frequently. Some afternoons, the Dominican sisters took children to this shrine for religious instruction

followed by recreational games. The youth group occasionally used the area for singing practice before religious celebrations. During 2003, a communal meal attended by many people from Bidau Motaklaran was held at the site to celebrate the incorporation into the church community of children who had made their first communion. This cave-like structure houses a religious icon, reflecting the internal processes residents experience through prayer. The statue is visible, as are residents' public religious practices; however, the changes that take place individually for people arising from their faith observances and beliefs are less visible like the deeper recesses of the cave. Many residents said that their prayers and participation in religious devotions made them feel better. They did not express the sentiment that they felt God had abandoned them, which some who had endured unbearable hardships may have been justified in feeling.

### *Churches*

There is no doubt that many people in Bidau Motaklaran found consolation in their faith. Faith beliefs and public religious practice were the central means by which Alberto and Luisa had coped with the atrocities that affected their lives. To go to church, they said, provided them with a source of confidence and courage. It had dispelled some of their fears of the Indonesian military and East Timorese militia.

After 1999, attendance at church services fluctuated. During the course of my fieldwork, there was a visible decrease in numbers attending regular Sunday Masses. Some residents chose to go to church only on special occasions, such as Nuptial Masses, memorial Masses and significant feast days, especially Easter and Christmas rituals when many thousands of people attended services. A few said that they did not go at all. The decrease in attendance, noted by many residents, may be attributed to less urgency to attend than in Indonesian times when many people turned to prayer. The change reflected a level of freedom in that residents were able to make these choices in contrast

to the past under *Pancasila* when they had to adopt a religion or when attendance at church may have been instrumental to meet with friends. In an interview with Fr. Antonio Alves on 28 October 2002, he said that in the past people blindly followed what religious leaders had told them to do: “If a priest said cut down the tree, then people just cut down the tree.”

Despite the noticeable drop in attendance, numbers at Sunday Mass were nevertheless very large compared to Australia. At Bishop Belo’s residence, Sunday services in Tetun were held in the large grounds around the house. Similarly, the early morning Sunday Mass in Tetun at St Anthony’s Church, Motael, was held outside, catering to the large numbers attending, a couple of thousand people most Sundays, but increasing to as many as eight thousand on special feast days.<sup>9</sup> The liturgies in Portuguese at Motael, which drew a smaller attendance, were celebrated inside the church.

It was in the public space of the church grounds that Fr. Antonio typically told “jokes” at Mass each week before the final blessing, using humour to relay his messages about various moral, spiritual and practical issues. Fr. Antonio said that he tried to make people laugh to attract their attention and keep them awake so they remembered what he said. His types of jokes were more than funny stories. He used humour to make his point, sometimes addressing moral or social justice issues. The large congregation on a Sunday morning would sit during his story telling session, which could take up to twenty minutes prior to the final blessing in the liturgy. One Sunday he made several jokes about self-respect and modesty. He made jokes about how people dressed for church, saying that some women “dressed like a cucumber” in very tight clothes in the belief they were being fashionable. He joked with the congregation that the stitching in women’s skirts was like the teeth of a crocodile – too tight. Some women may have

been embarrassed or insulted by his references to their clothing that Sunday, but people's reactions each week indicated that he had a good rapport with the congregation and people responded to his joking with much laughter.<sup>10</sup> Some people laughed so much they had tears rolling down their cheeks. At times, he was serious and angry when raising issues, but added humour to make his point.

In all these church rituals, sociability is very significant. Congregations are active in the celebration of the Mass, responding to prayers, changing posture for different parts of the ritual (kneeling, sitting, standing), singing, greeting one another at the sign of peace and receiving communion. At major religious ceremonies, the congregation at Motael Church overflows out onto the streets. Those in the street and park outside the church grounds often sit and chat with their friends, and their involvement is only partial and somewhat distanced from what is happening within the church grounds, where people more actively participate in the prayers and singing. However, all participate to some extent.

On Good Friday, the ritual includes a procession through the streets around the church, extending the public space used. In a country where most citizens are Catholic, the main Good Friday ceremony is the ultimate funeral ritual, held to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. The suffering and redemptive features of the death and resurrection of Jesus are re-enacted in the public spaces of the church and the streets, and through the rituals associated with remembering this death, offering Christians hope and the promise of a better future to those who have suffered. Even for those not attending, there is the element of commemoration that includes onlookers who are drawn into the rituals as participants process through the streets.

### *Umaluliks*

Some residents combine their Catholic beliefs with animist practices associated with *umaluliks*, especially people who come from Birunbiru. The purposes of an *umalulik* can be compared to those of a church where sacred rituals are performed. Most of the Portuguese Period Settlers and several Indonesian Period Settlers in Bidau stated that they did not follow traditional sacred practices and did not have *umaluliks*, though some mentioned that their kin had ancestral houses in the past. For some other residents, visits to *umaluliks* continued to hold significance. Aurora said that her kin group previously had an *umalulik* in Ermera, south of Dili, where they gathered and prayed. She stressed the authority of their Mambai elders whose leadership they followed and respected. According to her, if they did not adhere to ritual practices associated with their *umalulik* something serious could occur, such as a person's death. Aurora combined such beliefs with her Catholic practices.<sup>11</sup>

Visits to *umaluliks* are a regular part of life for a number of residents who were born in rural districts, especially settlers from Birunbiru, many of whom visit their *umaluliks* annually. Many respondents discussed the importance of following traditional practices to avoid sickness; some stressed the necessity of going to their *umalulik* if a member of their kin group became unwell. Others stated that they went to the *umalulik* if they had a problem. In these situations, they sacrificed a goat or a chicken and prayed to their ancestors for guidance and support. In addition to attending annual rituals held in their *umaluliks*, they travel to Birunbiru for weddings, funerals and large communal gatherings. As does Celestina, some Birunbiru people periodically return to their villages of origin to assist with planting and harvesting of rice and maize.

The Birunbiru Makassae thus express identity as people tied to their origin villages and *umaluliks*. The “people of one house” of an *umalulik* may be dispersed

throughout the country, but they are linked by the notion of obligations to origin places.<sup>12</sup> Their strong ties to their origin places led the Birunbiru Makassae to give priority to building their *umaluliks* rather than put many resources into improving their houses and surrounds in Bidau. This, in turn, may have contributed to their marginalisation within the urban village of Bidau.

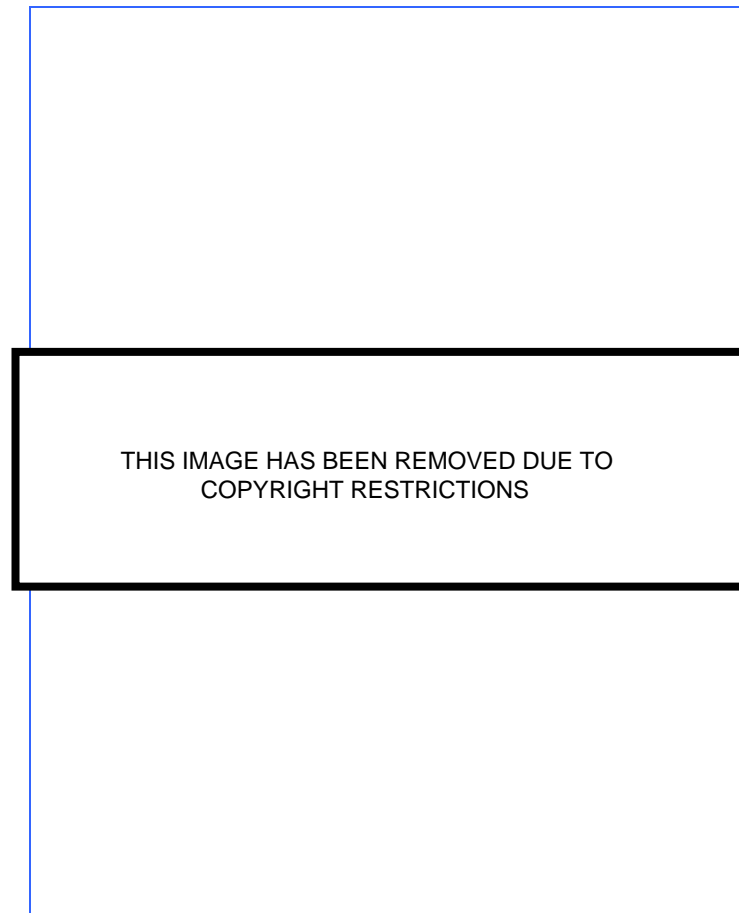
Prior to 1975, there were 48 *umaluliks* in Birunbiru district. Informants said that during the 1975 Indonesian invasion, the Indonesian military destroyed all of them. The villagers have since rebuilt ten of the sacred houses, which are the locus of ritual activity.

It takes approximately two to three months to construct an *umalulik*, but many years to complete the ceremonies for its sanctification. There are similarities between my observations regarding the building of an *umalulik* and Forman's account of house building. Birunbiru residents are Makassae and of the same ethnolinguistic group studied by Forman (1976; 1980), but from a different sub-district. The organisers for house building recruit labour "beyond the confines of their own descent group" and workers are engaged "on a reciprocal, voluntary, nonkin basis" (Forman 1980:176). Forman noted there are ten critical phases of the house building. He states that, "exchange of cooked food during house-building ceremonies is expressly prohibited until the house is built, and the cooking hearth, which gives life to the house, is placed inside" (Forman 1980:176). Birunbiru people too had many phases associated with house building, and exchange of cooked food did not happen until the hearth was completed.

The kin group of the Post-ballot Resident Ricardo commenced building their *umalulik* in Birunbiru district in 1994, but did not complete it until 2001. There was a delay in some stages of construction, in particular the trimming of the roof. When it was



completed, members of his lineage group gathered at the site and celebrated a ritual feast for which six buffaloes were slaughtered.



**Plate 15. *Umalulik* in Birunbiru**

Anthropologists have written of the significance of rock and tree for Timorese indigenous religion in rural areas (Forman 1980:174; Traube 1986:174-176; McWilliam 2001:91-93). Outside Ricardo's *umalulik* is a collection of sacred rocks that he believed had been there for a few hundred years. These rocks are called *biru* (T) or *sari* (M). People carried these small rocks for protection during periods of fighting because they believed the rocks had magical powers that prevented their enemies from killing them.<sup>13</sup> Within walking distance from Ricardo's *umalulik* are sacred groves and rock altars. At these places, Birunbiru residents sacrifice dogs or chickens, cook the meat for communal meals and offer the entrails to the spirit world.

*Umaluliks* in Birunbiru vary from square to circular designs and are constructed with bamboo walls and thatched roofs and have no windows. They are built high on piles and house jointly held sacred objects of kin associated with the house, personal wealth, and harvested crops, which are stored out of reach of rats. Each traditional house has its associated sacred rock, tree and ancestral burial ground. A ladder, which people can pull up into the house, is required to climb to the only entrance, which is a small doorway. Looking in from the entrance, a hearth for cooking can be seen in the near corner on the right-hand side. To the left of the entrance are sacred objects such as cooking pots (*busu*) (M), swords (*surik*) (T), fire sticks (*imi*) (M) and waving sheets (*rabi laku*) (T). Other precious items that I was told are stored in *umaluliks*, but were not observed in the ones I visited, include remnants of a Portuguese flag, warriors' headdresses, and anklets made from animal hair.

The house is accessible to members of the lineage with ties to it, but entry is subject to stringent conditions. Each house is under the control of male elders from the particular lineage associated with it. Women are not permitted to touch sacred objects. In the past, the person who lived inside the house was the traditional priest, known as *anu falu* (M) or *amalulik* (T). However, these rules have changed in some places, and in some situations women slept inside sacred houses. In Birunbiru, women use the space underneath the *umalulik* for weaving *tais* on a bamboo loom. Up until the mid twentieth century, when a person died, the corpse was placed in a cloth-draped coffin underneath the house until burial. However, this practice ceased, and for deaths I became aware of during fieldwork, members of the kin group took the corpse to the house of the deceased's kin for preparation for viewing by relatives and friends.

At Ricardo's *umalulik*, two rituals are held every year in addition to any special ceremonies that may be celebrated, such as weddings. The two annual rituals are held

before and after the maize harvest. For these ceremonies, members of the lineage gather at the sacred house with their contributions of chickens and rice to offer sacrifices and share a communal meal. For marriages, the house becomes the centre for transactions; wife-givers take pigs to the *umalulik* for the wife-takers and receive in exchange buffaloes and swords.



**Plate 16. Sacred objects stored inside an *umalulik* in Birunbiru**

People chew betel, areca and lime as a form of social interaction outside the *umalulik*. However, villagers also chew betel nut in the *umalulik* as part of ritual activities. During some rituals, the elders associated with a particular house place the spittle from chewed betel nut on the participants' foreheads while making utterances to their ancestors. Birunbiru people in Bidau said that they did not know what was included in these incantations. They said that it was knowledge passed on and safeguarded by the elders. During one ritual, Ricardo said the ritual specialist recited words that included references to good luck for the future.

The *umalulik* in Celestina's origin village has several purposes. It is a ritual centre for the population of approximately 150 people, but villagers also use it as a granary for maize and rice, complete with baskets for sorting and cleaning the grain. When Celestina returns annually to her village to assist with the rice harvest, the *umalulik* is her temporary accommodation.



**Plate 17. Cooking hearth inside an *umalulik* in Birunbiru**

Besides visiting their *umaluliks* for ritual activities, some Birunbiru people follow other practices. In Ricardo's village, a practice to make amends for any wrongs committed involves feeding the snake known as the "big boss" in a cave within the forest. A resident who possessed knowledge about this ritual explained the myth for me:

Some things are confidential and only known to the leaders in the community. The snake has always been in this district, but the year it came is a secret. The snake is not too long, not too short. It has a head the size of a coconut. The snake is multi-coloured and contains colours of all snakes. If people do something wrong they must go and feed the snake pigs or other animals. They take food to the entrance of the cave. The snake is called the "big boss." It lives in a special place just for snakes. Around the "big boss" are seven other snakes, which are a form of security. The "big boss" always remains in the same cave – it cannot go out. If some people do wrong and

need to make amends, they go and talk to the snake. If it does not rain people also go and talk to the snake and rain will come.

Grandfathers pass on the story about the snake to their sons. Only some people in the village know about this practice. Only men hold this knowledge. People believe that the snake never dies. All people in the village believe that the snake has been here all of the time. They believe that the snakes are the owners of the land. My father and my grandfather believed in the powers of the snake. People in this area do not follow other practices such as the chicken practice.<sup>14</sup> People believe in the practices associated with the *lulik* and they attend church on Sundays. People never use the word “snake” to describe it but refer to it as *malae* (foreigner). The legend about the origin of the snake was that two *malae* were walking through the jungle and shooting doves. When they shot the doves, the *malae* became the snake.<sup>15</sup>

This myth contains directions for the way Birunbiru people in Ricardo’s village should repent for any transgressions committed. The instructions include talking to the snake, dialogue also being a major component of reconciliation under customary law when a wrong has been committed. Food is given to the snake to make amends for any wrongdoing, and similarly, when East Timorese commit actions deemed to be offences under traditional law, they may be required to make a payment of food or livestock to the offended party. As well as the practice of feeding the snake to make amends for wrongdoing, people in Ricardo’s village also believe that the snake holds special powers including the ability to make it rain.

### **Public recreational sites**

Picnics, sporting events, cockfighting and other recreational activities take place in public places and provide opportunities for Bidau residents to commune with friends and exchange news and gossip. Residents told me that they enjoyed these activities, which were opportunities for relaxation, made them feel better and helped them forget their problems. Bidau residents, like many East Timorese, find that being alone is not an appealing state, and they enjoy group activities and the companionship of many friends. Activities range from everyday pastimes to more spectacular annual events. The daily

practices could easily be overlooked as being too ordinary to facilitate healing; however, they provide social occasions and support networks.

### *Beachfront areas*

A social occasion residents enjoy is going for a drive or a picnic by the sea. For most people, Sunday is a rest day in East Timor and after attending church services many families pack a picnic lunch and go to the beaches. For some months after the 1999 tragedies, many residents did not have the money to spend on picnics, but over time more and more families engaged in such outings. Even for those families who could not afford to pack special picnic lunches, a drive to the beach with relatives or friends who had a vehicle was welcomed. The beaches near *Kristu Rei* statue and Areia Branca are popular destinations for family gatherings and swimming.<sup>16</sup>

On New Year's Day, there is an exodus from Dili. On New Year's Eve, church services commence around 9.00 p.m. and finish around midnight. The next day, convoys of people in Dili travel with family and friends to Liquica or other coastal villages to the west or east for a picnic. On these occasions, people socialise within their groups of relatives and friends. Many families travel in groups in trucks with relatives and friends standing in the back. Taxis are overcrowded and cavalcades of friends on motorbikes leave the city.

As well as picnics, people enjoy going to the beachfront with friends for snacks. In the latter months of 2002, new food stalls started to appear along the coastal road from the port to Pantai Kelapa; selling roasted corn and other snacks, they became popular meeting places for young people.

### *Soccer fields*

Festivals, sporting competitions and everyday sport at the two soccer fields in Bidau provide exercise, team interaction, relaxation and entertainment as well an outlet for

those who have problems. Ricardo said that one Birunbiru man, who had personal problems arising from the 1999 conflict and experienced symptoms of trauma, improved when he invited him to play soccer regularly and to join in the team spirit of the group.



**Plate 18. Soccer field in Bidau Tokobaru**

Some athletic events are linked to religious celebrations, one example being a significant soccer competition named the Pascal Cup (also known as the *Sagrado Coracao De Jesus* (P) Sacred Heart of Jesus Cup), which is played during the Easter season. Sporting events create much excitement in the village, and the Pascal Cup attracts teams from Bidau and other parts of Dili. Players compete in matches held over several weeks at the football field in Bidau Lecidere, and the competition draws many spectators.

Spectators as well as players benefit from participation in athletic events. Sporting competitions can “resemble both ritual and drama,” as Rappaport (1999:43) argues in his general discussion of the performative aspects of ritual. He highlights the differences between the active participation of spectators at sporting events and the more passive

roles of audiences at theatre performances. Whereas at drama, audiences may be passive, spectators at sporting events are expected to be partisan and cheer on their teams, believing that their active support may spur on the players they support (Rappaport 1999).

In 2001, the team from Bidau Motaklaran, *Group St. Camillo de Lelis*, came second in the competition. A small party was held for the players to acknowledge their success. Some parents attended the celebration, which included formal speeches and presentation of statues of Jesus to the most exceptional players. Following the presentations and speeches, dancing continued for several hours.<sup>17</sup>

### *Cockfighting*

The sport of cockfighting continues to thrive in East Timor, and its popularity was evident by the huge crowds that gathered in Bidau.<sup>18</sup> A well-organised cockfighting ring in Bidau Lecidere was reconstructed in the year 2000, with benches built around it for viewing the action. During the middle of 2003, the cockfighting venue moved from its concealed location to an open public space in Av. Presidente Nicolau Lobato.<sup>19</sup> Men enjoyed the social aspects of meeting up with their friends at these outings, and even though palm wine was sold and consumed by some men in large quantities, informants said disorderly behaviour was infrequent. When asked about women's views of them attending this sport, the men responded that women were not bothered about their interest in cockfighting because they knew where they were and they had no cause for jealousy or concern because women were not present on these occasions.

An examination of the various themes in cockfighting provides insights into the worlds of East Timorese men. One theme is the social alliances formed between men, and another, the violent bloody clashes between two animals, often resulting in the death of one bird. A further aspect of the activity is its function as an outlet for



emotions, observable in the frenzied behaviour of spectators during a match, not to mention the jubilant pride of those who win and the disappointment of those defeated, who lose both money and their prized possessions. Geertz's (1973) analysis of cockfighting in Bali provides a comparable example to interpret the mediation of violence also relevant in East Timorese society. Geertz (1973:449-450) drawing on Balinese experience of cockfighting states:

... it brings together themes – animal savagery, male narcissism, opponent gambling, status rivalry, mass excitement, blood sacrifice – whose main connection is their involvement with rage and the fear of rage, and, binding them into a set of rules which at once contains them and allows them play, builds a symbolic structure in which, over and over again, the reality of their inner affiliation can be intelligibly felt.

An analysis of cockfighting showed various expressions of emotion, friendships between men, bonds and affection between men and their animals and themes of death and loss when animals were killed. The form of violence of the blade cutting into another animal could symbolize men cutting into opponents with a different sort of blade, that of a machete during periods of violent upheaval. As animals hacked each other in this game, in different contexts during periods of violence men also hacked each other.

Cockfights were held every afternoon at 5.00 p.m. and cancelled only in the event of heavy rain. Attendance varied, but usually numbers ranged from 100 to 200 men.<sup>20</sup> Money changed hands and, though some only gambled small amounts of one to five dollars, on some occasions the stakes were high. One man interviewed during 2001 boasted that he sometimes made up to Rp.1,000,000 if his cockerel won. There were two types of betting; one involved an alliance of bettors who congregated around an owner, pooling their funds to raise the stakes to challenge an opponent, and the other involved individual bets between spectators. This system was similar to what Geertz (1973:425-430) noted in Balinese cockfights and just as complex to follow. The

alliances of bettors demonstrated the social bonds between various groups of friends and kin as well as demonstrating village loyalty by men betting on cocks from their own villages. Cocks were named according to their colours or other physical features and, as one man pointed out, some birds had their owner's village or district added to their names. The adding of place names was obvious in one match as men yelled "Lospalos," jumping up and down in an excited frenzy showing support for their friend's bird.

### **Conclusion**

With the destruction of 1999 came an expansion of public space, as buildings and fences had been destroyed leaving few barriers between properties and allowing residents to take shortcuts between the village sections of Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru. This temporarily expanded public space was very important for the initial support that residents provided to one another.

A major change that residents commented on was the personal freedom they experienced to actively engage with others in the streets after the repression of the past. When residents returned to Bidau from late September 1999 onwards, they frequently assembled in public places to participate in rituals and recreational activities. What Durkheim calls "collective effervescence" was palpable in the streets as residents met for religious rituals or social activities. Gathering for religious practices, such as communal prayers and religious processions, presented occasions for social interaction, and religion functioned as a cohesive social force. Not only did it bond people through their shared beliefs and practices, its social dimension reinforced friendships, allowed newcomers to be included, and helped people find comfort together. When residents attended church services they were linked by social bonds to each other, as were people from Birunbiru when they returned to their origin villages to attend ceremonies in their *umaluliks*. Residents also had the freedom to display political flags and openly

participate in political rallies, a major difference compared to the past, when they had to conceal their political allegiances. The importance of the social was also evident in everyday activities of residents in public spaces, such as going for walks, organising picnics and participating as players or spectators in sporting competitions. The streets, as well as being spaces for assembly and events, became sites for memorial rituals, with residents lighting candles on significant dates and praying for those who had died. Accordingly, on occasions, streets became sacred spaces, and after independence, some were renamed to honour national heroes.

Participation in different rituals in public spaces after 1999 had a healing effect on residents as it brought them together, rebuilt trust, reduced anxiety, and restored social order. Over time, the reconstruction of private houses and the rebuilding of fences reflected and contributed to a redefining of the boundaries between the public and the private, and public space contracted as private and intermediate spaces were reclaimed and reshaped.

## **CHAPTER 9: INWARD JOURNEYS – PRIVATE PETITIONS AND PRIVATE PRACTICES**

I just hope that I can leave something good for my children when I die. I want to leave something like furniture in the house so my children always remember me. I am a widow so I do not have anything good or money to repair this house. (Portuguese Period Settler, interview, 17 April 2001)

Humphrey (2002:57) writes that war makes “all social space a potential zone of war and every place the site of potential invasion, destruction and death. There is no inside and outside, home and not home, there are no sanctuaries.” This was the situation in Bidau in 1999, where the majority of residents had to flee their homes, which were no longer protective shelters, as they became militia targets. Residents returned to Bidau after the carnage of 1999 shocked to find a transformed village. According to informants, only about 50 people had returned to Bidau Motaklaran by the end of 1999, but more returned in early 2000. They returned with mixed emotions, including shock, disbelief, sadness, fear, relief, exhaustion and anger. Many were jubilant and relieved to meet neighbours and friends who too had survived the violent months of chaos throughout the country. Others were horrified to find their houses demolished and their personal possessions torched or stolen. Damage by militia activities had exposed the private space within homes to public view.

The way in which the village was re-inhabited posed some uncertainties, especially for residents who gained new neighbours. The occupants of houses in Bidau Tokobaru had changed because the squatters had claimed many houses in that neighbourhood. A need that everyone shared was to reside in a house that offered protection against the outside world and provided space for devotional practices, negotiations between kin for weddings and funeral rites and celebratory events. A material house evoked feelings of connectedness for people, and membership in, or ties to, a particular house, even a distant one, could reduce isolation. Whereas Birunbiru

Makassae felt a sense of unity through membership in their “houses” in their origin villages, and focused on repairing their *umaluliks*, other Bidau residents concentrated on rebuilding their houses in Bidau as places for ritual and everyday activities. A material house represented a link to a household, a number of which incorporated additional members whose own dwellings had been destroyed. The ways residents attended to rebuilding their houses and what these material structures represented for them provide insights into how residents went about the restructuring of space and the rebuilding of their lives and the social order.

Helliwell (1993; 2001) who worked with the Dayak community of west Kalimantan makes a distinction between “inside” and “outside” the dwelling as a means to analyse the social relations between insiders and outsiders. Helliwell (1993:51) notes that in west Kalimantan “rickety walls between apartments within the longhouse provide a permeable structure for fostering an uninterrupted sociability between occupants.” In Bidau, residents wanted to rebuild destroyed walls and fences to mark permeable boundaries between those they admit or exclude from their properties. This recreation of spatial boundaries was a necessary part of reconstituting the social order.

The reconstruction of and repairs to residents’ private homes has far-reaching implications. Houses are important for Bidau residents as spaces for the performance of private and communal rituals and for facilitating networks of social connections, and as structures that provide “a sense of place,” stability and connectedness to the village of Bidau. This chapter focuses on the private spaces of residents’ houses – their reconstruction, their interiors, and the activities conducted within. In relation to activities, I examine how residents include into their homes and their lives some people as “insiders,” and leave others as “outsiders.” The friendship and support that residents extend to “insiders” identifies processes that assist people to live with the hardships they

have endured. The designation of “outsiders” in relation to a particular household identifies those who belong to different social categories whether from within the village or from other locations.

### **Reconstruction of houses**

Following a disaster, people have to come to terms with more than a material loss of private property. In *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*, Read (1996) describes how people mentally construct what a home signifies in terms of both location and space. He follows the painful themes of people’s reactions when sites have vanished through destruction and neighbours are lost through death. D’Souza (1981:10) emphasises the importance of place, home and neighbourhood relationships in the case of survivors from the 1976 Guatemala earthquake who immediately camped on the rubble of their homes and erected shelters out of wood, sheeting and other materials they could obtain. These survivors rejected the provision of tents in adjacent fields and prefabricated houses on separate plots by various agencies preferring to rebuild from scrap materials on their original sites. King (2004:2) refers to “spontaneous recovery” whereby a community will begin its own response and recovery to a disaster long before any formal agencies are present in the area.

After the violence of 1999, residents in Bidau went back to their properties and made makeshift shelters or searched for shelter in vacant houses. The majority of residents expressed a strong desire to rebuild their houses, but most lacked the necessary materials of wood, cement and zinc. In June 2003, a neighbour was still talking about zinc, which he wanted for his fence and he referred to the lack of assistance from the Shelter Program that provided materials to others.<sup>1</sup> There were still some expectations that handouts from the government or NGOs would be forthcoming. My neighbour complained about what he perceived as injustice in relation to houses. He was angry

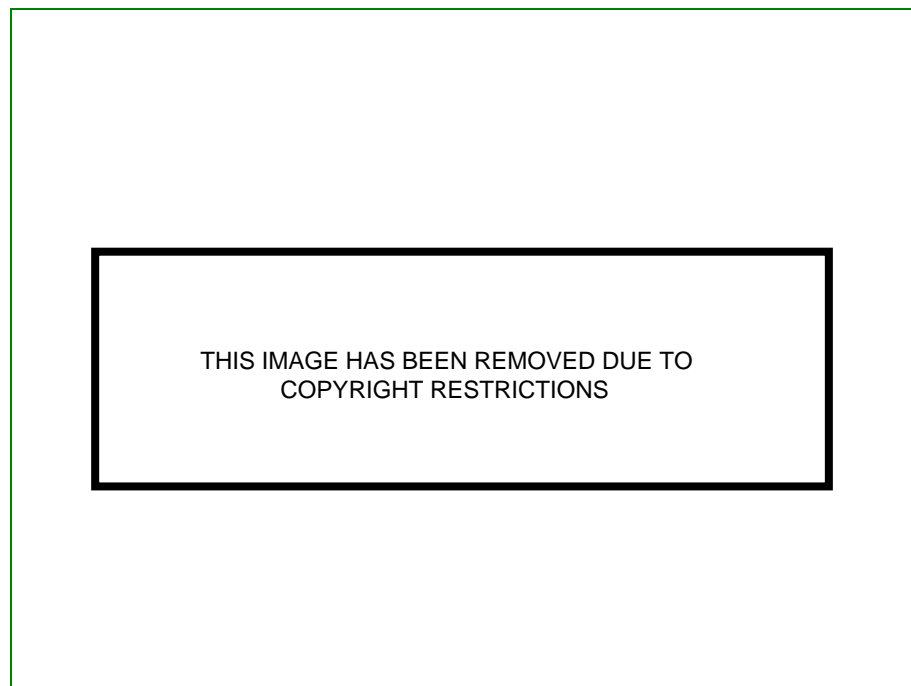
because militia were allowed to retain ownership of their houses and indeed could sell them, yet they had been responsible for widespread destruction of property and had reduced his house to rubble. This injustice, however, did not stop him from rebuilding and painting his house with whatever resources he could access.

In Bidau, residents were strategic about rebuilding their houses, and many waited for nearly three years before undertaking major reconstruction work to ensure that the situation in the country was stable. Towards the latter months of 2002 and early 2003, there was renewed confidence in the village, displayed by a number of residents building new homes or renovating their existing properties. The Chinese bakery remodelled its shop, and the owners constructed an eye-catching green and yellow brick house, surrounded by a high green metal fence, on the site where the rubble from their former home had remained for over three years.

A few residents were able to renovate their houses because they made tenancy contracts with foreigners who paid rent in advance in addition to an amount to repair the dwelling to a comfortable standard. The owners continued to live in more modest dwellings at the back of the main buildings. Eduardo, who continued to operate his large *kios* along the main street, supplemented his income with rental of a well-maintained house he renovated behind his family home.

Renovated houses restored residents' sense of security and were tied to their sense of identity. As their living conditions improved, they started to feel better as well. Waterson (1997:116) points out that in many societies houses are regarded "as having a vitality of their own, interdependent with the vitality of their occupants." Accordingly, the healthy state of one may influence the healthy state of the other (Waterson 1997:116).

Two of Alberto's neighbours had erected two new premises during the latter months of 2002 and were still putting the final touches to these in March 2003. One had secured some land from their neighbour's adjoining block. The neighbour did not appear entirely happy with the arrangement, but she was obliged to give it because of kin connections. Shortly afterwards rusty zinc fences divided the two properties. The owners of the new houses planted flowers and other shrubs in their garden. One of the occupants said he was proud of his house because the improvements to it demonstrated to others his hard work. Other residents were also proud of their houses after they had completed repairs to them, and one requested to be photographed as he posed in front of his dwelling after it had been painted.



**Plate 19. House of a Portuguese Period Settler**

A visitor staying with Alberto for a few weeks in 2003 commented about the widespread problem of jealousy in Dili and suggested people should settle for a modest house, which did not attract attention and envy. However, those who had the means wanted to improve their residences – not just the houses but also the surrounds.



Members of Alberto's household cut down trees, cleaned up their garden and penned their pigs during the latter months of 2003. In addition, they started to replace their *bebak* (palm leaf stalks) kitchen with a brick creation adjoining the dining room at the back of their house.

### **The interior of houses in Bidau**

Some Portuguese Period Settlers and Indonesian Period Settlers had unpainted, grey brick houses with zinc roofing, while others resided in dwellings constructed with *bebak* walls and rusty zinc roofs. Floors varied, and in some cases were simply uneven cement slabs; others were surfaces of white or maroon tiles; a few houses had earthen floors. Most houses of these established residents had a front room used for multiple purposes including receiving guests, family entertainment, religious rituals and formal kin negotiations, a hallway leading to bedrooms (usually two or three), with the kitchen and bathroom being separate buildings outside at the rear of the dwelling.



**Plate 20. House of an Indonesian Period Settler**

In Bidau, women are expected to assist in the kitchen when living with their husband's kin. In the past, the kitchen had been strictly designated as female space, but

even though women and girls were responsible for cooking, sometimes men could be seen in the kitchen roasting coffee or assisting with kitchen duties. In addition to being areas for cooking, kitchens were places where some people conducted household-related rituals, such as one for the prevention of escape of newly acquired pigs.<sup>2</sup>

All of the houses of Portuguese Period Settlers and Indonesian Period Settlers that I visited had a wooden *oratóriu* (T) (shrine) situated in a prominent position in the front room. If household contents were salvaged during 1999 or if members of the household had money to replace them, the front room included items such as a lounge suite. Also in front rooms were vases of brightly coloured artificial flowers and decorations on the wall, including such items as photographs, calendars, posters of Xanana Gusmao and religious icons. In Alberto's residence, a green teddy bear, which had not been used, hung in its original plastic bag on a wall in the front room as a decoration. Children's toys were sometimes used as ornaments, and residents said they were a reminder of the person who gave the gift. A few residents resourceful enough to own a television watched it in their front rooms.

Most bedrooms had a door that was usually open for ventilation, but with a curtain for privacy hanging from the top of the doorway. Married couples were allocated their own bedrooms, and children were mostly separated according to gender. During my fieldwork, very few people slept with mosquito nets despite the prevalence of mosquitoes. In residences where there was inadequate space, boys and young men slept on mats or mattresses on the floor in the front room or in the room at the rear of the house if the eating area was situated inside. This bedding would be put away every morning. In some households it was only when a man married, whether in a traditional wedding or with a church ceremony, that he secured the privacy of a bedroom. Upon

marriage, as well as a bedroom, a spouse has access to the front room and bathroom facilities.

In the kitchens, a small cooker fuelled with kerosene and woks are the main cooking utensils. Other alternatives for cooking are wood fires with grill plates and wood fires under pots, pans and woks. Residents use kerosene lamps or candles when there is no electricity. In 2000, only the Chinese bakery and the units in the same street as Alberto's house had generators. Only a few wealthier families owned refrigerators in Bidau Motaklaran, and some of these had built-in locks. Alberto and Luisa purchased a freezer in September 2001, and they sold ice to their neighbours in Bidau Motaklaran. As well as selling larger bags of ice, Luisa made caramel ice treats tied in small plastic bags for children, which she sold for five American cents. Her motivation appeared to be to spoil the children who played nearby as well as generating a small income. It may seem little money to earn; however, by way of comparison small sachets of washing powder cost five cents.

Eating facilities were mostly confined to the rear of the house. Some residents had their meals at a table on the back veranda, which was a roofed area. Most of the houses of Portuguese Period Settlers and Indonesian Period Settlers had bathrooms and toilets, built as a separate structure outside the house. These were built in the style of a *tempat mandi* (I) (bath) and squat toilet within a single room or divided by a brick wall. Only the few Portuguese Period Settlers who had renovated their houses had inside bathroom facilities.

In contrast to the established settlers in Bidau, many people from Birunbiru lived in dilapidated shacks constructed from rusty zinc sheets and whatever other materials they could accumulate, including flattened 44-gallon drums. Some of these dwellings had only one room. They all had earthen floors. If residents had more materials, they

divided space inside into separate rooms with sheets of zinc, or they tied material with pieces of string to holes in the zinc to make privacy for rooms. Occupants of these houses complained when it rained, because their roofs leaked and they would have to cluster inside or visit neighbours with sturdy houses to keep dry. Some Birunbiru residents had bamboo beds, which were located on verandas where they would have an afternoon siesta. Cooking was conducted in a covered area at one end of the house. Many Birunbiru residents dressed in sarongs to wash at the communal taps located in the space outside their houses. There were no fences around their properties.



**Plate 21. Houses of people from Birunbiru**

As Helliwell (1996:136) notes for the Gerai people, the *sawah* (outer area) and *lawang* (inner area) division does not make a distinction between “public” and “private” areas within the community, but rather represents a conceptual distinction between outsiders and community. Although Birunbiru people’s shacks create an inside/outside division, there is a fluidity of social relations as there are no fences between houses and the inhabitants share the communal space created between houses. To some extent, the

non-Birunbiru residents also experience a fluidity of social relations between their own groups; however, fences to properties do mark a point that outsiders do not cross. Frequently people would stop at the gateway or fence of a property and call to the inhabitants of the house, only entering a property if invited.

The Post-ballot Residents acquired brick houses that had white tiled floors and interior bathrooms. These houses, which had previously been occupied by Indonesian government officials, were similar to each other in architectural design, with a lockable wooden front door, spacious front room and a hallway to bedrooms. Some squatters cooked inside in a rear room, while others used an outside kitchen area. Furniture was sparse depending on the household and activities in the house. Ricardo only had two plastic chairs in his front room. On the wall, he had a blackboard displaying numerals, as he taught Mathematics and English to children from the neighbourhood during his free time.



**Plate 22. House of a Post-ballot Resident in Bidau Tokobaru**

Post-ballot Residents often needed to search for chairs to accommodate visitors. Those who were working or had money or connections had a lounge suite, a small coffee table and an *oratóriu* in the front room. During 2001, some of these houses were not connected to a water supply, and the inhabitants relied on neighbours who did have a water connection. A few residents owned long garden hoses (usually mended in places with tape) which they connected to neighbours' taps and manoeuvred over fences or on the road leading to their properties to fill water buckets. Many Post-ballot Residents washed their clothes in shallow black tubs next to water taps in the front garden and arranged the clothes over bushes in their gardens to dry. Each residence had fences, which enclosed the property, and a gate.

Most residents lost valuable personal belongings when their houses were destroyed during 1999. Some who had owned gold jewellery or money had used such savings to buy food or to rent accommodation in West Timor. The more fortunate travelled overseas and secured their finances in foreign bank accounts. They were a small minority. Many residents, like Alberto, remembered the feelings of starting from nothing after they had lost their personal possessions during the 1975 invasion. The 1999 destruction for Teresinha (the older woman who had survived many of her children) generated yet another experience of living without the security of a stable house. When security was established, "home" for Teresinha alternated between different households of her kin group in Dili and Baukau.

During 1999, some residents put their personal valuables (e.g. gold, money, jewellery) in small cloth bags and concealed them in their bedrooms. Some residents buried their treasures in a hole dug inside the house (if it had an earthen floor) and filled in the space. This was a quick and easy method to hide their valuables and protect them



from fire if the house was burned. Other assets in the form of livestock, mostly pigs and chickens, were stolen or killed during the conflict.

In Bidau, many Portuguese Period Settlers and Indonesian Period Settlers kept several dogs for security.<sup>3</sup> People believed the more dogs, the better the security. Alberto's household had six dogs during 2001. Some residents allowed their dogs to sleep inside their houses to protect their families. A number of Birunbiru households tended to keep only one dog. Another measure taken for security was to leave the house's exterior lights on throughout the evening, and as previously noted, some used protection in the form of cactus and coral visibly hanging outside above the front and back doors. These, people believed, had *lulik* (T) (sacred) power, which saved their houses in 1999. Even Alberto, who stated that he did not believe in such practices, had a cactus hanging over his front door, which remained there for several months after the conflict period. Luisa had put it there because residents had told her this would protect their house. When the house was repainted, the cactus was removed and not replaced.

### **Practices within the home – insiders and outsiders**

Following the 1975 invasion, the clandestine movement against the Indonesian army operated in many places including Bidau Motaklaran, with meetings held in different houses to nominate the group's representative and to discuss how to collect provisions for Falintil members. The representative's task was to purchase food and clothes and take these supplies to an arranged meeting place in the forest. Under the watchful gaze of the Indonesian regime, residents were careful whom they invited inside their residences and entry was restricted to people whom they trusted, or Indonesian soldiers or police who demanded entry. After 1999, the situation altered; residents could decide more freely, who entered their house.

The category of “house” represents both a group and its dwelling, and the material structures of the house symbolise aspects of the house group. As noted earlier, the “knock at the door” ritual, the first formal action undertaken when a marriage is being negotiated, entails symbolism of people entering a body, as the wife-takers enter the private space of the house of the wife-givers. Because residents conceptualise these rituals in terms of “the house” and conceive of them as “household rituals,” rebuilding their houses and their spatial boundaries was necessary for ritual life and relationships.

The “house” as a category can convert outsiders into insiders, as people become incorporated into the house. In Dili, many households had incorporated members of the extended family who came to live in the capital for various reasons. In some cases, members of the extended family, for example a niece, nephew or cousin, came to Dili from remote rural districts where secondary education was unavailable. Other members of the kin group from rural districts came to look for employment, while others moved to the city because their spouse or another significant member of their kin group had died and they needed support of kin. Relatives also came to the city for medical treatment and to attend rituals in Dili. In Bidau, after the 1999 violence and destruction, households expanded temporarily, becoming much more than nuclear families or patrilineal groups. As I have mentioned previously, some households had a number of families residing together. In some households, there were people residing together who had no kin connections. With the social disruption in living space, no definite pattern could be stringently applied to those who shared a residence, as there were many variations, with nuclear families with extended kin, matrifocal households, and groups of students living together. Once people had the financial means to do so, people began to reconstruct new houses and establish smaller units – some households residing together reduced in numbers to a nuclear family and grandparents.



During funerary rites, residents use all three spaces – public, private and intermediate – but practices in the house reveal who are insiders. In the private space inside the front room of the house relatives carefully wash and clothe the corpse and maintain the vigil of burning candles, lamentations and prayers. The front room is open to all visitors to pay their final respects, but only residents who are kin or very close friends assist with the preparation of the corpse. They may remain in the front room to comfort members of the bereaved family and offer prayers on the first evening after a death, while insiders with a distant association may choose to sit in the intermediate space of the garden.

Many women with insider status take leading roles in the kitchen, preparing the different funerary banquets, after a burial and after a *kore metan*. At these times, the kin group of the deceased ask their neighbours for the use of kitchen equipment as well as labour. In Bidau, women from the three categories of residents frequently visit friends and borrow cooking utensils. For major ritual banquets, residents use plates, cutlery and chairs from several households. When there are large ceremonies in the village for mortuary feasts and *festas*, women share their labour and work with a spirit of co-operation. Depending on kin networks and close friendships, women may send more than one representative to help in the kitchen. Households send at least a representative to assist the household hosting a function where relationships are less formal, but where their houses are located within close proximity to the hosts.

These relationships and practices of sharing are based on principles similar to what Javanese refer to as *gotong royong* (I) (mutual help). Sullivan (1994:90), writing about a neighbourhood in Yogyakarta, states that the ideology of *gotong royong* informs and sustains “cell” life. Neighbourhood cells are composed of women with insider status who share, not only material resources, but also “labour, skills, confidences,

children, gossip, information, affection, laughter, joys and sorrows” (Sullivan 1994:90). “Individual women can contribute diverse specialised inputs and get back certain general benefits and other specialised goods lacking in their own households” (Sullivan 1994:90). In Bidau, many women from the Portuguese Period Settlers and Birunbiru residents have insider status within their own category of residents. However, the Indonesian Period Settlers are a more diverse group; if there is no kin relationship or close friendship, women remain outsiders in relation to each other and accordingly do not feel any obligation to contribute their labour or materials for ritual feasts and celebrations.

Religious processions weaving through Bidau – during the months of May and October for Marian devotion and during June for devotion to Jesus – provide a trail between the private and public realms, the inside and outside spaces. When the bearers of the statue reach the host household, they pass on the statue at the intermediate space of the front gate to members of that household who then carry it to and place it in the front room on a prominent table decorated with artificial flowers, flickering candles and religious icons. Prayers are then said inside the house. For these prayers, being decades of the Rosary, the host household may provide older residents with seats, while children sit in front of the statue on the floor. There is never adequate space in the front room to accommodate the whole group, so some people remain standing in the garden. Residents take great care in preparing the room if they are the recipients of the statue, using colourful cloths, *tais*, flowers and candles, with some people even purchasing strands of coloured flashing lights to decorate the space around the statue.

People from the three categories of residents participate in these rituals and socialise together in one another’s houses in the context of the shared prayer. The participation of a different host household each evening guarantees that many residents

participate. Some residents only attend the procession on the night their household receives the statue and the next evening when different residents carry it to another house. Following the prayers, participants often remain at the house that receives the statue, and the hosts, who can afford to, offer refreshments of tea, coffee, fried bananas, peanuts and cakes. The conviviality of these evenings provides another opportunity for residents to exchange news and to enquire about the wellbeing of occupants of the household. At the end of the ceremony, one of the catechists announces which household will receive the statue the next evening. Which households will have the statue overnight on each night of the month is decided in advance at Bekora Catholic Church, as Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru come within Bekora parish. In Bidau, on 8 May, a feast day celebrated for the Blessed Virgin, a Mass is celebrated at the house where the statue of Mary is on that day.



**Plate 23. The Marian statue in the front room of a Bidau house**

Residents confine some rituals to the privacy of their homes; for example praying in front of their *oratóriu*, while they conduct other religious rites in public places. Plate 23 shows the Marian statue in the house of a Portuguese Period Settler. The residents of this house use the prayer table – on the right hand side of the photo – for everyday private petitions. Several residents confirmed that praying comforted them, especially during the difficult months of 1999. Members of households pray private petitions standing in front of an *oratóriu* and sometimes burn a candle at the shrine for a special intention. Some residents before leaving the house, and some visitors upon entering the house, bless themselves with a sign of the cross near the *oratóriu*.

Close friends and kin are often received in the front rooms of houses. When Madalena wanted to have a private conversation with me, she invited me into the front room, which was visible from the street, as the dwelling had no front door. Inside the room were lavender plastic chairs and a matching plastic coffee table with a crocheted pink doily. Some family photographs, including ones taken a few weeks after Vicente died, took pride of place. The only other item of furniture was a rickety prayer table that supported an *oratóriu* (T) (shrine) with an assortment of Catholic religious icons.

East Timorese show respect towards each other by using polite forms of address derived from Portuguese titles. A man is sometimes addressed as *Señór* (P) (sir) followed by his Christian name. People sometimes address a woman by putting *Señora* (P) (madam) before her Christian name. If a woman has children, she may be addressed as *Dona* (P) (Mrs) followed by her Christian name to show greater respect than using the term for madam. My interpreters used different forms of address upon entering a house. Upon arriving at a house, they addressed the occupants as *tiu* (T) (uncle) or *tia* (T) (aunty) if they were of approximately the same age as their parents, even though there was no kin relationship. Older residents are more likely to be called *abó*

(grandfather) or *avó* (grandmother) without the use of their Christian names, even if there is no kin relationship. Men often address males of the same age who are close friends as *maun* (T) (brother). Women who are close friends may address each other as *mana* (T) (sister). Some older residents in Bidau follow the practice of bowing slightly to people they consider to have higher status when they greet them. This is a tradition of respect carried over from the Portuguese administration of the half-island when people of a lower class bowed to those who were considered to be *ema boot* (T) (big people). When guests were received inside the house, the titles were relaxed between close friends who then addressed each other by their first names. Children in Bidau mostly called their parents *pai* (P) (dad) or *mai* (P) (mum) within their households; however, they refer to their parents more formally by the title *Señór* or *Dona* followed by their first names when talking about them to outsiders. East Timorese adopt both parents' names, which are mostly Portuguese surnames. The mother's name precedes the father's name.

Members of households leave their rubber thongs outside the front or back door and enter the house with bare feet. Formal shoes and sporting footwear are kept inside the house in the bedrooms. Guests do not enter the house unless they are invited, and on these occasions, they remove their shoes, which they leave at the front door.

Bidau residents mostly socialised with those from the same category of residents. Rarely did people from Birunbiru visit Portuguese Period Settlers who were not from Birunbiru. Similarly, Portuguese Period Settlers who were not from Birunbiru seldom visited the houses of Birunbiru residents. However, some of the Post-ballot Residents who lived in Bidau Tokobaru were Makassae like the Birunbiru residents who resided in Bidau Motaklaran, and they often visited one another. Portuguese Period Settlers and Indonesian Period Settlers invited close friends and kin inside the front room of their

houses. However, most of them tended to socialise in the intermediate space of their gardens.

Guests invited for everyday meals are normally insiders, while both insiders and outsiders are included amongst guests at *festas*. Alberto's family rarely ate meals together except on special occasions. Usually Alberto had his meal first, sometimes accompanied by one of his children. Other members of the household would eat at different times throughout the day. On many occasions, Alberto's friends, Eduardo and Sergio, joined him for the midday meal. Nicolau, one of Alberto's sons, intermittently invited one or two friends for lunch. Women in Bidau cooked the main meal in the early morning and placed this on the dining table for members of the household to consume at lunchtime. Sometimes women who were close friends or relatives ate meals together in the kitchen. The evening meal was eaten around 8.00 or 9.00 p.m. When the tides were good for fishing, small groups from households including women and men, took their lanterns and went fishing late at night. If they returned with a plentiful catch, they sometimes cooked and ate around midnight. When asked about their dietary habits, most people said they consumed the same meals each day, consisting of rice and vegetables in season. If the household had a reasonable income, meat or fish dishes were included once or twice a week.

In addition to inviting people to participate in everyday and celebratory meals, residents who owned a television set welcomed friends into their homes to enjoy leisure time watching television together. Television is a powerful medium beaming the outside world into residents' homes providing another opportunity for social engagement.<sup>4</sup> Residents who owned televisions attracted many neighbours who enjoyed such programs as sports broadcasts and Indian films telecast from Indonesia. Madalena, captivated by these movies, regularly visited her neighbour to watch them. Children

who had access to television were strongly influenced by programs. One song, “Oh my darling I love you,” taken from a television program, was sung by many children in Bidau. They also mimicked dances from pop channels. Religious programs were broadcast from Portugal. Often Alberto’s household would attend Mass and then return home to watch Mass or another religious program televised from Portugal. When soccer matches were screened, Alberto’s house was crowded with his children’s friends, many of whom stayed overnight sleeping on mattresses scattered around the lounge room floor. Residents also enjoyed watching the news and local current events, including sessions of parliament when these were broadcast.

Residents met at houses for other leisure pursuits. For example, Alberto’s front room was transformed for dancing tuition when children practised routines for major rituals. During the week prior to the procession for the feast of the Sacred Heart on 6 June 2003, dancing classes were held in Alberto’s residence every afternoon. Furniture was moved into the garden to make space available for approximately 20 children who participated. Young women from the youth group were instrumental in teaching them several traditional dances. Children from Birunbiru households were also involved in the performance at the commencement of the procession for that feast day, and the same teachers gave them instructions; however, these lessons were in the grounds nearer their homes. Thus, despite their being included in the procession, Birunbiru children were separated from others for the teaching of these dances.

Other social activities conducted inside the house involve groups of women sewing together, making tablecloths and other decorative cloths by cross-stitch. During one of my meetings with Teresinha, she listed the full names of nine women who had been significant friends with whom she had enjoyed this pastime when they were

adolescents. She stressed the importance of these friends with whom she did everything from playing games to collecting firewood.

If Portuguese Period Settlers were celebrating a special occasion, for example, a birthday, they would invite a few guests for a buffet dinner. This event was usually a small gathering, as residents could not afford to entertain many people. The hosts would change from their everyday clothes of T-shirts and shorts or casual dresses into better clothing. When guests were expected, male residents changed to shorts and a good quality opened neck shirt, and women would wear a dress or a skirt and blouse. Women did not wear makeup when visitors came to their homes, as it was mostly reserved for more formal wear when they attended functions. In the past, only older women wore lipstick; however, in Dili these practices were altering with younger women wearing makeup to work and social outings. Younger and older women liked to use nail polish, believing it to be extremely fashionable and did not restrict its use for formal outings.

When Alberto's wife, Luisa, celebrated her birthday one evening in their dining room at the rear of their house, one of her brothers attended the buffet dinner. Other guests from Bidau included Alberto's friend, Eduardo, Eduardo's wife and two of Luisa's nieces from Bidau Lecidere. Luisa and Alberto's daughters assisted with the cooking, which included an iced birthday cake decorated with birthday candles. Other dishes included chicken with fried beans and carrots, a salad made of lettuce, tomato and onion with oil dressing, and boiled white rice. For this occasion, Luisa and Alberto's children came inside the house to sing "Happy Birthday," and most of them ate their meals inside seated with plates on their laps, whereas they usually ate separately, sometimes with the daughters responsible for cooking eating in the kitchen.

There were no strict rules governing who was invited to such gatherings. If the celebration was for an adult, generally a couple of friends of that person and a few



members of the kin group were welcomed into the house. Another resident, an Indonesian Period Settler, hosted a birthday party for her daughter in the front room of their residence, and on that evening about ten teenagers and four adults attended. Birthday parties were held more frequently during the latter part of my fieldwork when some households included members who had gained employment and therefore were able to assist with financing the party. Households of people from Birunbiru or Post-ballot Residents lacked the financial means to hold as many celebrations as Portuguese Period and Indonesian Period Settlers, as most of them were struggling to meet their daily food needs. They entered each other's houses and shared cooking utensils. Sometimes they shared food if they had adequate supplies.

Some children became insiders by being informally adopted, a form of support that East Timorese have practised since long before the troubles in 1999. Although violent events can have a negative impact on a community, the aftermath of tragedy can be instrumental in shaping positive decisions people make about their future. Conflict created many orphans and East Timorese showed their generosity by supporting them. Some who adopted children had altruistic motives to help others improve their lifestyles after they had witnessed much horror. One resident in Bidau Tokobaru, Carlos, was extremely charitable in adopting eight children after he had witnessed the deaths of many people during 1999. At the time of my interview with Carlos on 24 April 2001, he was 24 years old and had married a few days earlier. He was working as a Regional Supervisor with an NGO, and his wife worked as a cleaner at a health clinic. His wife was introduced to the children he had adopted before they married, and they both agreed to support them. Despite his own suffering, he took on the responsibility for the eight children and was optimistic about securing a better future for them. Five of the children lived with him, two adopted daughters lived with religious sisters in Maliana and one

adopted son lived with religious sisters in Maubara. He financially supported the three children who lived with the sisters. None of the children was related to him by blood; however, they came from the same district where he was born. Two of the boys were brothers. By adopting these children, their status as outsiders became one of insiders as Carlos expanded his household.<sup>5</sup>

Other children were supported by religious institutions or NGOs. During 2001, the role of adoptive parents and the operation of orphanages were being reviewed by NGOs. The standard of care and opportunities for children who were adopted were matters of concern that appeared in reports such as the *Assessment of the Situation of Separated Children and Orphans in East Timor*. Some people questioned whether children placed in institutions were in fact orphans or rather children from disadvantaged families. An East Timorese organisation, “Hope,” had its office based in Bidau Motaklaran and was in the process of building an orphanage in Ermera district. During September 2003, the Dominican sisters commenced their intake of children for what was considered a boarding house.

Residents had insider status in households beyond the village of Bidau through ties of kin and friendship, and this provided important opportunities for support. For example, when Madalena was grieving – which she expressed as *hanoin* (T) (thinking) – long after the one year anniversary of Vicente’s death, she locked up her house for a few days and went to stay with relatives. She found solace in their companionship and in talking with them.

## **Conclusion**

Bidau residents were agents in their own recovery. While presenting with some symptoms of trauma, they did not want outside assistance to overcome these. They said they relied on the support of their kin and friends as well as social and religious

activities to get on with their lives. As insiders, they had wide networks of social support that reduced any sense of alienation. Their most dominant request was for the supply of materials to rebuild their homes, and they yearned for a peaceful place to live. The rehabilitation of houses and surrounds, however, was required for reasons in addition to accommodation. The category of “house” in East Timor designates not only a material structure, but also a group. The rebuilding of houses redefined the house and household order as part of the wider social order. Bidau residents focused on their “houses” not only to rebuild their physical dwellings, but more importantly to strengthen relationships with kin, friends and neighbours.

By repairing their homes, Bidau residents recreated the interior spaces necessary to conduct key rituals and host informal social gatherings. Having an appropriately furnished front room is important for a number of rituals, whether performed individually or collectively. This is the space into which the prospective wife-takers enter to begin initial marriage negotiations with wife-givers. It is the room in which the corpse of a household member is laid out, and into which kin, friends and neighbours file to view the corpse. It is the scene for lamentations and collective prayer over the deceased. On these occasions, the room is open to insiders as well as outsiders. Positioned in the front room is the *oratóriu*, before which household members pray private petitions. When the household is the recipient of the Marian or Jesus statue, it is a room open to all.

The outside structure of the house can be linked to the outside physical appearance of the body, visible and accountable, while the inside destruction of the house, invisible and therefore unspoken, can be linked to the inner scars that wound the body. What a person carries inside themselves and their homes may be secret, contained and haunting for that person, while public knowledge of violence to the social body may

pervade the whole village, yet remain nameless. To some extent, the experiences of conflict residents had lived through were going to remain inside their houses as well as being embodied in their memories, perceptions and beliefs. However, my observations reveal strong connections between the reconstruction of residents' houses, the social interaction of insiders and occasionally outsiders within the private space of their houses, and improvement in their lives.

## **CHAPTER 10: EXCHANGES IN BETWEEN – PRACTICES IN INTERMEDIATE SPACES**

I do not keep it a secret but talk to people. I talk to my family. We talk about fighting and killing so that we are careful. If it is secret or kept in my heart, I am afraid that fighting will come to this area. If we talk, then we are aware of what is happening in our neighbourhood. (Indonesian Period Settler, Interview, 29 January 2001)

The activities conducted in the intermediate spaces of verandas and gardens, visible to the public gaze, reflect elements of the known and unknown of the house and the body. Though what we understand of people's internal worlds is always limited, by observing the appearance, behaviour and associates of people, and through what they tell us, we can gain partial glimpses into their lives. By establishing good relationships with the occupants of houses and spending time with them in intermediate spaces, we can learn about what is happening both inside the house and in the public realm.

In addition to activities in the public and private spaces, residents participate in religious and social events organised in their gardens and entertain visitors on their verandas. This chapter explores how Bidau residents redefined and reclaimed intermediate spaces and how they engaged in ritual and everyday activities in these spaces. Investigating how they rebuilt their fences, gardens, and verandas after destruction and how they used the social spaces thus formed provides insights into the social interactions and activities that sustain them.

### **Recreating destroyed gardens and verandas**

The intermediate space differed in the properties of the three categories of residents. Most of the Portuguese Period Settlers and many Indonesian Period Settlers owned large blocks of land. In the early morning, people would sweep their gardens around the house. Striking gardens with a variety of hanging flowering pots enhanced some

properties. Madalena was proud of her garden and liked passers-by to comment favourably on her plants, even though she stated that her house “was bad.”



**Plate 24. Indonesian Period Settler’s garden**

During 2002, Bidau residents started to clean up their gardens. Some planted corn, nurtured fruit trees and grew vegetables in fenced off areas. As residents in Bidau Motaklaran believe certain plants have healing powers, some had healing plants for traditional medicine. Alberto tended various trees and smaller medicinal plants growing in his garden, and he used the bark or boiled the leaves from these to treat particular ailments. His family chewed small pieces of bark from the tree *ai-lakatai* (T) when they had stomach problems. Alberto’s family boiled the leaves of another plant, called *bigodes de gartu* (P) (cat’s whiskers), which grew in his garden, then drank the fluid to treat what they thought to be kidney infections. Many people had papaya plants, and eating their bitter flowers was widely believed to offer protection against contracting malaria. Knowledge of how to prepare some traditional medicines has been lost.

Alberto's wife Luisa pointed out other garden plants previously used by her grandparents for curing ailments, but confessed that she did not know how to use these.

In Bidau, a few residents follow traditions from their districts of birth that they believe offer protection from sorcery. A resident originally from Viqueque pinned *liis mutin* (T) (white onion), which she also referred to as *gannua*<sup>1</sup>, on her baby's singlet in order to keep *buan* (T) (witches) away. Portuguese Period Settlers were not aware of this practice.

People from Birunbiru did not have fences around their properties and did not have flowering gardens or plants. The land around their dwellings was dry and dusty, and when it rained, stagnant pools formed, becoming a health hazard as a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Instead of establishing gardens, Birunbiru settlers in Bidau focused on caring for their animals, providing them with feed troughs made from old tyres. They were the first residents to pen their animals in Bidau, whereas Portuguese Period Settlers and Indonesian Period Settlers were happy for their pigs to scavenge in the canals. Pigs and chickens had been allowed to roam freely in the intermediate and public spaces until the early months of 2003 when more residents began to pen their animals.

Not only were the houses of Post-ballot Residents similar to each other in design, so too were their gardens, enclosed with fences and a gate. These residents did not own their properties, and some were uncertain how long they would be permitted to live in Bidau Tokobaru. Because of this and the fact that these houses had not been damaged, there was little maintenance or modifications made to these properties. Outside chores, such as washing clothes at the front garden taps, had a social component as residents chatted with their neighbours over their fences.

During the latter months of 2002 and during 2003, Portuguese Period Settlers and Indonesian Period Settlers began to rebuild fences around their properties. Some constructed high brick walls topped with protruding jagged glass, sending a strong message to potential intruders to keep out. A few rebuilt houses at sites where militia had demolished the dwellings, and their owners started to block off land that had been used as pathways, such as land that for some time had provided easy access for anyone to walk from Bidau Motaklaran to Bidau Tokobaru. People were starting to withdraw into the privacy of their own properties and to reduce the openness of their houses, which seemed so remarkable when I first arrived in the village. However, the physical boundaries they established gave them greater control over how they used intermediate spaces for social interaction and helped define the social order with clearer definition of “insiders” and “outsiders.”

### **Activities in intermediate spaces**

The intermediate space of gardens is important for celebrations, rituals and informal meetings. Apart from *festas* or smaller private celebrations inside the house, guests are entertained on front verandas where their hosts offer tea, coffee and snacks. In addition, in gardens, women who are related or who are close friends chew betel nut together as they chat.

### *Special events held in intermediate spaces*

The erection of a palm fence and a tarpaulin in the intermediate space of gardens signals that preparations for a *festa* are underway to celebrate a wedding, a baptism, or a funerary banquet (after a burial, the placing of bitter flowers on a grave, or a *kore metan* ritual). Residents mostly held these events in their front gardens, though depending on available space, they were sometimes organised next to the house or in the back garden



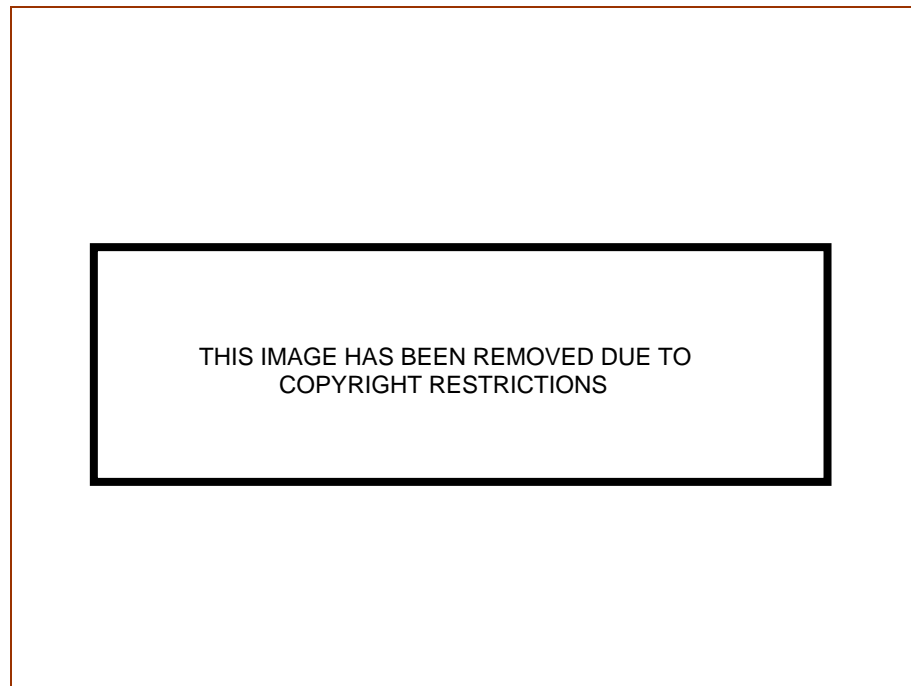
of the property. Residents also utilised the back garden area next to the outside kitchen for cooking and washing up for banquets at *festas* and mortuary feasts.



**Plate 25. Cooking preparations for a mortuary feast**

The intermediate space becomes a significant one for sociality between kin. As previously discussed, relatives, friends and neighbours who attend funerary rites of burial and the placing of bitter flowers on the grave spend a week in the garden of the deceased's household joining in prayer vigils as well as social activities that include card games.

There were no prohibitions on burying kin near houses, but most people buried their dead relatives in the cemetery. When a man in Bidau Motaklaran died, his family considered burying the corpse in their garden, but changed their minds because the area flooded when there were heavy rains. In the past, residents had buried kin in the intermediate spaces around their houses. In one case, a foetus was buried in a small cement grave beside the family home, and each All Souls' Day, members of the family light candles, place them on top of the grave along with flowers, and pray together.



**Plate 26. People gathering in a garden area for mortuary rites**

For weddings and baptisms, the prospects of an invitation to enjoy a sumptuous meal, companionship of friends and dancing, lifts people's spirits. East Timorese are renowned for their love of music and dancing and the festivities for many weddings continued until sunrise the next day. After the formal proceedings and dining at a wedding *festa*, plates, utensils and tables are removed to make a space for dancing. Musical equipment often consisted of loud speakers and a sound system with cassettes. A few young men acted as disc jockeys playing a selection of music collected from friends. At some *festas*, a band performed throughout the afternoon and late evening. At Filomena and José's wedding, several guests sang with a microphone between sessions of music on cassettes. Not all of the performers were accomplished singers, but this did not deter guests who were encouraged to participate and contribute to the entertainment. At other weddings, guests admired people with polished voices and for their skills in entertaining crowds. These people were widely acclaimed for their talents not only at

Bidau *festas*, but also elsewhere in Dili. Similarly, certain people were recognised for their dancing prowess.

Once the music commences guests select their partners, not deterred by the uneven earthen dance floor. One dance is similar to a barn dance, but couples do not exchange partners. However, several other dances are progressive, and guests change partners. Some older experienced dancers ensure that no one is left out by partnering many guests and encouraging others to do the same. There did not appear to be any overt hostility or jealousy at the weddings I attended arising from people dancing with different partners. Guests dance for several hours and take few breaks. There is a limited supply of alcohol available at most functions, and it seemed that dancing and popular music are attractive incentives, which keep people at *festas* all night. People return to their seats after a session to enjoy a cigarette or mingle and chat with other friends.

A conventional dance known as the *balsa* (T) (raft) is similar to a slow waltz, which consists of three main steps, for which the couple only slightly lift the feet and rest on the third step with a subtle movement of the hips. Their arms are in the position for a waltz; however, the way the woman rests her right hand in the man's can vary from a clasped position to only grasping his thumb. Residents in Bidau of all ages enjoyed this dance, and it is one of the most popular, performed by many people at all *festas*. While possessing a certain charm, this slow dance lacked the sexy passionate zest of Latin American dancing, or of the *Nordestino forró* described by Scheper-Hughes (1992:246) as a sexy version of the two-step, but its restrained movements nevertheless require skill to execute.

Anthropologists have studied dance in diverse contexts. The power of dance expressed in ceremonial rituals associated with war has featured in many anthropological works (Schulte Nordholt 1971:351-352; McNiven *et al.* 2002:30). In

various countries, including South Africa and Latin America, people express themselves in dance as a form of resistance against powers of domination (Scheper-Hughes 1992:481; Ballantine 1993:11-38; Browning 1995; Guss 2000:47-59). Other contexts in which anthropologists have studied dance have been in relation to carnivals interpreted as forms of play (Turner, Victor 1987:123-138). Although dancing was part of headhunting rituals in Timor's history, its contemporary expressions are ceremonial and social.

For Bidau residents, dancing is a pleasurable social activity, which not only has physical benefits, but is also an important form of social interaction. It is an enjoyable pastime that many people report helps them forget about their troubles. A Bidau man boasted that he was a famous dancer during the Portuguese period administration and that his photograph and an account of his dancing had appeared in a newspaper. Those who did not participate in public dancing at *festas* were sometimes known to sashay around the inside of their houses to various tunes. Alberto never danced at communal celebrations, but did so alone in his dining room, singing along with music varying from popular pop songs to more nostalgic Portuguese songs he played on his cassette player.

Dance in East Timor not only enhances opportunities for social interaction at communal celebrations and provides an outlet for tension, but also has ritual significance. Dancing rehearsals take place both inside houses and in intermediate spaces in preparation for religious processions. Another form of dancing is the *tebe tebe* (T) (*tebe* to stamp; dance), a traditional Timorese dance during which women dressed in *tais* beat gongs and small goblet-shaped drums tucked under their arms. The Dutch musicologist Kunst (1994:189) has described this type of dance as found in West Timor and reports that in a musicological sense Timor has much in common with Flores. This dance is usually performed as the introduction to a ceremony to welcome officials or to

formally open special events. During independence ceremonies on 20 May 2002, groups of elders from different districts invoked the spirit world while dancing and waving small oblong pieces of leather.



**Plate 27. Traditional dancing at a religious ceremony at the grotto in Bidau Motaklaran**

Residents dressed in formal attire to attend *festas*. Depending on their relationship with the hosts, some men wore a suit, business shirt and tie while others were neatly groomed in a shirt with a collar, trousers, shoes and socks. A few men on formal occasions did not wear socks, which may have been due to lack of money to buy them. For Portuguese Period Settlers and Indonesian Period Settlers, women's apparel for these parties ranged from long sequined evening dresses with elegant shawls made from matching fabric to three quarter length skirts and blouses. In 2001, younger women began to wear fashionable shorter dresses as stock became available at several fashion shops. Women's footwear varied from high-heeled gold or black sandals to well-polished shoes. Women styled their hair in various ways; young women set their hair

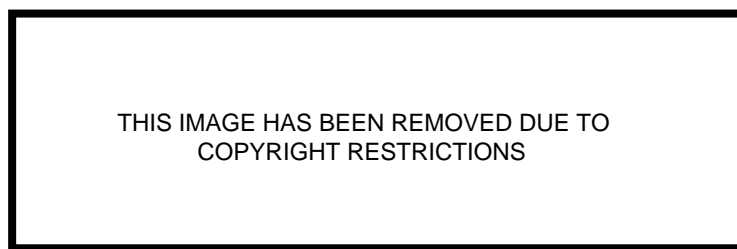
the previous day with strips of cloth to make ringlets; others wore their hair in a chignon or clasped with a stylish clip. Most women wore make-up to attend formal outings; older women used lipstick, and younger women added eye shadow, mascara and cheek blush. However, women from Birunbiru dressed in sarongs and brightly coloured *kabaia* (blouses) and flat sandals, and few wore lipstick.

Intermediate spaces featured in religious processions during May, June and October. If a household was nominated to receive a statue during one of these processions, residents decorated the entrance to their property with an archway of bamboo, palms and bougainvillea flowers and marked out a pathway with palm leafstalks, each with a candle attached. Members of the youth group assisted with these decorations, which could take many hours to prepare. Under the decorated archway, the bearers of the statue handed it over to members of the household that received it for the evening. During this handover ritual, residents standing in the garden gently tossed flower petals over the statue, and then the exchange took place. As the new bearers carried the statue into the front room through the garden between the rows of palm leafstalks, a hymn was sung. The following evening the statue was taken out through the same garden pathway for the procession to the next recipient house. The space of the gateway and garden is thus used as a transition space between the public space of the street and private space of the house.

#### *Everyday activities that promote healing*

Verandas and gardens are important places for making traditional cloths, which are a symbol of Timorese culture and may be sold to contribute to household income. Women from Birunbiru sit under the shade of their verandas if they have one, or under a tree or makeshift shelter in the intermediate space, to weave *tais* on a wooden loom.<sup>2</sup> These intermediate spaces also have recreational uses. Team sports were not limited to soccer

played in public spaces by men and boys, but also included volleyball played in front gardens by both men and women. Volleyball was a popular game, and residents who had the necessary equipment often invited passers-by whom they knew to join in the games.



**Plate 28. Birunbiru settler in Bidau weaving a *tais***

Intermediate spaces served as informal meeting places to receive guests or friends who passed by in the street and entered the property for a chat. Young people congregated in gardens of an evening playing guitars and singing Timorese songs and love tunes. Renditions of “The House of the Rising Sun” became a regular choice. Some kiosks, including Madalena’s, were constructed in the intermediate space of the garden. Located in the garden, but also bordering the public space of a neighbourhood pathway, Madalena’s stall is a place for exchange of information and gossip.

Residents generally viewed gossip as problematic and referred to people who participated in it as *ibun-boot* (T) (big mouth). However, nearly everyone engaged in this activity. There were instances when gossip spread animosity, and these were situations when people were jealous of other residents’ achievements or personal

possessions. Rumours spread rapidly in Bidau, and it was not easy to have much privacy in the village. Yet, despite the negative side of gossip, it could draw together those who shared confidences.

In addition to the exchange of news and gossip, residents engaged in joking relations and storytelling. Often I witnessed people sitting in groups in their gardens joking and socialising with each other. I give much attention to this pastime, because many residents said that engaging in joking with family and friends helped them overcome their problems.

Since Radcliffe-Brown's seminal work on joking relations in 1940, several anthropologists have reviewed his "hostility" hypothesis, which looks at joking relationships in terms of their ambivalence between friendliness and antagonism. Freedman (1977) in his work on the Kiga of Northern Rwanda evaluates criticisms of Radcliffe-Brown's hypothesis and argues that a major failing is that they compare data from social settings quite different from the social settings that Radcliffe-Brown considered. Freedman (1977:156) reminds us that joking and theories to explain its occurrence vary cross-culturally. The form and content of jokes differ in different social settings and social relations. Douglas (1968:363) argues "that the joke form rarely lies in the utterance alone, but that it can be identified in the total social situation." Other anthropologists have analysed joking relationships in terms of avoidance relationships or "avoidance partnerships" (Heald 1990; Stasch 2002). Yoshida (2001:367) documents how female Japanese inn workers use joking to reflect on their work conditions, gender roles, and personal problems all of which contain elements of suffering.

Joking occurs in Bidau between close kin and friends, and can break down barriers of class and culture. As previously noted, Madalena jokes with her children to forget her problems. She would also create jokes that included references to me.



Sometimes when she saw me walking up her street, if it was quiet, she would stand in her garden bouncing her large bosom up and down joking that she was not wearing a bra and calling me *teki teki* (T) (slang for young woman) if I was dressed more formally.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in my relationship with Celestina from Birunbiru, it was the joking that signalled an intimate relaxed friendship, and it was through humour that she initially attracted my attention.

Other residents also enjoyed making jokes to release tension, telling them to their children, other relatives, and neighbours as they sat in their gardens. Some jokes made light of distressing circumstances; for example, residents used banter to call each other relatives of militia (when there was no relationship) or depict humour in other sad scenarios from 1999. Even when discussing their everyday chores and simple diets, people laughed and used humour. In the household surveys, most of which were conducted in intermediate spaces, I asked people to tell me about their daily activities. This question evoked much laughter. Some respondents described in detail what they did from when they woke up until later in the evening and were amused that I was so interested in what they did. This question gave me insights into the hardships that people experienced and their capacity to cope with them.

People also made jokes inside their houses. Other contexts in which joking occurred included therapeutic programs and religious services such as those conducted by Fr. Alves at Motael Catholic Church.<sup>4</sup> *Bibi Bulak* (T) (crazy goat), a theatre group from overseas, incorporated humour into its performances, which were enjoyed by many East Timorese.<sup>5</sup> This theatre group, initiated by an American man, also appeared on the local television channel. The group was involved in live outdoor performances and was employed by some NGOs for training workshops. During 2003, the group teamed up with an art group, *Arte Moris*,<sup>6</sup> to commence theatre courses for East

Timorese. While these groups have a positive appeal for an East Timorese audience, East Timorese themselves use humour in various settings, and Bidau residents consider that their ways of joking are forms of communication they utilize to make themselves feel better.

Some of the joking engaged in by Bidau residents was part of the broader forms of communication that reduced anxiety and rebuilt trust. I use the term “Bidau talking therapy” to describe the forms of talk in informal meetings, one-to-one conversations and group discussions that assisted residents to share experiences and make reconnections. Herman (1992) stresses the need to reconnect with others after trauma:

The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation .... Traumatic events destroy the sustaining bonds between individual and community. Those who have survived learn that their sense of self, or worth, of humanity, depends upon a feeling of connection to others. The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience. Trauma isolates; the group re-creates a sense of belonging. (Herman 1992:133, 214)

Herman discusses the healing relationship in terms of a clinical model with the support of a therapist; one chapter of her book focuses on survivors of traumatic events who find “commonality” by joining organised groups for support. By contrast, kin, friends and neighbours in Bidau supported one another by informally discussing together the difficulties that they had experienced. The term “therapy” conjures up formal, western models of counselling with a qualified therapist, but I use it to emphasise the therapeutic nature of the informal discussions residents had between themselves and the way they communed with each other. In the healing environment of Bidau after Black September 1999, residents shared stories, listened to each other and rejoiced in finding friends who survived.

The listening side of the Bidau talking therapy was as essential as the talking. Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Zen Master and Buddhist writer emphasises that compassionate listening brings about healing (1998:79). He believes that many of us have lost our capacity to listen, even within our own families, and one result of this is a loneliness, which requires us to visit a therapist, hoping that she or he can listen to us (Nhat Hanh 1998:80).

By sharing similar experiences, bonds between groups of residents in Bidau strengthened. As Sr. Pely witnessed, the Dominican sisters found relationships with those whom they had not known well before the conflict were enriched after the sisters shared a few harrowing days with residents. According to Sr. Pely, the people felt supported and were grateful. As she said, “The gates were opened for them during their times of difficulties.”

An Indonesian Period Settler, Yeni, enjoyed going for walks with family and friends and engaging in “Bidau talking therapy” with them. She said her conversations with her immediate family members and trusted friends, including Alberto’s household, eased her fears and provided her with emotional support during times of distress. Her father Eduardo was one of Alberto’s closest friends, and the two families socialised frequently, eating at each other’s houses, the men drinking whiskey together, the women borrowing kitchen utensils for cooking, and the children playing soccer in the vacant block between their houses.

Numerous respondents reported that they often talked with kin, friends and neighbours about the hardships of 1999 and difficulties under Indonesian rule. It was part of casting off the burden of what they had experienced. While they talked informally between themselves, residents did not necessarily feel the need to talk to anyone else. The notion of visiting a counsellor was a strange concept, and some people

did not have sufficient trust to talk to East Timorese who worked at counselling centres. Other factors, such as political affiliations and associations of those they did know, deterred them from moving outside their trusted circles to seek assistance, not to mention the worry of gossip, which might prevail if they shared some of their secrets. While Bidau residents did not want to use counselling services, some East Timorese went to Jakarta or Australia for medical treatment and benefited from counselling services there. They were reluctant to say that they obtained assistance for stress-related problems and gave other medical reasons for their trips if asked.

One of the most significant factors that contributed to healing proved to be the social support that residents provided to one another when they returned to the village after late September 1999. The majority of residents discussed this social support and commonality when telling me that they talked to family, friends and neighbours or did not need to say anything as everyone shared a similar history or knew what had happened in the country. As Herman (1992) points out: “The restoration of social bonds begins with the discovery that one is not alone.”

## **Conclusion**

By remaking destroyed gardens and verandas, Bidau residents recreated spaces for entertaining guests and holding communal rituals. As with the front room of houses, the intermediate spaces of gardens and verandas are important loci for ritual and everyday activities that bring people together and strengthen social bonds. During wedding and mortuary rituals, gardens are transformed into venues for holding communal banquets and for dancing at *festas*. Gardens are also important spaces for wife-takers and wife-givers to gather during the ritual of *hatama sasán* before a wedding.

In some ritual contexts, the bounded garden area, within which sits the house, could be likened to a liminal area, a space for transitions. In Bidau, there are several

rituals where residents pass through a gate or archway to enter or leave the garden area. As van Gennep (1960:20) writes, “to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world.” For example, during religious processions for the Marian and Jesus statues, participants stop for a special rite of handover at a decorated archway at the gateway of the home that receives the statue for the evening. Similarly, when people enter the garden upon the return from the cemetery after a burial, they wash their hands as a part of a purification rite and rite of separation. During mortuary rituals, many members of the deceased’s descent group and their affines live in the garden space for the time between the death and the day of bitter flowers. The garden is also the gathering place for those who join in processions to the cemetery for burials, the day of bitter flowers, the day of sweet flowers and *kore metan*. In one marriage I witnessed, the bride’s father greeted the couple at the entrance to the garden for the wedding *festa* and placed a *tais* around his son-in-law’s neck as a sign of acceptance and welcome of the new man.

As Bidau residents erected fences to partition off their gardens and protect their houses, they physically and symbolically distinguished between insiders and outsiders and so created or affirmed social boundaries. What had been a village with few physical boundaries when people started to rebuild their lives from scratch after 1999, changed a few years later as people began reclaiming the privacy of their homes. When Bidau residents renovated their houses and erected fences, they were able to demarcate private and intermediate spaces, which enabled them to renegotiate relationships and discriminate between insiders and outsiders. Insiders included kin, close friends and neighbours who assisted with preparations for rituals and who visited regularly to socialise, whereas outsiders would normally stop at fences to call to household members to attract their attention and would only enter properties without specific invitation when participating in communal rituals.

In post-conflict Bidau, gardens and verandas were social spaces that were conducive to much sociality – including interactions at mortuary rites, dancing at *festas*, joking and “Bidau talking therapy”. In these intermediate spaces, as in public and private spaces, special rituals and everyday activities contributed to individual and social recovery.

## **CONCLUSION: PROCESSES OF REVIVAL – THE REMAKING OF THE SOCIAL ORDER**

The central argument of this thesis is that Bidau residents have been agents in their own recovery following the 1999 conflict. Their focus on rebuilding their homes and the fluid modes of sociality across different spatial settings was critical to the remaking of the social order. The reconstruction of houses and their surrounds was not only to satisfy residents' basic needs for shelter, but also provided vital, tangible dwellings required for exchange obligations, such as those associated with wedding and mortuary rituals. This reconstruction was part of redefining social boundaries after the transitional phase between destruction and rebuilding during which a temporarily expanded public space created opportunities for supportive social interactions. As homes and spaces were reconstituted, residents were able to reengage in familiar rituals and other social activities with a sense of confidence and well-being.

My research stresses that rather than apply an individual trauma model to assist them, we need to pay greater attention to the social worlds of people who have been involved in conflict situations. A focus on the life histories of key characters from Bidau reveals the disrupted life trajectories of residents of the village, resulting from deaths of kin, friends and neighbours, lost educational and employment opportunities, periods living under harsh conditions in the forest, and relocation after the 1999 conflict. It also shows how, despite personal hardships, people were able to take advantage of different opportunities, which included employment, marriage, the setting up of new homes and the education of their children. Many, though not all, Bidau residents had the strength and ability to recover from catastrophic events without outside intervention by drawing on their own skills and coping strategies. Donor agencies and NGOs did not provide material assistance to residents to rebuild their houses, nor did residents receive

financial support from East Timor's government. Residents did not want referral to a counselling service, even though a few evinced symptoms of trauma.

As Jacobson (1987) stresses, the meaning of social support is understandable only within its cultural context. In Bidau, residents talked about support in terms of relatives and friends in whom they could confide, on whom they could rely for assistance during times of crisis and mobilise to help with mortuary and wedding banquets. The *festas* held as part of wedding celebrations were evidence that residents could gather resources and host costly celebrations despite all they had suffered and lost. Support came from informal systems of reciprocity between friends and neighbours as well as from the structured formal obligations between wife-givers and wife-takers. Existing social networks assisted people from Bidau to find safe haven during the most violent months of 1999. When residents returned to Bidau from the end of September 1999 onwards and found much of the village destroyed, they provided immediate support to one another. In some cases, as many as three or four families moved in together wherever they could find shelter.

Amidst hardship, people in Bidau reconstructed the village and participated in wedding *festas*, mortuary rituals, religious processions and other social activities within a supportive network of kin, neighbours and friends that assisted them to overcome their difficulties. In doing so, they formed and used the public, private and intermediate spaces necessary for their ritual life and social interaction. In particular, their focus on rebuilding their private dwellings was extremely important for their personal and collective healing. Through rebuilding their houses, residents were able to reorder their lives and remake the social order within Bidau.



### **How ritual contributed to healing and recovery in Bidau**

In examining how rituals contribute to healing and recovery, I have been looking at the function of these rituals in post-conflict reconstruction. This is not to say that residents had this particular purpose in mind; as Perry (2003:134) notes, function does not imply intention or motivation. Nor does this focus on function imply that the history or symbolic value of these rituals is unimportant. On the contrary, residents expressed the need to continue their rituals because they were part of their traditions. At the same time, this was not a blind following of past practices. People made choices about which practices they deemed to be significant and which were less important. In line with Malinowski's insight, residents did not merely conduct rituals that held value for their ancestors, but focused on those that were important for their day to day living (Perry 2003:138).

One of the ways that participation in significant rituals, especially wedding and mortuary rites, contributed to both psychological and social healing of Bidau residents was by providing opportunities for reducing anxiety and for incorporation into the social body that sees these rituals as necessary. As Homans (1979) notes, in reconciling Malinowski's theory that ritual alleviates anxiety and Radcliffe-Brown's thesis that anxiety is often experienced when a customary ritual is not performed, ritual can reduce anxiety about things beyond our control, while not performing socially expected rituals, or not performing them properly, can result in anxiety. Thus, Homans (1979:61) argues that even though a ritual may not produce a practical result on the external world, this does not mean it has no function. "Its function is not related to the world external to the society but to the internal constitution of the society" (Homans 1979:61). Participation in key rituals helped regulate life in Bidau and reconstitute the social order. When important rituals could not be conducted in the usual forms due to conflict, such as

when weddings were delayed and when bodies were not recovered for burial, residents did what they could at the time, but still found it necessary to rectify the perceived deficiency through rituals performed at a later time. Thus, as discussed in Chapter 5, Filomena and José married in the church almost two years after the conflict, and as noted in Chapter 6, Francisco's kin were not able to conduct the prescribed mortuary rituals of bitter and sweet flowers after the deaths of his father and brother.

Over time, it became clear that some rituals were more central to the social order than others. For example, most couples wanted to have a church wedding, even if this was only possible many years after they had been cohabitating, and most people wanted to follow traditional mortuary rites, while the number of people who went to Mass on Sundays or joined in local Marian processions decreased over time. Though some residents regarded this decreased participation to be due to a lack of discipline, it may in fact reflect a reduction in people's anxiety, giving them confidence to make choices about their participation or non-participation in some rituals.

Engaging in rituals contributed to fostering a supportive social environment. As Rappaport (1999:39-44) notes, participation is a distinguishing feature of rituals. In Bidau, participation in wedding and mortuary rituals meant uniting with others to celebrate or mourn. These rituals included structured and unstructured elements, which provided opportunities for both formal and informal social interaction of participants.

Marriage rituals specifically involving the wife-givers and wife-takers – namely the knock at the door where the wife-takers seek to enter the house of the wife-givers and the later gathering of wife-givers and wife-takers to contribute goods towards the *festa* – formally expand social networks as they make and strengthen alliances characterised by onerous economic and social obligations. To what extent the alliances actually become supportive depends on how well the parties negotiate and fulfil these

obligations. As detailed in Chapters 5 and 7, relationships between wife-givers and wife-takers can involve conflict, yet nevertheless become sources of support. The example of a delayed wedding due to militia activities in 1999, and later because of protracted bridewealth transactions, identified the difficulties experienced by a couple and their kin groups in contracting a marriage as well as the strengthening of social ties and alliances through the marriage. The exegesis of a lamentation revealed matters of strong disagreement over mortuary payments, but it also showed how the funerary rites were carried out according to the requests of the deceased and in conformity with societal norms.

My concentration on marriage and death rituals has highlighted the significance of reciprocal obligations that commence with marital alliances between wife-givers and wife-takers and continue over a lifetime, with mortuary payments required for the death of each kin member. People's lives and livelihoods in Bidau and elsewhere in East Timor are bound up with these exchange relationships, and people will often forgo basic necessities to stage marriage and mortuary rituals. The mortuary rites held following the death of Maria Soares emphasise the alliance relationship between her sons and daughters, in line with Traube's (1986:90-91) analysis of the Mambai death ceremonies. Wife-givers and wife-takers stand as brother and sister to Maria Soares' kin group and as son and daughter to her.

As was demonstrated in the marriage negotiations for Filomena and José, the complex exchange obligations were weighted against the wife-takers, but despite the imbalance in what was given and received, an alliance was formed. Traube (1986:91) emphasises the mutuality of this exchange:

What needs stressing is the mutual character of social imbalance, which precludes any notion of the "purchase" of a woman. Affinal gift exchanges are the price of an alliance relationship, and the price is paid by both parties. Material prestations are weighted in favor of the wife-givers and express the

disparity between alliance statuses, but the maritally incurred debt is, and remains, reciprocal.

Although José's kin as wife-takers suffered financial hardship in meeting the demands of the wife-givers, the marriage commenced a lifelong alliance in which both parties can be called upon to fulfill mutual obligations.

Marriage and funerary rituals, in addition to forming and strengthening alliances, foster broader socialising. Many people in addition to the wife-givers and wife-takers participate in the Nuptial Mass, *fiesta* preparations and the *fiesta* itself. A wedding *fiesta* has a formalised structure in the way hosts arrange seating, display food on the banquet tables, offer drinks and deliver speeches as well as the sequence of dances initially performed by the bridal couple, the bridal party and then guests. Apart from the platform and special chairs allocated to the bridal party, there are no rules for seating guests, and there are no obvious class, gender, age or other social distinctions regarding the participation of invited guests in greeting the bridal party, lining up for the meal and joining in the dancing. Interspersed with the formal elements are opportunities for socialising between those working in the kitchen, informal communication between seated guests who may arrive hours before formal proceedings commence, and conviviality of the shared food, drink and dancing.

Similarly, funerary feasts include informal socialising and have no obvious social distinctions in terms of participation. In contrast to weddings, however, there are no invitations for joining in mortuary banquets. Thus, the choice of whether to participate or not is open to anyone who is in any way connected with the deceased, though relatives, friends and close neighbours are expected to attend, and because the feasts do not stand alone, all participants in the feast are expected to have participated in at least some of the associated funerary rites. Funerary rites, therefore, present an opportunity for residents to extend social networks through participation.

Funerary processions (for the burial, the day of bitter flowers and the one year anniversary) and associated rites at the cemetery bear public witness of support provided to the bereaved family. In addition to participants in a procession, some onlookers choose to participate through gestures of respect as a procession passes by. The visible, public expressions of social support in ritual processions communicates a sense of social stability and a return to proper ritual forms following the period of disruption. As Handelman (1990:15) contends: “Public events are locations of communication that convey participants into versions of social order in relatively coherent ways.” The form of the ritual is important here. Rappaport (1999:51) argues that “the formality and non-instrumentality characteristic of ritual enhances its communicational functioning.” In the case of funerary processions in Bidau, the form of the ritual – physical movement of bodies through the public space of the streets, Catholic prayers, and the symbols of the cross, candles and flowers – communicates social and religious solidarity.

In addition to funerary processions, the religious processions taking statues from house to house during the months of May, June and October, which followed a set of specific acts and utterances, reinforced social bonds based on shared beliefs and practices. As for funerary processions, the form of these rituals included processing, repetitious prayers (the Rosary) and the carrying of symbols (a statue, rosary beads and candles). In common with processions for funerals, these structural elements convey a sense of shared social and religious identity. They communicate this not only to onlookers, but also, as auto-communication (Rappaport 1999:51), to those in the processions. Participation in these processions is voluntary, and although relatively few people join in them, they have significance for the whole community. As with hearing the familiar rhythm of the Rosary on the radio in the background in kiosks and homes,

seeing these familiar religious processions enacted in the streets can be a source of comfort and reassurance for people who are doing other things. Even the bamboo arches and bougainvillea flowers, which decorate the path from the road leading to the house that receives the statue, convey the idea that there is order within the village.

These religious processions include much sociability, as host households provide snacks and drinks to participants inside their homes after prayers. Involvement in these rituals provides an opportunity for residents to cross social divides by entering houses not normally open to them. Hosts were proud to receive the statue and open their homes to welcome participants, and it did not matter whether the physical structure of the house was in good condition or whether the house was dilapidated.

Some rituals contribute to healing through collective remembering. Most significant are the various rituals at the cemetery for All Souls' Day and the lighting of candles in the streets on significant days of remembrance (the anniversaries of the Santa Cruz massacre and the announcement of the 1999 ballot results). As well as emotions of grief that residents may release on these occasions, there is an honouring of those who have died and a powerful sense that one is not alone, but a member of a suffering community. Remembering was also elicited by the major religious procession of the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 2003, in which there was a mix of religious fervour, political symbolism with the use of the national flag, input from elders reciting ritual speech and performance of traditional dance by children. On this occasion, some participants cried as they remembered clandestine activities carried out during this procession in the past.

According to some residents, participation in religious rituals, both private and public, made them feel more secure and helped ease their anxieties about possible future conflict. Residents also emphasised that social activities played a major role in their

recovery. Social activities that assisted residents forget about their problems, at least temporarily, included going for walks with friends, playing sport, singing, dancing, playing cards, going to parties, attending cockfights, story telling and making jokes. All of these provided many opportunities for residents to talk with friends about topics ranging from everyday events to serious concerns. Through social interactions people gradually built up trust that everyday life had stabilised. In addition, their recreational activities were an outlet for tension and turned their minds away from their problems.

Rituals and activities contributed to recovery and revitalisation to different degrees for different residents depending on their level of participation. Through participation in rituals and practices, either directly or as onlookers, residents contributed to and shared in psychosocial recovery in Bidau. As agents, they benefited from a reduction in anxiety, a supportive social environment, and social and religious solidarity. These benefits arose as they formed and moved within social spaces that were integral to their remaking of the social order.

### **Significance of the spatial dimensions of rituals**

This thesis has looked at rituals and other activities in relation to three social spaces. As Tilley (1994:10) states:

There is no space, only spaces. These spaces, as social productions, are always centred in relation to human agency and are amenable to reproduction or change because their constitution takes place as part of the day-to-day *praxis* or practical activity of individuals and groups in the world.

How Bidau residents redefined spaces and used these spaces for rituals and other practices shaped the social relations that assisted in their recovery. In the post-conflict reconstruction, there was a return to ritual life and practices performed in public, private and intermediate spaces. The spatial dimensions of the rituals and other practices are

closely related to the social processes of the household and the architectural space of the house.

My analysis of the activities of residents in their houses, verandas and gardens and public places shows how the activities of residents reconstituted and reshaped social spaces. Jiménez (2003:140), in critiquing the Durkheimian approach to space as territory, theorises that social relationships in the urban space of Antofagasta, Chile, are not invested in the land but in social processes. As Jiménez argues, space is “a condition or faculty – a capacity – of social relationships. It is what people do, not where they are” (Jiménez 2003:140). In Bidau, when social interactions had been limited (for example, when people could not freely congregate in the streets due to the threat of violence), social space was restricted. The expansion of social space after 1999 accompanied an expanded sociality as people reclaimed the streets, expanded their households, and aided each other.

Public space was very important for the first few years after the 1999 violence. There was much noise and activity in the streets. It seemed that the lid of oppression had lifted and the fear residents had experienced during Indonesian rule had begun to dissipate. There were significant changes in the way residents used public space compared to during the conflict, with streets being the routes for religious processions and people lighting candles on the footpaths on significant dates in remembrance of those who had died. Residents were able to congregate freely in the streets and go for afternoon strolls without the fear of imprisonment or intimidation. The youth were visible and vocal in the streets expressing their freedom by congregating in groups, singing and playing their guitars long into the night, and painting graffiti on walls and fences. They claimed spaces at the two bridges in Alberto’s street and in front of Alberto’s house. Some of Alberto’s neighbours complained about the unruly noise, but



most residents tolerated the din and the idle ways in which the young people passed their time. Residents, in reclaiming the streets, not only went beyond the constricted conduct that had been possible in the time of Indonesian rule, but also what would later be regarded as acceptable once residents and authorities began to regulate what people did in public places.

Public space had expanded beyond what it had been prior to and during the conflict and beyond what it would be once social order became more firmly re-established. The movement of bodies through this enlarged public space created a multiplicity of paths through Bidau. There was not only more space for movement through the streets. There were few physical boundaries around people's properties, and people wore tracks between houses amidst the rubble, some stopping to pick fruit from neighbours' trees, treating these as a shared resource. These tracks were also routes to increased sociality as residents had open access to each other's properties and had additional opportunities to cross paths with friends and stop for a chat or invite passers-by to sit for a while in their gardens.

Spaces continued to change as reconstruction provided altered settings for ritual life and other social activities. The enactment of many rituals and everyday social activities in public places (streets, churches, the grotto, the cemetery) contributed to a vibrant public space. At the same time, residents, through their activities in their homes and the rehabilitation of their houses and surrounds to better accommodate these activities, demarcated private and intermediate spaces. Such demarcation of space was essential for ritual activities, especially wedding and mortuary negotiations and feasts, and for enclosing the household. Destroyed dwellings and broken fences had allowed public gaze into the privacy of homes as people used paths beside houses as thoroughfares. In rebuilding their houses and erecting fences, some of which blocked

off pathways, residents gained greater control over whom they admitted into their properties and into their lives as insiders or excluded as outsiders.

In this understanding, the private, intermediate and public spaces are distinguished by the activities that form them. It is important to note that, while identifying these social spaces draws attention to the varied ways of relating and relationships that contributed to healing and recovery in Bidau, the boundaries between these spaces are understood to be fluid. The spaces can overlap, and people can move seamlessly between them, for example, during a funerary rite or a local procession of the Marian statue. Although the physical boundaries (doors, gates, fences) associated with the social spaces may restrict access, they do not impede the flow of social relations. Rather, in enabling residents to regulate this flow, they are in fact constitutive of social relations. These observations are in line with the findings of Helliwell (1996) who, in her exploration of the Gerai longhouse and the way space is lived and used in everyday life, draws attention to such fluidity of social relations and permeable boundaries.

As residents felt more secure and their capacity to redefine the architectural space in and around their houses increased, they were able to renegotiate relationships within households and between insiders and outsiders. According to Tilley (1994:17) architectural space “involves a deliberate attempt to create and bound space, create an inside, an outside, a way around, a channel for movement.” The architectural spaces that Bidau residents formed as they repaired and rebuilt their homes enabled participation in the social exchanges and ritual life that facilitated their recovery. For example, having a suitably furnished front room was essential for the knock at the door ritual, viewing the corpse of a household member, praying at the household *oratóriu*, and receiving the statue of Mary or Jesus during religious processions. It was central to receiving kin and guests, thereby sustaining the flow of relationships in the city and with kin from rural

areas. A veranda (or makeshift shelter) and garden space around the house was needed for the gathering of relatives and friends during the week of mourning after a death, receiving contributions for *hatama sasán*, preparing and hosting funerary feasts and wedding *festas*, informally entertaining visitors and everyday socialising.

Many anthropologists have written about the importance of the structure of the house, the use of space and house symbolism in Southeast Asia (Cunningham 1964:34-68; Hicks 1976; Forman 1980; Traube 1986; Cinatti *et al.* 1987; Fox 1993; Helliwell 1993;1996; Waterson 1997). Cunningham's 1964 study of the Atoni house in West Timor, one of the most cited analyses of house symbolism and the use of space, investigates the rules and meanings associated with specific parts of the house structure to show how the Atoni express order with and beyond the architecture of the house to bring about social and political order. Although the house structure in Bidau, unlike the Atoni house, has taken on a modern architectural style, it reflects, like the Atoni house, patterns of social relationships and the protocols for rituals, such as showing respect to guests and conducting marriage negotiations and funerary rites. As in other parts of Timor and the Southeast Asia region, the Bidau house is the centre for key ritual activity.

The architecture of the house and the practices in and around it delineate insiders from outsiders in relation to the household. In this thesis, I have used the term "household" to refer to the group of people living in the one house. While there was a dominant form of household composition in Bidau, with many households following rules of patrilineal descent, there were also variations as the composition of households altered due to the conflict. Although changing household composition was nothing new, as evidenced by Alberto's early childhood and other cases where children moved between houses of kin, the destruction in 1999 demanded new forms of household. In

many cases, nuclear families took in relatives and friends. A number of households became matrifocal due to deaths or disappearances of husbands. In some instances, different families shared the one house; in others, a group of people with no kin relationship occupied a single dwelling. As order was established in Bidau and destroyed houses were rebuilt, there were opportunities and space for some households to divide. The composition of the household was an issue for people who wanted to maintain social connections, but were finding kin obligations burdensome. Some residents aspired to establish or re-establish households consisting only of their nuclear family, but were economically constrained from doing so. Others had sufficient resources to restructure their households. Thus, by the middle of 2003, Alberto's household, which for the first couple of years after 1999 had hosted many short and long-term visitors, comprised only his nuclear family, although many visitors continued to call during the day.

The gradual reclaiming of private space with the physical rebuilding of houses provided the mechanism for redefining household members. Residents had displayed openness to their homes and themselves when they returned to the village from September 1999 onwards, but over time, they wanted to control the social dynamics of their houses and gardens. Doors and fences, as the markers of thresholds between private space and intermediate space and between intermediate space and public space, allowed for distinctions between insiders and outsiders. Residents who were insiders in relation to a particular household had access to some internal parts of the house, including the front room and areas where meals are taken. Insiders included kin and close friends who assisted with the preparation of banquet feasts and who played important roles during rituals such as assisting with the washing of the corpse and other mortuary rites. Although outsiders had access to the front room during some rituals,

they were usually relegated to the garden space and veranda. During everyday life, outsiders would normally stop at the fence and call to household residents before entering a property.

Residents, through their engagement in activities with each other in shifting social spaces, made and remade their place in the dynamic social order, including to which groups they belonged as insiders and to which they related as outsiders. This was central both to their individual healing and to the revitalisation of the social body. The health and recovery of residents went hand in hand with the reconstruction of their public spaces and private dwellings.

### **Healing of the body and repair of the physical environment**

As residents expressed themselves through their relationships with each other and their physical environment in an expanded public space after the 1999 violence, they were transforming the Bidau landscape. Tilley (1994:34) describes landscape as “a series of named locales, a set of relational places linked by paths, movements and narratives.” In this thesis, I have located Bidau within the destroyed city of Dili and traced some of the locales within the cultural and natural landscape that had been destroyed. Just as these places were damaged, so too were the individual psyche and the social body. Rehabilitation of this “wounded” landscape and the healing of “damaged” bodies has been a simultaneous process in which the people of Bidau have changed the landscape and the landscape changed the people. Hirsch (1995:23), in describing landscape as a process, states that “there is no ‘absolute’ landscape: the salience and relationship between place and space, inside and outside and image and representation are dependent on the cultural and historical context.” Residents, despite what they had been through, were able to transcend their pain and remake their landscape and themselves. Destroyed homes were a prominent feature of the landscape, and the rubble still evoked feelings of

sadness, but as significant locales were gradually rebuilt or renovated, people began to feel better in their surrounds. Their sense of attachment to significant locales – including houses, the local primary school, the Bishop's residence, the cemetery and the grotto – created the impetus for repairing them and supported their rehabilitation.

Over time, the public space in Bidau contracted from the areas it had temporarily taken over, as behaviour in the streets became more regulated and as residents reclaimed intermediate and private spaces again, particularly the space in and around houses. After the 1999 destruction, residents in Bidau strongly voiced their desire to rebuild their houses. This focus on reconstructing houses represented much more than an immediate need for accommodation; it was about redefining the house and the household order as part of the wider social order. With physical structures destroyed, ritual life had been ruptured. Rebuilding was necessary to provide the space required for marriage, mortuary and other rituals. Although residents were strategic in deciding when to reconstruct their homes, with many waiting up to three years to feel confident that East Timor was stable before they carried out major renovations or rebuilding, they made makeshift shelters very quickly after the conflict. For wedding and funerary feasts, they set up tarpaulins beside their dwellings and built temporary fences made from rusted roofing sheets or freshly cut palm fronds. Some residents complained that no organisation gave them zinc sheets for roofing their houses, but most residents were not so much preoccupied with obtaining handouts as with rebuilding the structures needed to reorder their world. By 2002, the extent of reconstruction undertaken showed which residents had resources to significantly improve their residences and which residents did not. There was a danger that sections of the village, especially where many of the Birunbiru residents lived, would deteriorate. However, most residents attempted to improve their houses to the best of their ability with the limited resources they had, and

even the occupants of the most ramshackle dwellings penned their animals and planted flowers to make their surroundings attractive.

An analysis of the house structure and the meanings and practices associated with it provides an understanding of what is lost besides a place of shelter when the house is destroyed. An understanding of what the house represents provides insights into the suffering caused by its loss and the significance of its reconstruction. Waterson (1997:170) shows how the house is a “prominent and central feature of kinship and ritual systems” in Southeast Asia, though there are many variations in the meanings associated with the house and its space. The physical body of the house offers protection to the individual and social body, such that the health and wellbeing of the inhabitants relies on good maintenance and health of the house. Waterson (1997) cites examples from Java, the Bugis of Luwu (South Sulawesi), the Sakuddei of Siberut (Mentawai Islands) and other societies of island Southeast Asia to demonstrate the idea that houses can be a source of vitality for their occupiers.

This connection of house and health is true of the traditional Tetun house. Hicks (1976) notes that elements of the traditional Tetun house are named after human and animal body parts and draws attention to energy within the house, recording that the front and back door of the house are known as “the steps to the source of life (*oda matan*)” (Hicks 1976:57). The largest room in the house is called “the womb of the house (*uma lolon*)” located in the female section of the house and linked symbolically with the notions of “birth, creation and femininity” (Hicks 1976:60). The traditional Tetun house also contains a ritual shelf where sacred objects, including water pitchers and a special plate, are stored. These sacred objects are important for the ritual life of the household members and used when they have to make amends for wrongdoings; for example, betel nut and food offerings are placed on the sacred plate during “rites of

expiation for moral and social offenses or ritual neglect” (Hicks 1976:64). In this way, the house with its objects becomes a purifier for its dwellers.

Though the houses in Bidau were very different in architectural style from the traditional Tetun house studied by Hicks, the practices of Bidau residents showed that they also associated the health of their houses with their own health. This was especially evident in purification rites during mortuary rituals (for example, the ritual washing of hands after returning to the house from the cemetery, and sprinkling of coconut water in and around the house after removal of the table and cloths used to lay out the corpse). Many Birunbiru people continue to follow the practice of sprinkling chicken blood around the base of a house during its construction to prevent inhabitants from falling sick or suffering misfortune. Others bury coins in one corner of a room. Within houses, Christian beliefs and practices led to the replacement of the ritual shelf with an *oratóriu* in the front room. Nearly every house of Portuguese Period Settlers and Indonesian Period Settlers contains a table with an *oratóriu* housing a collection of statues, rosary beads, holy pictures and packets of candles. Occupants of the house, and some visitors to the house, pray in front of these religious artifacts. Just as the sacred objects in the traditional Tetun house are important for ritual life, so too these *oratóriu* are for petitions for healing and forgiveness.

For some societies, the vitality of the house is contained in the wood and house posts, which are personified or become the focus of ritual attention (Waterson 1997:118). Bloch (1995) writing about the Zafirmaniry living in eastern Madagascar, shows how the original couple associated with a house are materialised after death in the structure of the house with the man being represented as the carved central post and the woman associated with the three stones of the hearth together with a cooking pot and a large wooden cooking spoon. During rituals the central post and hearth are



addressed as if they were the original man and woman (Bloch 1995:69). As most houses in Bidau have been reconstructed using bricks, mortar and zinc, wooden poles are not a significant feature of them. Wooden poles are, however, a key feature of *umaluliks* (sacred houses), to which many Bidau residents go each year for special ceremonies. In *umaluliks* in Birunbiru, the post at the back right hand side facing east is known as the *sa'a falu* (M) (sacred pole), and is also referred to as the mother post. During special ceremonies, the participants “feed” the mother post with rice, meat and water. If members of the house have an accident or are sick, they give food to the mother post. The mother post needs to be appeased and respected to care for the inhabitants; it is a central pillar in the structure of the house, as a supportive mother is for the wellbeing of her household. As for the Zafirmaniry, sacred houses hold special significance for East Timorese who believe that they are places where they can appeal to the spirits of their ancestors for assistance and where they can participate in processes that maintain relationships between the living and their ancestors. Birunbiru residents in Bidau demonstrate the vitality of these houses by the frequent visits to perform rituals within them and by their commitment to maintaining them.

While reconstruction of houses was critical because of the meanings and practices associated with houses, especially their place in ritual life, there were also some obvious direct connections between reconstruction and health. One improvement that raised the standard of living was a regular town water supply, as once this was connected, there was cleaner water, which helped reduce skin fungus, and more water points, which encouraged more frequent bathing. In addition, many residents in both Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru watered the areas and footpaths around their properties to reduce the impact of dust, which contributed to allergies and the spread of respiratory

diseases. Houses also provided space for peace and rest, bases for going into the outside world and for finding respite from its demands.

## **Conclusion**

Anthropologists have used the metaphor of path to describe social journeys through a landscape that links people, places and political units (Tilley 1994; Feld, Steven *et al.* 1996; Fox 1997). As Tilley (1994:31) states: “The path may be a symbol not only of interconnectedness and social relations but of movement through life.” In this thesis, I have traced the paths of different Bidau residents and have included parts of their life stories to identify how they survived the violence of 1999 and the social connections and networks of support that strengthened their abilities to overcome terrible hardship. Through investigating the impact of the 1999 conflict on residents, it became clear that their worlds of suffering extended beyond that year. Places of suffering and pathways to healing stretched both backwards and forwards in time.

The ability of Bidau residents to rebuild social networks contributed to a process of mending the social fabric disrupted by years of violence, deaths, separated journeys and painful memories. They knew what had happened in the village in the past – who had been militia and who had not, who had died, who had left and not returned – and this was part of their individual and collective memory. However, they did not want to dwell on this disruptive past, but preferred to concentrate on creating opportunities for a better future in a stable social order. By informally discussing issues among themselves, many residents found support that helped them come to terms with the events of 1999. By participating in a rich ritual life, they produced and shared in supportive solidarity with one another.

The destroyed Bidau landscape, which as with the rest of Dili had been abandoned by the birds, was gradually transformed into something vibrant, noisy and interactive.

Now each morning, the tweeting of small brown finches and the cooing of pigeons joins the chorus of cockerels welcoming each new day, encouraged by Alberto who tosses them seed. Where the canals meet the sea, water birds hover above the fishermen casting nets from their canoes, while further away, on the road to *Kristu Rei*, kingfishers dart from trees to rocks. The birds have returned.

## Notes

### Orthographical note

<sup>1</sup> Although “Tetun” is the agreed Tetun spelling of the word, in English some writers use Tetun and some use Tetum. Geoffrey Hull (1999:xi) for instance, argues for Tetum while others such as Catharina Williams-van Klinken (2003) use Tetun.

### Introduction

<sup>1</sup> More than one hundred years ago, naturalists attracted to the island of Timor documented abundant birdlife and other fauna and flora. Wallace collected 118 species of birds in Timor during a period of 115 days he spent on the island from 1859 to 1861 (Wallace 1986:xiv-xvii). The kakuak (*Philemon timorensis*), with its bawling cry, *Neopsittacus euteles*, a little green and scarlet parrot, the fine white cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*) the scarlet *Myomela vulnerata* were among some of the species of birds described by the naturalist Henry Forbes in his travels around East Timor in 1882 (Forbes, Henry O. 1885:421). When the United Nations Transitional Administration of East Timor (UNTAET) was established, its Environmental Protection Unit introduced Regulation 2000/19, which prohibited: (1) the killing, selling, injury, harming, taking, disturbing or exporting of any of the birds displayed on a poster, and (2) the destruction of the habitat of an endangered bird. The maximum penalty for an individual breaking the law was US\$5,000. A colourful poster of birds that were protected was displayed in cafes and offices. In 2003, preliminary assessments of the status of threatened and restricted range bird species at several sites in East Timor was conducted by Trainor *et al.* (2003).

<sup>2</sup> The official name of East Timor after independence is *República Democrática de Timor-Leste* (RDTL).

<sup>3</sup> A reference to hunting birds is included in Vondra (1968:43). People in Bidau Motaklaran also told me that they used to go to Hera, a sub-district of Dili, to shoot pigeons.

<sup>4</sup> In many societies, references to birds are contained in songs, dances and myths. In East Timor, anthropologists and other writers have recorded references to birds in performances and mythology. Forman (1976:12) describes an origin myth of the Makassae clan in which a wren broke its leg in floodwaters and was transformed into a rock. Lazarowitz (1980:154) refers to Oulo Mele (proper name of a bird) in a ceremony in which one bird is fed to protect the rice crop from all birds. For information about the “Eagle Dance” described in Atsabe, East Timor, see King (1963:130-132).

<sup>5</sup> Makassae is spelt different ways including Makassai, Makasai and Makasae. Throughout this thesis, I use the spelling Makassae which, according to Guterres (1997), follows Portuguese orthography by spelling the word with a double s, and is the most common way the word is spelt in Portuguese and English literature. Guterres (1997) records that Makasae practice is to spell the word with a single s.

<sup>6</sup> In this research, some residents were happy for me to use their first names, but due to the sensitivity of material gathered and the fact that they used nicknames themselves, I decided to use pseudonyms throughout. One woman who resided in Bidau Motaklaran was known by a different name in her village of origin. A friend whom I had known for several years by one name requested that I introduce him using a different name when he worked as an interpreter at a training workshop. When I asked him about this, he said that he liked to change names and that many East Timorese had nicknames. Walford (2002:96-104) discusses the use of pseudonyms. He argues that giving anonymity through pseudonyms to sites and people often does not work. He discusses the study conducted by Scheper-Hughes (1979) in a rural village in Ireland relating to high rates of hospitalised mental illness. Following the publication of this study, a journalist identified this village and published articles about it in *The Irish Times*. Residents in the village felt that it was a one-sided account and that Scheper-Hughes had only written bad things about them. Walford believes that naming research sites and people within them alters the way access is gained to sites and demands changes in the ways books and articles are written. Walford also discusses the issue of the right to reply to research if names of people are used. Van der Geest (2003) while discussing the ethical considerations of using pseudonyms for people and places, also describes his experiences of using a pseudonym for himself as the author in publications. He took this approach to protect the community he was studying in Ghana, as the material he collected about witchcraft accusations, sexual relationships, and birth control practices, including the practice of induced abortion, was highly sensitive. He encountered difficulties with the community years later when he returned to undertake more research as people were very disappointed that they had not had an opportunity to read his PhD thesis and were disappointed that

he did not report their real names in his work. He advocates the need for anthropologists to give those studied the right of reply by having an opportunity to read material written about them.

<sup>7</sup> I use the word ritual in a broad sense following the definition of Rappaport (1999:24) who uses the term “to denote *the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers.*” Rappaport (1999:27-28) defends his position on ritual from criticisms by Maurice Bloch and others including Catherine Bell who suggest his approach is a functional-ecological theory of ritual.

<sup>8</sup> Feld and Basso’s (1996) edited book contains several essays about some of the ways in which people encounter places, sense them and give them importance. Fox (1997:2) provides a number of references for publications in relation to place, space and landscape as well as introducing the notion of topogeny, being the ordered succession of place names. In the same book, Pannell (1997) explores the discursive practices that transform places into spaces and spaces into places through the relationship between stories, people and landscape. Henry (1999:34-41) provides a comprehensive overview of the debate between place and space. Henry (1999:38) emphasises “that if places are empowered, or animated, by lived bodies then this is by bodies in intense and active socio-political engagement with one another, not just by bodies as individual psycho-physical objects.”

<sup>9</sup> The place name for Bidau Santa Ana in some documents during the Indonesian administration has been shortened to Bidau Santana. This reflects how many people pronounce the place name.

<sup>10</sup> I acknowledge the assistance of John Leigh, National Land Administration Advisor, Directorate of Land and Property, Dili who kindly calculated the combined land area of Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru for me in a meeting on 16 October 2003.

<sup>11</sup> I had been communicating with Sr. Pely O.P., the Novice Director, by mail and telephone for some time after being introduced to her by a mutual friend in Sydney. I had originally asked Sr. Pely to explore the possibility of staying with a family in the area. This did not eventuate for two reasons. Firstly, it was difficult for people to house their own families. One consequence of the violent conflict during 1999 was that many people’s houses had been damaged. People were living in cramped conditions, some only staying in makeshift homes amongst ruined buildings. It would have been embarrassing for them to have a stranger stay in meagre facilities. Secondly, the sisters knew that there had been some households connected with militia activities and were concerned for my safety. For these reasons, the sisters offered me accommodation in their convent.

<sup>12</sup> TNI is the Indonesian National Army. Brimob, (*Brigada Mobil*) is the Indonesian Riot Police. According to *The KPP-Ham Report* (2002:43) the Ave Maria church was also known as the *Nossa Senhora de Fatima* Church or the Suai church. While Suai was a possible fieldwork site, I decided against this for several reasons. Firstly, it was a distance of approximately five hours drive from Dili and the only means of transport during the wet season at that time was by United Nations’ flights. Transport would have been extremely difficult to access, and it would have been difficult to obtain food. At that time, most of the United Nations’ workers travelled to Dili to shop or went to Darwin on their days off and purchased food in bulk. In addition to transport, health issues were another factor to consider. During my visit, I met three people (a nurse, a doctor and an agricultural officer) who had had cellulites. The agricultural officer had been evacuated to Darwin for medical treatment and had almost lost his leg.

<sup>13</sup> The killings of what became known as the “Balibo Five” were presented by Australian government ministers and officials as an incident shrouded in confusion and mystery; see Dunn (1983:235). Indonesia claimed that the journalists were killed in crossfire between UDT and Fretilin forces (Taylor 1999:61). For detailed analysis of these killings, see Jolliffe (1978:166-176; 2001); Dunn (1983:233-252); McDonald (1979); Taylor (1999:60-62); Ball *et al.* (2000). For Australian government documents extracted from files of the Department of Foreign Affairs about the deaths of these journalists, see Way (2000:1, 9-11, 479, 481, 483-493, 496-515, 517, 520, 521, 524, 716-720, 728, 761-765, 775, 786, 787, 793, 812, 813, 832, 833). On 31 October 2003, there was an official opening of the house in Balibo, which has been turned into a memorial for the journalists killed. Relatives of the five journalists and about 3,000 others including East Timor’s President Xanana Gusmao and Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta lit candles and planted trees near the house. The house has been converted into a community centre, with funds made available from the Victorian Government in Australia; it is a memorial and also a place for vocational training and for use as a kindergarten for East Timorese (Bowling 2003).

<sup>14</sup> *Kristu Rei* (T) (Christ the King) is a large statue of Jesus with outstretched arms standing on a globe of the world situated at Cape Fatucama. According to Crowe (1996:116) it was built in 1995 and was reported to be a project of the Governor and the military rather than the church. Dimensions of the statue symbolize important dates for the Indonesian State. “It is 17 metres high to mark the 17 July, Integration

Day for East Timor according to the Indonesian State. There are 27 steps to signify East Timor as the 27<sup>th</sup> province of Indonesia” (Crowe 1996:116).

<sup>15</sup> East Timorese friends organised a house for me to share with their relatives in Bekora, another village in Dili, 2.5 kilometres from Bidau Motaklaran. I was to reside in that house when I returned in January 2001. An incident of violent clashes in Bekora on 5 January 2001 influenced where I lived when I returned to East Timor on 17 January 2001. In the gang fighting, one man was killed and sixteen people were arrested. During an exchange of telephone conversations with my East Timorese friends while I was in Australia, they expressed concern about me residing in Bekora and arranged another house for me, located at New Surikmas, another village in Dili. I resided there for a few weeks; however, due to my desire to live in the village section where I was conducting research and the offer of accommodation, I moved to Bidau Motaklaran on 3 February 2001.

<sup>16</sup> *Rate Laek* is a Co-operative formed after the massacre on 6 April 1999. Interviews were conducted over a three month period from May - July 2001. I continued to visit the Co-operative on a weekly basis until October 2001. A total of 11 interviews were conducted. These covered 11 of the 12 members at the time. One member declined to do the interview due to poor health and said that she did not like to talk about these things any more. Interviews were conducted by way of a questionnaire, which comprised two parts, Part A and Part B. Confidentiality was assured, and all material was coded. Consent forms were also obtained for each interview. The same female interpreter worked with the researcher on the project, and all interviews were conducted in Tetun. The women reported that keeping busy and having a business like *Rate Laek* contributed to improving their lives. Of the 11 members of *Rate Laek* interviewed, six women reported that as time was passing they were feeling more sad. The reasons for the increase in their sadness varied. One woman reported that her children were always looking for their father. Another woman reported that she was feeling sadder because her husband did not die of sickness but was killed. Another woman reported that she feels sad and thinks that she might die soon and cries when she is carrying her young child. This is not to say that the other women do not still experience periods of sadness; however, they also reported that they feel happy sometimes and have improved with the support they have received. Likewise, the women who reported feeling more sad as time passes have created for themselves support networks with friends, have engaged in work related activities and support their children, and are planning for their children's futures. During the interviews with the women throughout the period of the research conducted, eight women stated that they still suffered from headaches, stomachaches and sleeping problems. Some women also experienced flashbacks, and others had aching bones. Some of the women said that they would like to know more about the impact of trauma and would like assistance to overcome these problems. This information was passed on to Fokupers, and NGO responsible for counselling support for the women. An unpublished report “*Rate Laek – A Gathering Place: Remembering the Dead, Empowering the Living,*” which included data on household composition, daily activities, issues of loss, financial situation, education and personal goals, dated August 2001 was provided to the members of the Co-operative.

<sup>17</sup> Only five residents declined to participate in the household surveys. They gave different responses for their refusal. One man said he could not read or write and had not been involved in an interview before. Another man living in poor housing conditions near the hospital said it was too hot. One man was drunk and angry and not in a state to be interviewed. One woman who agreed to participate in the research hid in her *kios* when we returned to see her. I was unable to find the occupier of another residence, calling in on three occasions to meet the person. On my last visit, neighbours said that the resident was away in Viqueque.

<sup>18</sup> In early 2001, there were two agencies in this area, one being an East Timorese NGO teaching computer courses. Another house was occupied by plumbers working for a Japanese construction company. While I interviewed the NGO and one of the residents working for the construction company, I did not include them in the analysis of data.

<sup>19</sup> The Harvard Trauma Questionnaire is a clinical tool that records the number of traumatic events a person has been exposed to and gives a rating to a number of symptoms including depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, hypertension and problems with concentration. A tally of the scores for each symptom provides an overall rating that indicates if a person has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This study with the University students revealed that 7 (15%) of the 43 students obtained a score on the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (above 2.5) indicating the presence of PTSD. These results need to be considered cautiously due to the small sample size and the fact that PTSD symptoms may take many years to surface. A correlation analysis between PTSD scores and academic scores was performed. Across each of the four mid-term and four final exams no significant association between PTSD and performance was found. However, it was interesting to note that there was a trend for students with higher PTSD scores to have

better results. However, this was only a small trend and needed more subjects to be statistically significant.

<sup>20</sup> Note that the first author's name is incorrectly spelt in the journal article as Modrig. I have used the correct spelling in the bibliography.

<sup>21</sup> For details about these facts, see the Final Report, Nationwide Psychosocial Needs Assessment in East Timor, Modvig *et al.* (2000:1-16).

<sup>22</sup> A number of papers in the collection *Violence in Indonesia* (Wessel *et al.* 2001) discuss and analyse cases and causes of violence within the region. Similarly, another source, Kingsbury *et al.* (2003:108-110) provides a summary of East Timor's separation from Indonesia and other articles analysing political reform in South Sumatra, conflict in Aceh and Papuan identity and nationalism.

<sup>23</sup> Manufahi was a kingdom on the south coast of East Timor corresponding with the present-day district of Same. This Great Rebellion of 1912 was led by Dom Boaventura and was an anti-Portuguese revolt. It started in Suai; however, other rebels attacked and looted Government House in Dili. In the capital, two Portuguese officers were decapitated and their heads were paraded in the streets. Dom Boaventura was eventually defeated, with thousands of Timorese killed. Following this incident, the Portuguese set up administrative posts in the interior and divided the liurais' kingdoms into smaller units of administration called *sucos* (princedomes) (Lennox 2000:9-11).

<sup>24</sup> Cribb (2001) argues that "to treat mass death as an object of statistical analysis implies a dehumanization of the victims and reduces a multitude of individual tragedies to a figure." The data is then subjected to manipulation and analysis. "Bare statistics carry not even the slightest hint of the terror, which individuals felt as they saw soldiers march into their village, search their houses roughly for evidence of enmity, and brutally question their neighbours" (Cribb 2001:82).

<sup>25</sup> The work of the French sociologist, Émile Durkheim, on morality, knowledge and religion has been influential in many disciplines, including anthropology, though at the same time he has attracted criticism. Lukes (1973:497-592) provides an overview of his methods and ideas that have been attacked. Frank Pearce (1989:19) discusses weaknesses and limitations of Durkheim's work, but emphasises that: "Durkheim's brilliance lay above all in his commitment to social explanations of social phenomena, in his feel for the *power of the social*. He was clear that the social order cannot be conceived of as the sum total of the attributes of its members, nor is it an expression of their individual goals, nor is it exhausted by the interpersonal relations that obtain between them, indeed human subjectivity is *constituted* by the social realm."

<sup>26</sup> Justino Guterres (1997:8) uses the term "*omafalu*" and Lazarowitz (1980:146) the term "*uma da'an*" to refer to sacred houses of the Makassae.

<sup>27</sup> Soares who has researched traditional law, perceptions of culture and environment and political developments, submitted his anthropological dissertation in 2003. At the time of writing, this work was not yet available.

## Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> InterFET (International Force in East Timor) was the United Nations authorised armed force led by Australia and despatched to East Timor on 20 September 1999. For the composition of the international force and additional information about the deployment of InterFET, see Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2001:145-149) and Greenlees *et al.* (2002:266-278).

<sup>2</sup> In an interview with Pedro de Sousa Xavier, Director, Land and Property Department on 5 June 2003, he stated that he believed that the land prior to Portuguese administration was divided into three kingdoms. He believed that there were three *Liurais* (traditional rulers) in Dili: one in Bidau, one in Motain (Motael) and the third *Liurai* ruled the land west of Komoro River known as Ulmera. The Liurai from Ulmera came from Bazartete and the Liurai from Motain came from Laga, according to Pedro de Sousa Xavier. In an interview with a resident from Bidau Santa Ana on 13 March 2003, he was aware that Dili was previously divided into two domains being Bidau and Motain. Traube (1986:25) states that "Dili itself was formerly part of the Mambai domain of Motain ..."

<sup>3</sup> This was not the first time a Portuguese governor had fled; in 1865, one had run away because he had received no pay for six months (Bickmore 1868:122).

<sup>4</sup> From May 1974, three main political parties (initially called "associations" or "unions," because technically under the Caetano regime the formation of political parties was forbidden) were established, namely: UDT (Timorese Democratic Party), ASDT (Timorese Social Democratic Association), which became Fretilin, and APODETI (Timorese Popular Democratic Association). Mario Carrascalão was the

President of UDT, which advocated a progressive process of autonomy under Portugal. Fretilin was a political organisation that developed from the political party ASDT. It was formed to fight for independence. Fretilin comprised a committee of urban elites whose platform rejected colonialism and proposed a program over three to eight years to prepare for independence (Taylor 1999:27). This party gained popularity by focusing on agricultural development and literacy programs, with its members travelling to and living in rural districts, emphasising full participation of Timorese in the political structure. APODETI wanted an autonomous integration into the Republic of Indonesia in accordance with international law. It included the teaching of the Indonesian language as a compulsory subject among its policies. APODETI was closely associated with the Indonesian intelligence service BAKIN. Various sources have documented the formation of these political parties, the coup by UDT in August 1975 and the defeat by Fretilin, and the proclamation of East Timor as an independent country by Fretilin in a ceremony held on 28 November 1975 (Jolliffe 1978:61-119; Dunn 1983:165-281; Hastings 1999:66; Taylor 1999:25-67; Soares 2000:57-78; Hill, Helen 2002:59-174).

<sup>5</sup> An example of the Indonesian promotion of model villages was as follows: “Many people live in so small villages consisting of only a few families, scattered and isolated in remote and mountainous areas. This poses a serious problem in promoting social and economic development of the region. Therefore, a village development programme, called the Model Village (Desa Binaan) Development Programme, has been initiated. The programme seeks to develop 223 model village(s), whereby each village comprises of about 200 families, with the ultimate goal of re-organising the settlement pattern so as the people can be soon benefited from the development programmes. This programme is also linked with the programme of unification of families that were separated during the civil war” (House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia 1988:27-29).

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed description of these principles given in a speech by President Sukarno on 1 June 1945, see Muskens (1979:170-175). In this speech the President stated that if he could squeeze all these principles into one principle, he would use the “word which is purely Indonesian, gotong royong (mutual help)” Muskens (1979:174). Jolliffe (1978:230) notes that in a radio Kupang broadcast on 2 December 1975, as well as in details for the integration of East Timor into Indonesia, there was a statement that the citizens of East Timor would be obliged to respect *Pancasila*. Hal Hill (1994:272) refers to *Pancasila* education courses which government employees, community leaders, business and private company employees had to attend. For another source which contains a definition, critique and material about the indoctrination program of *Pancasila*, see Schwarz (1999), *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia's Search for Stability*.

<sup>7</sup> The term “Black September” has been used in several sources. See, for example, Soares (2000:75). Human Rights Watch estimated that 1,000 people died in the 12 days from 8-20 September 1999.

<sup>8</sup> During the earlier period of my fieldwork, I noted there was a feeling of gratitude towards Australians following the intervention of InterFET. These sentiments appeared to change over time with some East Timorese feeling resentment towards outsiders for having access to more resources, the best-paid jobs and living a comfortable lifestyle, frequenting restaurants. Several analysts have criticised Australia and the U.S. for not ensuring a better security arrangement was in place prior to or immediately once mass violence began by threatening a cut-off of economic and military ties with Jakarta earlier in their negotiations (Maley 2000; Nevins 2002).

<sup>9</sup> In the population study I conducted, 32.4% of the people interviewed were born in Dili, 39.9% were born in a district in the eastern part of East Timor (this included 25% of people born in Birunbiru) and just over 23.6% were born in other districts in East Timor. Five people (3.4 %) were born in West Timor, and one person (0.7%) was born in Portugal.

<sup>10</sup> As Dunn (1983) stresses, however, Portugal emerged from World War 1 in a weak economic position threatened with political instability. Following World War 2, Portugal was the poorest nation in Western Europe (Dunn 1983:21-38). While acknowledging Portugal's unimpressive record for advancing the country, Dunn argues that in some ways the Portuguese have been done a serious injustice by being blamed for the tragic events of later years in their administration, and questions whether East Timor would have been more developed had it been left to the Dutch and later became part of Indonesia (1983:53).

<sup>11</sup> During the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, Mateus studied in Java at the *Sekolah Tinggi Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri* (the High School of Home Affairs Government) which prepared students to be future leaders, such as District Administrators or Governors. Mateus completed three years of a four year course before the 1999 violence erupted, requiring him to return to East Timor. While the school continued to exist, according to Mateus it no longer accepted East Timorese, as they were classed as foreign students. Initially despondent about his bleak future, Mateus was able to pursue other opportunities.



<sup>12</sup> This survey was recorded with the assistance of one of Alberto's daughters who methodically recorded the number of visitors each member of the family received each day. Two members of the family sold ice to generate extra income. Luisa made caramel ice, which she sold to children for five American cents, while another daughter sold larger bags of ice for household purposes for 10 cents. Nicolau, a son who was 22 years old, had the most visitors, 54 in total, with five people who slept over during the week. After discussions with Alberto's daughter about the survey, she told me that while there were a few visitors who came on more than one occasion throughout the week, the majority of visitors to the house were different residents. For this reason, I have used the term "household visits" rather than visitors.

<sup>13</sup> The practice of sending children to Dili to further their education was still happening when I was conducting my fieldwork. Problems of transportation difficulties in remote areas and lack of facilities were often given by parents as the reasons for doing so. In addition, parents became more aware of the importance of education for their children's future. I was involved in a research project on community learning needs in remote areas, which explored some of these issues. For further details, see Field *et al.* (2002).

<sup>14</sup> In Bidau Motaklaran, there were many houses constructed from *bebak* (leaf stalks) with brick bases and zinc roofs. There were only two houses with palm-thatched roofs. Most new houses under construction during my fieldwork were built from brick with cement rendering. One new house erected in 2002 had a cement base, *bebak* walls and zinc roofing. In the district of Birunbiru, inhabitants from that area were in the process of rebuilding traditional houses, which were destroyed during the 1975 invasion. For information about the style of traditional houses in East Timor, see George Aditjondro (1994:19) who states that there are seven types of traditional architecture in East Timor. He draws on Cinatti *et al.* (1987) to describe the seven different styles. Cinatti *et al.*'s book has detailed drawings of the layout of villages and black and white photographs of traditional houses in different districts, many of which styles could still be observed during my fieldwork.

<sup>15</sup> The expression "forest" was one often used by residents in Bidau. It referred to bushland areas outside of Dili.

<sup>16</sup> For foreign words, I use (I) to indicate that the word is Indonesian, (T) for Tetun, (P) for Portuguese and (M) for Makassae.

<sup>17</sup> *Kios* are small open stalls, which are very common in East Timor. Some smaller *kios* only sold a few green leafy vegetables, small piles of onions and chillies. Others were stocked with a variety of items including betel nut, dried fish, and balls of buffalo meat wrapped in plastic, *tua* (palm wine), packets of peanuts and a wider range of fruits and vegetables in season. Larger shops, smaller in size than supermarkets and of better construction than *kios*, sold other goods, such as bottled water, biscuits, coffee, cigarettes, tinned foodstuffs, washing powder, shampoo, packets of noodles, etc. Depending on the size of the shop, it may sell wrapping paper for gifts, fried bananas and *dosi* (T) (small cakes). Several women expressed their desire to open a *kios* if they had the finance to do so. Many *kios* sell the same produce and their vendors rely on selling to their relatives and friends.

<sup>18</sup> A few younger East Timorese men in the village had their names tattooed on their arm or the back of their hand. Some older men and women in East Timor had tattoo markings, which were always on their arms and were mostly their own name or the name of their spouse. Unlike people in some other countries, East Timorese do not tattoo their faces.

<sup>19</sup> In 2001, most people in Bidau Motaklaran purchased their fruit and vegetables in the central market located in the main business section of the city. Older residents remembered these markets as being friendly places to take families; however, they had deteriorated, becoming places for gambling and frequent fights. In early 2002, these central markets were disbanded and relocated to other villages within Dili – Komoro, Taibesse and Bekora.

<sup>20</sup> Ormeling (1957:61-62), in writing about Indonesian Timor, notes that all modern houses are made from durable leaf-stalks (*bebak*). Schulte Nordholt (1971:51-52) states that the ribs of gebang palm leaves are used for the walls of houses and describes the scientific name of the palm as *Corypha gebanga* Bl. Fox (1977:23,185) refers to *bebak* as gewang leaf stalks (*Corypha elata* Roxb.). Hull (1999:31) includes an entry for *bebak* in the Tetun/English dictionary, which he states is "palapa," stalk of palm-leaves used to build walls of Timorese houses; *bebak tali-metan* (*tali* variety of palm: *Corypha utan*, *metan* black) gamuti stalk(s).

<sup>21</sup> Arms used included both military weapons and homemade guns, some of which fired rounds of nails.

<sup>22</sup> The term "street children" requires further explanation. Some street children did have families that they would return to from time to time. There have been a number of reports published concerning the plight of street children and orphans in East Timor. For additional information, see report, Knudson (2001),

*Assessment of the Situation of Separated Children and Orphans in East Timor* produced by the International Rescue Committee and UNICEF.

<sup>23</sup> This tertiary institution was funded by the Diocese of Dili but linked to Institute Pastoral Indonesia in Malang. It was founded in 1986 and offered a three year Diploma or an advanced Diploma that required four years of study. Courses were for catechists and religion teachers to work in schools and parishes. For further details about the education system operating in East Timor during the period of Indonesian administration, see East Timor International Support Center (1999).

<sup>24</sup> Team Saka (*Tim Saka*) (I) was a paramilitary group formed in 1986 in the eastern sector of East Timor by a Kopassus officer, Captain Luhud Pandjaitan. He reportedly carried out orders from his commander, then Colonel Prabowo. Another paramilitary unit was Team Alpha (*Tim Alpha*) (I) whose “members were trained and paid, and their operations against pro-independence elements organized by Indonesian military officers” (Dunn 2002:68). For additional information about this group, see Martinkus (2001:42, 55, 63) and Cristalis (2002:224).

<sup>25</sup> These stories reminded me of the writings of Evans-Pritchard (1958) in consulting the poison oracle, a practice the Azande used with chickens.

<sup>26</sup> El Sete is the leader of a group of veterans and is frequently engaged in disputes with the East Timorese government.

<sup>27</sup> For additional information on the history and production of *tais*, see report, *Traditional Crafts of Timor Leste: A Marketing Overview*. 2002. Alola Foundation and Oxfam.

<sup>28</sup> This was a voter registration card issued for the 2001 election for members of the Constituent Assembly. As well as the personal details of full name and birth date, the card also had a photograph of the person.

<sup>29</sup> Here I adopt the term “origin village” from Elizabeth Traube’s work amongst the Mambai. According to Traube (1986:70-11) “the place of origins is where sacred heirlooms are kept, narrative history is recited and collective rites are performed ...” Origin villages vary in size and scale and may be deserted at varying periods. For Celestina, this village was both her village of birth and origin village. During Indonesian occupation, the village was deserted, with many residents scattered around the Mate Bian mountain range from 1975-1979. In 1979, Celestina moved to Dili. Other residents from her village returned to the district of Birunbiru in 1981.

## Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup> This street was renamed Av. Presidente Nicolau Lobato on 28 November 2002, the anniversary date of Fretilin’s original claim to rule the country. In 2002, though not listed as an official public holiday on the approved calendar of holidays for the year, the government granted a holiday just prior to the date. Some sources stated this was to appease the people who were becoming discontented with progress made by the government and other difficulties East Timorese experienced such as power shortages throughout the city.

<sup>2</sup> Information about the business “Tjing Fa Ho” was obtained from personal communication with Mr Ley Kiung Keng’s son, Mr Jackson Lay, on 1 November 2002. Mr Lay operates a business around the corner from this shop.

<sup>3</sup> In 2004, the building was painted and remodelled by the ANZ Bank, when the sign in Chinese characters was removed.

<sup>4</sup> The telecommunications system was part of the infrastructure destroyed during the 1999 conflict. During the early part of my fieldwork, mobile telephone coverage was only available in Dili, Suai and at one location on a hill in Baukau. Sometimes from a place on the beach in Atauro Island, one could use mobile phones. Telephone contact with kin and friends in other countries during periods of upheaval, and radio broadcasts were important means Timorese utilized to keep informed of developments within their country and overseas. Television was only introduced into East Timor in 1978 (Indonesia Departemen Penerangan 1980:17).

<sup>5</sup> These businesses were relocated further down the street towards Bidau Motaklaran just prior to independence on 20 May 2002. Some people, however, returned to the original site a few weeks later once independence celebrations finished.

<sup>6</sup> In this dissertation, I have used the term “village sections” to describe Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru. When I make references to material that is relevant to both areas, I will refer to them as Bidau, which includes the population for both locations. I lived in Bidau Motaklaran, and although I had contacts in both places, on a daily basis I had more interaction with residents in Bidau Motaklaran. According to Capell (1944:198), there is no satisfactory term in Timor languages for “village.” Previously there were

no villages but hamlets being clusters of a few houses within an enclosure. In Tetun, *knua*, is the word used for village, which refers to a group of huts. Previously the country had been divided into a number of kingdoms composed of a number of *suku*. A *suku* is made up of several *aldeias*. A number of *sukus* make up a sub-district and sub-districts make up a district. One of the difficulties of defining an area was that it had come under various levels of administration during the Portuguese period and then later under Indonesian occupation. During the Portuguese administration, districts were referred to as *Conselho* with sub-districts called *Posto*. A village was called *suco* (Portuguese spelling). During the Indonesian period districts were called *kabupaten* (I) and sub-districts called *kecamatan* (I). A village was referred to as a *desa*. A *suku* is described by Traube (1986:101) as “a set of contiguous villages with its leader the *Chefe do Suco* (Port.) appointed by the colonial district administrator.” Traube (1986:259) provides further information about the definition of *suku*, drawing on references to Hick’s 1972 material, which describes *suku* as “princedom.” In the area I researched, under the Indonesian administration, the district was Dili, the sub-district was Dili Timur, and Bidau Santa Ana was the *desa*. Some people previously referred to Bidau Motaklaran as a *kampung* (in Bahasa Indonesia this translates as village). *Rukun Tetangga* is the Bahasa Indonesia term for neighbourhood association (the administrative unit) which I was told was also a term previously used in Bidau Motaklaran. Hull (1999:11) translates *aldeia* as village; however, the word more accurately translates as sub-village; the term I use is village section. In an urban setting such as Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru where there are approximately 150 houses, hamlet is not an accurate term to describe them.

<sup>7</sup> I endeavoured to trace the etymology of the word Bidau and although I was unable to locate a text with a definition of the word, I discussed its origins with various people. Residents in Bidau Motaklaran told me that it was a Tetun word; however, it was not included in the Tetun dictionary produced by Geoffrey Hull. Residents did not know the origins of the word or the meaning in English and referred me to an original settler in Bidau Santa Ana who they thought might be able to assist me. One person suggested that it came from the words *we* (*be*), which in Tetun means water and could be a reference to the river that runs along the area, and *dau* (from the word *dok*), meaning far or distant. Some workers at the Directorate for Land and Property in Dili thought the word Bidau meant village, though I had not come across this meaning from other sources. Another possibility for the meaning could be that it is a Mambai word, as Dili was formerly part of the Mambai domain of Motain (Traube 1986:26). Another suggestion, but one that I could not confirm, is that it could be a Mambai feminine proper name, Bi Dau. Another source also advised me that in Mambai, Bi-Dauh and Bi-Thau are common Mambai names for women, and according to some older residents in Dili, it was the place where an old woman called Bi-Thau lived when her house was the only one in the area.

<sup>8</sup> For information about the clandestine parallel system of governance, see Ospina *et al.* (2002). The clandestine network – the *Nucleos de Resistencia Popular* (“NUREP”, Popular Resistance Centres) – was set up during a national conference of the *Conselho Revolucionario da Resistencia Nacional* (CRRN – National Council of Resistance) held in March 1981 (Symthe 2004:12).

<sup>9</sup> A number of sources discuss the administrative units in East Timor. Dunn (1983:4-5) discusses the Portuguese system of colonial rule and the role of traditional local rulers, while a more recent overview of the history of administrative structures in East Timor and comparison between Portuguese, Indonesian and traditional systems of power can be found in a report by Ospina *et al.* (2002).

<sup>10</sup> When I was conducting household surveys, a number of people referred to their houses as being in Bidau Motaklaran when in fact they were in Bidau Tokobaru. On 26 June 2001, I walked around Bidau Motaklaran and Bidau Tokobaru with the *xefe-suku* to note the physical boundaries of the area. He advised me that Bidau Motaklaran was known as *Aldeia Hadomi* (T) (love sub-village) and Bidau Tokobaru was known as *Aldeia Oriente* (T) (east sub-village). Bidau Santa Ana was known as *Aldeia Sagrada Familia* (T) (sacred family sub-village) and Bidau Massau was called *Aldeia Manu Matan* (T) (chicken eye sub-village). During the course of my research, I never heard anyone refer to his or her area as *Aldeia Hadomi* or *Aldeia Oriente*. This exercise demonstrated the complexity of defining an area and showed that physical boundaries do not necessarily correspond to people’s attachment to place.

<sup>11</sup> The transition from teaching in Bahasa Indonesia to Portuguese had broader implications for secondary school students and university students who had been educated in Indonesian. This decision caused some debate in the country with concerns that there may be university students who would be disenfranchised in the future because of language difficulties.

<sup>12</sup> For additional information about primary schools in East Timor following the 1999 conflict, see *Voice of the Teachers*, a UNICEF publication, which contains 11 records of interviews, conducted with teachers in April and May 2000 in five districts. A summary of the findings notes that class time was limited, with most children only attending school for 2-4 hours per day, school was often cancelled to accommodate

Church events, attendance rates were poor, and there was a shortage of teachers in some schools (UNICEF 2001:5-7).

<sup>13</sup> The Public Hospital was classified as a Type C hospital, having 250 beds, 12-20 doctors and specialist departments in Internal Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Surgery and Paediatrics at the end of Indonesian occupation in 1999 (East Timor International Support Center 2000:7). In *East Timor Develops* (1984), the total number of hospital beds in Dili Central Hospital was documented as 300 beds. Another publication, *The Province of East Timor, Development in Progress* (1980:34-37, 65-66) provides statistics on medical personnel before the civil war of 1975.

<sup>14</sup> Prior to Christmas 2002, traders set up many temporary stalls of new clothes purchased from West Timor opposite permanent shops in Kolmera, Dili. These stalls operated for only a few weeks over the Christmas season. The regular shop owners angrily complained about this and stated that they paid good taxes to the government for their merchandise but “the government kept one eye closed to what was happening around them.” They were angry because the traders were taking away their business. At this time, more vendors were also hawking their goods walking around the villages. Some came to Bidau displaying new clothes to prospective customers in their gardens.

<sup>15</sup> Aditjondro (1994:38-40) discusses the issues of the Catholic Church’s position on family planning and the female fertility control program conducted under the Indonesian system.

<sup>16</sup> During 2002, there was a HIV-AIDS awareness campaign held in East Timor. On 1 December 2002, World Aids Day, there was a concerted campaign with the organisers targeting many people by leaving large stickers on car windscreens while owners were at church services.

<sup>17</sup> For additional information about these needs, see Maslow (1970:38, 51-53 and 59).

<sup>18</sup> There was a program called the Shelter Program, which operated in rural districts and was funded by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). It provided materials such as zinc sheets for roofing and timber poles to people whose houses had been destroyed during the 1999 conflict. Various NGOs implemented this program in different districts. The program did not operate in Dili.

<sup>19</sup> Fox (1993) contains a number of papers that discuss the use of space in relation to the house and the allocation of space for the performance of ceremonies and rituals. For example, Ng (1993:119-127, 127-137) discusses the divisions of private and semi-private space within the house and then proceeds to the use of space on ceremonial occasions to identify patterns in Minangkabau social organization and the definition of male and female identity. Waterson (1993:225-229) focuses on the use of space in houses in South East Asia to show how rules of space influence the ways people relate to each other.

<sup>20</sup> The Dominicans are a worldwide Catholic religious order with congregations of both women and men. The Dominican Order was the first Catholic religious order to arrive on the shores of East Timor, with Father Antonio Taviera O.P. arriving at Lifau in Oekusi in the sixteenth century. The Dominicans were not always in good favour in East Timor. The viceroys at Goa during the second half of the seventeenth century complained about their immorality and thought of replacing them on a number of occasions with the Jesuits. This decision was strongly rejected by the Portuguese chiefs who were loyal to the religious congregation that had taught their ancestors and wanted to maintain continuity with them (Boxer 1960:352). The suffix O.P. (Order of Preachers) to their names denotes the commitment of each to preaching.

<sup>21</sup> When the Chinese government expelled the Dominican sisters, one group went to East Timor and another group went to the Philippines. Three sisters, Sr. Maria Pui O.P., Sr. Salome Pires Boffil O.P. and Sr. Joanna Goñe O.P., arrived in Lifau, Oekusi, in 1953. Their mission took them to different locations throughout the country until they arrived in Bidau Motaklaran in 1994. Two Filipino sisters, Sr. Pely O.P. and Sr. Belen O.P., came from Zamboanga in 1993. However, as it was difficult for them to renew Indonesian visas in East Timor they had to travel periodically to Australia for this purpose. In 1994, they obtained permanent visas, following which they moved into the house in Bidau Motaklaran.

<sup>22</sup> A novitiate is the Catholic religious term for the period of training a person undertakes after joining a religious order prior to the taking of first vows. It is usually for two years and includes formal training in the religious history of the order and spirituality as well as the undertaking of other courses and work in the community. The house where novices live is referred to as a novitiate.

<sup>23</sup> Postulancy is a period during which a person lives with a religious order before taking formal steps to enter religious life. It is the time prior to becoming a novice. The period can vary between religious orders, but is usually between six and twelve months. It is a time for the postulant to experience religious life and to discuss with members of the order her or his suitability for this way of life.

<sup>24</sup> Two sisters worked with the local youth group, which had 61 members in 2002. Prior to the sisters’ involvement with the youth group during 2002, respected residents and a local youth leader in Bidau guided and organised activities for them. The members of the youth group ranged from 15-20 years in

age, and the sisters saw it as their mission to prepare them spiritually for the future. For an hour every weekday, the sisters gave religious instruction to approximately 100 children, aged from 3 – 14 years. The postulants and novices assisted with these tasks. During 2002, the sisters commenced a small farming enterprise on one hectare of land in Natarbora to grow vegetables for the boarding house in Soibada.

<sup>25</sup> According to Knudsen (2001:22) the standard UN definition of vulnerability used in East Timor was the one defined by the World Food Program. It included but was not limited to a) street children; b) orphans and unaccompanied minors; c) returnees; and d) children with disabilities or those affected by trauma or other psychological effects. The criteria the sisters used for accepting children for their “boarding house” come within this definition. Historically “boarding houses” developed in East Timor near schools for elite groups of children who would have otherwise had to travel long distances to access education. Both the Indonesian government and the Catholic Church operated these boarding schools, some of which became known as “orphanages” (Knudson 2001:12). Following the conflict in 1999, it was anticipated that there would be an increase in enrolments at these boarding schools due to the closure of state-run institutions and due to deaths of parents and separation of families resulting from the conflict (Knudson 2001:13). However, the increase in enrolments in Church-run institutions was not large (Knudson 2001:14). Most children who reside in childcare centres, boarding houses and boarding schools are not orphans. In a survey conducted on behalf of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) of 1,242 children only 19% had lost both parents (Knudson 2001:7). Knudson (2001:19) noted that the survey did not find one centre in East Timor that falls under the strict category of “orphanage”, where all of the children had lost both parents.

<sup>26</sup> The Dominican sisters have a good reputation for education of children and young women in East Timor. On 22 February 1955, the sisters opened a girls’ dormitory in Lifau. There were approximately 38 girls residing in the dormitory and all were non-literate, previously having no opportunities for study. The sisters educated the girls and trained them as teachers, carrying out this work until 1975. In 1957, the Dominican sisters opened another girls’ dormitory in Ermera. In 1972, they expanded their work to educate women in Maliana. In 1975, the Timorese Dominican household included an aspirant, two postulants and one professed sister. The small group came under the administration of the Portuguese Province of the Dominican sisters. With the departure of Portuguese administrators and religious sisters prior to the 1975 Indonesian invasion, the future direction for the Timorese sisters changed. The professed sister, Sr. Laurinda, went to live and work with the Canossian sisters, another Catholic congregation of religious sisters in Dili. The other three went to live in the Philippines and became part of the Philippines Province of the Dominican Order. On 11 June 1992, two Timorese Dominican sisters returned to Bidau Lecidere and lived with the Canossian sisters. The Dominican sisters were exploring the possibility of future programs in East Timor. They received their first assignment from Bishop Belo on 1 October 1992, to re-open the boarding facility for the school in Soibada, previously administered by the Canossian sisters. In 1975, when Indonesia took control of East Timor, the boarding school in Soibada closed. The Dominicans re-opened the boarding house with seven girls; by the end of 1992, they had 65 boys and girls under their care. In 2002, there were 85 children residing in this boarding residence. Of that number, approximately 10% were orphans. Some of the intellectual elite in East Timor were educated in Soibada, and it is the site for pilgrimages during October each year to the chapel devoted to the Blessed Virgin at Aitara, which is within walking distance from the boarding house. Pilgrimages to this church ceased during periods of conflict, especially in 1999. The next pilgrimage to Aitara took place during October 2002, attracting crowds from Dili and other parts of East Timor.

## Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup> Robinson constructs a genealogy of militias that links East Timor’s experience with Indonesia’s. This article traces the historical roots of militia groups well before 1999 and looks at irregular troops organised by *Liurais*, weaponry and repertoire of action used in the past that had similarities to modern militias. Robinson also draws on material to suggest that the relationships between the militias and the authorities were similar in East Timor and Aceh. The “home made” firearms (*senjata rakitan*) fashioned from two or more tubes of steel attached to a wooden grip, fired by holding a match or cigarette lighter to a fuse on top of the weapon at the base of the steel tubes. He describes these on page 276 and they were similar to what some residents in Bidau Motaklaran described were fired into their houses.

<sup>2</sup> The estimated number of people killed in East Timor during the 1999 conflict has been documented between 1,000-1,500 people. It is estimated that in the two weeks before InterFET arrived on

20 September 1999, 650,000 East Timorese people (three-quarters of the population) were driven from their homes and virtually all towns were destroyed (Scheiner 2001:120). More than 200,000 people fled to West Timor. However, deaths and disappearances in East Timor had already occurred on a grand scale during the twenty-four year Indonesian rule. During the period of Indonesian occupation, the most widely quoted number of people who died is 200,000 and this figure is used without detailed information about locations or circumstances. "The figure in fact originated in a 1980 study by the Australian researcher John Waddingham, based on a careful analysis of data from Portuguese, Catholic Church, and Indonesian sources" (Tanter *et al.* 2001:260). Some people who have lived in East Timor for a considerable period have disputed this number. As Tanter points out, serious analysis either supporting or contradicting Waddingham's findings is lacking. When I was checking some details about the history of the Catholic Church in East Timor, I had a meeting with a priest in Dili during November 2002 who stated that some figures about the number of people killed in East Timor were inflated. He had lived in one area in Dili during the Indonesian occupation where there was a reported killing of a considerable number of people; however, he stated on that occasion he did not hear or see any evidence of this reported atrocity (Name withheld).

<sup>3</sup> Manuel Carrascalão is the brother of Mario Carrascalão who was the Governor of East Timor between 1982 and 1992. Both of them had assisted the Indonesian invasion force in 1975, but openly showed support for the independence cause from about the mid-1990s (Van Klinken 2001).

<sup>4</sup> The KPP-HAM Report (Komisi Penyelidik Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia di Timor Timur) gathered evidence in relation to violations of human rights in East Timor from January 1999 until October 1999. It also investigated the involvement of the state and/or other bodies, national and international, in the crimes and formulated results as the basis for prosecutions in the Human Rights Courts. Membership of KPP-HAM consisted of Komnas-HAM members and leaders in the field of human rights, totalling nine members. The report was completed on 31 January 2000. The pages referenced provide an overview of attacks in various locations and includes tables on frequency of human rights violations (Jan-Dec 1999) and militia composition, size, firearms and leaders.

<sup>5</sup> Reports differ in the number of people killed in this incident. Numbers in this attack range from 13 killed to more than 30 attacked (Bartu 2001:78; Nairn 2001:163-172; Scheiner 2001:112). The KPP-HAM Report states that 15 people were killed and provides their names; see McDonald *et al.* (2002:40). Taylor John G (1999:224) states that 17 people were killed by paramilitaries in this incident.

<sup>6</sup> The flag in East Timor has special significance and is discussed in chapter 8.

<sup>7</sup> Joaquina resided on her property for 22 years. Prior to that, she lived in Baukau where she was born. She stated that her house came within Bidau Motaklaran, but according to the official boundaries, it came within Bidau Tokobaru. The burnt-out shell remained of what would have once been a splendid home. Her household, comprising her husband, three daughters (aged nine, seven and two years), her eleven-month-old son, five year old nephew, a younger sister and mother, resided in a *bebak* (gewang left stalks) dwelling at the back of the block. Joaquina was one of the few people I observed cry during the process of conducting my interviews. For the most part, I rarely observed anyone else crying during the first period of my fieldwork, even when I went to funeral services. My meeting with her took four hours one afternoon as she relayed parts of her experiences to me. My meeting with Joaquina was interspersed with coffee breaks, when the discussion changed to general topics about children, where my interpreter came from and some questions about my life. During the afternoon, it seemed like the floodgates had been let open and Joaquina was able to release some of the pain that infiltrated her life without invitation. She walked me through the ruins of her house distressed that she was not in a position to rebuild it and disappointed that the government of East Timor had not offered any assistance. After the 30 August 1999, Joaquina's family had joined her sister's family living nearby, and the two families together travelled to Baukau. A few days prior to their departure from the village on 26 August the militia threatened Joaquina's husband and confiscated their vehicle. When it was safe to return to Bidau, they did so (on 28 October 1999) but were shocked to find their house destroyed and all the contents inside stolen. Joaquina cared for her nephew because his mother died in childbirth in the year 2000. He has a sister who resides with their father in Baukau. The father regularly visits his son in Bidau. Joaquina's younger sister, who was 28 years old when I met them, graduated from an Indonesian university in economics and, unable to secure employment, had resided with this household for one and a half years since she completed her studies. Although Joaquina had endured traumatic events, her household was more fortunate than many others because they had a source of income. Joaquina's household was supported from the proceeds of a minibus (*mikrolet*) they owned. They employed a driver who travelled a regular route around Dili including places such as Komoro and Bekora. From the weekly earnings of Rp.1,500,000, they incurred

expenses including the salary for the driver, petrol and maintenance of the vehicle. At the end of our meeting, Joaquina said that she was pleased to be able to talk about the difficulties and events of 1999.

<sup>8</sup> The Dominican sisters later heard that the East Timorese TNI man who had assisted them remained in West Timor and remarried. However, within a few years he died from a diabetes related illness.

<sup>9</sup> Their vehicle remained with the Claretian priests in Kupang. When the Salesian priests returned to West Timor in early 2000 to collect their own vehicles, they also drove the sisters' vehicle back to Dili. When the sisters returned to Dili, there were few vehicles. Most people were walking around the streets.

<sup>10</sup> Sr. Laurinda lived in East Timor during the Second World War and the 1975 Indonesian invasion.

<sup>11</sup> POLDA was the Indonesian Provincial level in the police command structure.

<sup>12</sup> Nevins (2002) provides a good account of the involvement of the core group of countries, identified as Australia, Japan, United Kingdom and United States, in providing military, economic and diplomatic assistance to Jakarta. He argues that these countries could have done more to prevent the mass violence after the 1999 ballot by putting more pressure on Indonesia by threatening to break military ties or cut economic assistance before the violence and at the very least having a security plan in place to act immediately after the ballot once violence began.

<sup>13</sup> During my fieldwork, in early March 2001, there were fears of a plot to assassinate Xanana Gusmao while he was delivering a speech on the role of East Timor's new defence force. Three men, members of a fringe pro-independence political party, Popular Council for the Defence of the Democratic Republic of East Timor (*Conselho Popular pela Defesa da Republica Democratica de Timor Leste*) (CPD-RDTL) were arrested.

<sup>14</sup> This party was originally formed in mid-1974 by several *Liurais*. The party was re-constituted at a meeting of approximately 20 members in Dili on 30 August 2000. For additional information about this party, see Dunn (1983) and Walsh (2001:14-15) who produced a report about East Timor's political parties and groupings in April 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Four people were killed and eight wounded in the villages of Tiarelelo and Laubonu, Ermera district, on 4 January 2003, and there was further loss of life in a shoot out between the villages of Aidabaleten and Elkina in Bobonaro district on 24 February 2003.

<sup>16</sup> On 6 September 1999, three Catholic priests were killed in the massacre in Suai church. On 25 September 1999, two religious sisters were among a group of nine killed in an ambush by militia in Lautem district.

<sup>17</sup> Interview conducted 12 July 2001 (name withheld).

<sup>18</sup> Interview with lawyer February 2001 (name withheld).

<sup>19</sup> Gampel (2000:59) expands on her concept of "radioactivity", which is a term she uses to describe how the effect of social violence penetrates people's psyches and is unconsciously transmitted by them to the next generation, and draws on material from Puget (1989) and Berenstein (1990) in relation to three psychic spaces and their representations. According to Gampel (2000:59), "radioactivity takes place when an external reality enters the psychic apparatus without the individual having any control over its entry, implantation or effects."

<sup>20</sup> In 2001, I co-facilitated a therapeutic program for young offenders in Bekora Prison with PRADET (Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor). In February 2001, there were ten teenage boys being held for crimes, most of which included violent acts. One offender had beaten up his sister's child, and another had stuck an arrow in another boy when the boy threw water over him to wake him up one day. This particular boy was having nightmares. He said that he dreamt of eating bananas, and other prisoners told him this meant that a member of his family had died. Another young man was in prison for the murder of a taxi driver. All of the ten young men who attended the anger workshop held in March 2001 revealed that they had been beaten by their fathers and lived in disruptive households. What was particularly difficult for these teenagers was the alienation they experienced in prison, especially when they had to sleep in separate cells. For additional information about East Timorese children who have witnessed violence, see report, *East Timorese Children Involved in Armed Conflict* (UNICEF October 2000 - February 2001). The authors of this report conclude that it is difficult to describe the psychosocial effects on children, the full implications of which may not be known for some years. They note that children recruited to join militia gangs show high levels of trauma and anti-social behaviour. As well as studying groups of children who have displayed violent behaviour, it is also important, as Apel and Simon (2000) advocate, to examine an intergenerational perspective on the transmission of resilience to understand what alleviates discontents for children in war. In their study on Palestinian and Israeli children over eight years they explored themes of resiliency in children and the need to support families and schools of the children to strengthen intergenerational bonds to help the children overcome the effects of violence and loss. "Resilience" is a label often used for East Timorese. It is extremely important to

investigate what mechanisms assist people to integrate traumatic experiences; however, there is also a danger that a polarization could arise between coping, resilient, strong individuals and those who are weak, cannot manage, and are severely traumatised. To label people “resilient,” gives no middle ground to allow people to move between a continuum of coping and not coping, which we can all experience on occasions under different circumstances.

<sup>21</sup> For additional information about violence perpetrated against women in East Timor, see International Rescue Committee (IRC) report, *Traditional Justice and Gender Based Violence* (Swaine 2003). This study was conducted in three districts, Ainaro, Covalima and Oecussi, between March and August 2003. While it is restricted in the numbers of women interviewed, in total 25, it does provide insights into women’s experiences, especially in relation to the use of formal and local justice systems. Some of the women stated that *barlaque*, (bridewealth) was one cause of discrimination against women. I discuss this point further in chapter 5. Fokupers, an East Timorese women’s NGO, also produced a report documenting “Gender-based Human Rights Abuses during the Pre and Post-Ballot Violence in East Timor, January – October 1999.”

<sup>22</sup> The expression “domestic violence” was problematic, because it was open to different interpretations of what was acceptable behaviour.

<sup>23</sup> When writing this chapter, the final report of CAVR had not been completed. What is available is a review of the Commission conducted by La’o Hamutuk (2003). The review outlines the structure of CAVR, its budget, difficulties between international and national staff and raises questions about transparency and openness of the Commission. Regular updates of public hearings are posted to CAVR’s website at [www.easttimor-reconciliation.org](http://www.easttimor-reconciliation.org).

## Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup> The label, “critical medical anthropology” was first coined by Baer and Singer in a paper presented at the 1982 American Anthropology Association. For detailed information about this approach which is “concerned with the ways power differences shape social processes, including research in medical anthropology” and asks questions such as “who ultimately controls biomedicine and what the implications are of such control” see Baer *et al.* (1997:36). Hahn (1995:71-74) also provides an explanation of this approach.

<sup>2</sup> Kleinman and Kleinman (1991:277) suggest that “[E]xperience may ... be thought of as the intersubjective medium of social transactions in local moral worlds. It is the outcome of cultural categories and social structures interacting with psychophysiological processes such that a mediating world is constituted. Experience is the felt flow of that intersubjective medium.”

<sup>3</sup> There is no term comparable to “stress” or “trauma” in the Rwandan language, nor was there an activity called “counselling” until UNICEF-sponsored programmes introduced it (Summerfield, Derek 1998:31).

<sup>4</sup> Several East Timorese told me that the word trauma was the same word in Indonesian. However, Echols *et al.* (1975:602) translates the word trauma in Indonesian as *luka berat* (seriously injured, serious injury). East Timorese I worked with in different jobs and many people in Bidau said there was no Tetun word for trauma. Over time the word became more known, and I note that Instituto Nacional de Linguística (2002) has included the word trauma in their list of Tetun words.

<sup>5</sup> Some areas attracted much attention and more input by NGOs than others. For example, because Liquica had been the site of a massacre, a number of organisations worked in that area offering trauma training and support. Initially Fokupers worked with *Rate Laek* members. In addition, International Rescue Committee (IRC) provided financial support and input into that organisation. During 2001, Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor (PRADET) visited the district on a weekly basis and took referrals from the health clinic. International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) also worked in Liquica and conducted trauma workshops. In the March 2003, a worker from Timor Aid advised me that they were organising programs in relation to trauma counselling and support in that district. These were only a few of the agencies I became aware of working in Liquica during the time of my fieldwork. On 27 July 2001, I interviewed a social worker from the agency Children’s Recovery and Resilience Program (CRRP) which was based in a house in Maubara (12 kilometres from Liquica). This agency was managed by a University in the Philippines, and it aimed to raise awareness of the effects of trauma on children and assist the community to help children who had been affected by the war. The agency was experiencing difficulties with funding and appeared to be very isolated working in a rural district with a lack of adequate staff, no vehicle to access communities they were targeting and limited



possibilities for forming partnerships with a Timorese NGO (as there were none at the time of my interview in the area) which was one of its original aims.

<sup>6</sup> I was familiar with this organisation as I worked on a voluntary basis one day per week for eight months co-facilitating a program for Young Offenders in Bekora Prison. During the latter months of 2002, another organisation PRADET Timor Lorosa'e was formed as a national NGO in East Timor with some members of the original staff of PRADET. This created some confusion because for a short period there were two organisations operating under the name of PRADET. PRADET Timor Lorosa'e focused on issues of child abuse.

<sup>7</sup> The program IRCT conducted in Suai was "*O Regresso à Alegria*" (Return to Happiness). The general objective of the program was to provide emergency support for the psychosocial recovery process of 200 primary school teachers and 10,000 school children (in 70 schools) who were all affected by violence, during the re-opening of classes, in order to ensure an atmosphere conducive to a good learning process of at least 80% of the children population. The research project designed was ambitious in the numbers of people it set out to assist and did not reach the desired targets. Other difficulties encountered were encouraging volunteers to work in the program and forming community structures. Despite these difficulties, the program organized teachers and provided training and support for working with children who experienced traumatic events. The program also worked in Maliana at the request of a parish priest. When I visited Suai, I was able to see another component of the project; it had funded and organised for a children's play area to be erected. For further information about the program, see "*O Regresso à Alegria*" An Emergency Psychosocial Recovery Program for Children and Their Families Through East Timorese Teachers Final Evaluation Report (undated).

<sup>8</sup> Sr. Pely attended the course and found it helpful. She also found helpful a book on trauma that a Filipino IRCT doctor gave her. She was not the only person to find a book helpful in understanding issues about trauma and recovery. When I engaged the services of a female interpreter to work with me in Liquica I was concerned that she looked very sad when I first met her. We discussed what the project involved and agreed that we would work together initially on a trial basis and would monitor the work to assess whether it was too difficult or emotionally upsetting for her. The interpreter found the work very rewarding and challenging, as she was able to identify with the women we interviewed and had shared some similar experiences, especially in relation to the death of one of her brothers. We spent time debriefing about the work after each session. Because of her own situation, I provided her with information about PRADET suggesting that it might be helpful for her to talk with another person, as I was both her employer and friend. She was interested in the work of PRADET, but reluctant to make an appointment with them. I gave her a copy of one of my books to read, *The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Sourcebook*; Schiraldi (2000). On another occasion when I was in Australia, she phoned me to ask if she could go to my house in Bidau and borrow my book again. A priest, who I came to know personally, also borrowed this book, which he said he found most helpful. This book is among several that could be useful for people wanting to know more about symptoms they experience; it just happened to be one I had in my small library in East Timor. I am not advocating that I would give reading material to everyone who was experiencing symptoms from post-traumatic stress disorder. However, in these two cases, it was appropriate and helpful.

<sup>9</sup> Betel nut is the fruit of the palm, *Areca catechu*, and is the quid for chewing with betel leaf and lime. "Chewing betel quid leaves the mouth rather numb and promotes intense salivation and mild exhilaration" (Hirono 1987). Regularly chewing betel nut has a detrimental effect on health and has been related to high incidences of oral cancer (Hirono 1987). The practice of betel nut chewing was a form of social exchange, mainly among women in Bidau. While most residents tolerated betel nut chewing, some younger people in Bidau, especially men, thought it was a disgusting practice and became annoyed when their mothers engaged in it.

<sup>10</sup> During the course of its work, PRADET came across patients who had been tied up in chains because the families were unable to cope. One such patient was tied up for 15 years until he was first seen by PRADET on 14 December 2000 and diagnosed with schizophrenia. He received treatment from PRADET, and his family were supported whereby he was able to be released from the chains and integrated back into the community. For additional information on this service, see PRADET (2000) Another report containing the clinical profile of cases and an expanded case study of the patient described above are contained in PRADET, *Recuperação no Desenvolvimento da Saúde Mental no Psicossocial iha Timor Lorosa'e*, (PRADET 2001).

<sup>11</sup> When I asked residents to comment about difficulties they experienced and whether anyone in their family died in the conflict, many of them talked openly about aspects of their lives during 1999. All of these residents, except for the resident who responded that her daughter died, had kin who died because of

the violence, being killed either by militia or by the Indonesian military. The resident who reported her daughter died in fact had two daughters die during 1999 – one daughter died in childbirth and another one year old daughter died from sickness. These figures do not take into account deaths of several relatives reported by the interviewee, but were calculated based on the first death discussed. For example, one resident reported his grandfather died, but he also had four uncles and two cousins who had died. Other residents stated that they had relatives die in the conflict, but these were not included in the figures as the residents were not specific about the relationship of the person. Another aspect to be considered, but not reflected in these figures, is the number of deaths resulting from stress-related symptoms because of the conflict. I was not able to estimate these, but have included a reference in this thesis to one such death, reported months after the violence. A resident who was a nurse believed her husband's stroke, which killed him when he was in his early forties, was due to stress-related symptoms arising from his loss of employment and depression after the conflict.

<sup>12</sup> According to a report in the South China Morning Post, 5 April 2003, aid agencies estimate that 8% of children die before the age of one year in East Timor.

<sup>13</sup> While I noted these facts, I did not observe people in Bidau consuming a combination of foods that possess hot or cold elements as followed in some Southeast Asian countries. Raftos (1999:112-122) discusses the hot/cold opposition in respect of residents in a Manila slum. Some minor complaints such as "red eye," which was most likely conjunctivitis and affected residents in Bidau, also affected residents studied by Raftos (1999:121-122). In Bidau as in other parts of East Timor, the bitter flowers from papaya plants were eaten to avoid malaria. In another village in Dili, informants advised that they became aware of traditional practices involving hot/cold opposition in relation to resolution of disputes. In one such case, a married couple who had been separated came together after the death of their teenage daughter whose death they attributed to their separation and fighting. After the death, before the funeral rituals were completed, they engaged in a ritual during which they burned a stick and then the man and woman placed one foot on the unburned end of stick, which was a way to cool the heat from their fighting. The person who related this story said that he had not been aware of the practice before. It identified that hot/cold opposition warrants further investigation and was an important aspect of some rituals, which were being incorporated into city practices from rural districts.

<sup>14</sup> Bourdieu (1991:117-126) prefers to describe rites of passage as *rites of institution* to develop the theory further to examine "the social significance of the boundaries or limits which the ritual allows one to pass over or transgress in a lawful way." He is critical of van Gennep's theory, because while it stresses the temporal transition of a person passing from one stage to another, e.g. childhood to adulthood, it does not separate those who have undergone a rite from those who will never in any sense undergo it. He provides an analysis of a Kabyle ritual of circumcision. Rather than looking at this ritual of boys being separated from their childhood, he examines it as a ritual of boys being separated from women and the feminine world. The expansion of the theory is relevant to my exploration of delayed rituals as there may be cases in which, for example, some people never make a transition from a single person to a married person because they never marry. After a death, if no mortuary rites are held, there are no transitional phases for the deceased and the mourners.

## Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup> Anthropologists have focused on the delay of rituals in other contexts. Lewis (1988:175-185) discusses the celebration of the *gren mahé*, a large-scale festival held at the ritual centre, performed by the people of Tana Wai Brama in eastern Flores in 1980. The village dwellers had not celebrated the ritual since 1961, and they believed that the failure to hold such a celebration partially contributed to poor harvests the previous two decades. Literature on war and trauma has documented cases of refugees languishing in refugee camps for several years or post-migration stressors of those who flee to another country. In those situations, people's ability to perform certain rituals and practices and pass through rites of passage is severely disrupted. Over time, people adapt meaningful rituals from their homeland and integrate these with their new experiences.

<sup>2</sup> I have referred to bridewealth transactions as *barlake*, which is the term most appropriate for transactions residents in Bidau discussed in relation to marriage payments. Hull (1999:30) translates *barlake/barlaki* as "common-law marriage." Gunn (1999:38) refers to *barlaque*, which he states is a term of Malay origin. He draws on a study by Manuel Alves da Silva, a Catholic missionary in Timor in the 1880s, who records the transactions of *barlaque* as more than a dowry system that relies on relationships of alliance and transactions of trade of materials for women. Pinto *et al.* (1997:47) describe *berlake* as a

form of bride price that men had to pay to a woman's parents before they could be married. Davidson (1994:282) describes *barlaque* as "marriage settlement or arrangement; usually indicative of non-Christian union and implying promise of exchange of bridewealth." Wise (2002) translates *Barlaque* as "Indigenous dowry system," a definition with which I disagree, as I found in my discussions with residents that it was not a dowry system but one of bridewealth. What I identified in Bidau was a complex set of exchange relationships when marriages were being negotiated. These were not uniform in the city due to the changes in attitudes, with some families maintaining traditional practices and others relaxing and/or modifying practices for bridewealth according to the situation. Some families still followed traditions from their districts of birth, while others just wanted happy unions for their children. However, the negotiations I became aware of did constitute bridewealth transactions rather than follow a dowry system. I also discussed transactions in relation to marriage arrangements with several East Timorese, and based on the information they gave me about their own weddings the payments constituted bridewealth payments.

<sup>3</sup> In Bidau, a number of young people were living together and each said that they had entered a traditional marriage but could not afford to have the *festa*. Sometimes it took many years before the man was able to acquire the necessary payments for bridewealth. Schrauwes (2000:863-865) in writing about the performance aspects of weddings in Sulawesi describes the traditional or *adat* ceremony of marriages. This ceremony (which is the third in sequence of three rituals performed on the one day) begins with an official procession of the groom and his kin to the bride's parents' house where the bride is waiting. The bride and groom dress in traditional *adat* costume for this ritual. During this ceremony, the initial transfer of bridewealth takes place with the bulk of bridewealth paid after the birth of the first child. Prior to the *adat* ceremony there is the state ceremony (the civil registration of the marriage by the district head) and the church ceremony. However, it should be noted that the wedding sacrament followed the general form introduced by the Dutch Reformed Church (Schrauwes 2000:863). This was in contrast to Catholic Church services in East Timor, which were introduced during Portuguese administration. Forman (1980:159) in his work with the Makassae noted that a young couple declare their matrimonial intentions by sleeping together at the woman's house, then the senior spokesmen for the two lineage houses are asked to negotiate the bridewealth.

<sup>4</sup> José had aspirations for a regular job with a project repairing roads from Maliana to Suai. This location was approximately three hours drive from his parents' household in Tekkibae, which would have required him to move, leaving Filomena and Mena living with his parents' household. I met a number of East Timorese who, once married, lived in different districts from their partners for work purposes. One of the partners, usually the husband from my observations, returned on weekends to the residence where the wife was residing.

<sup>5</sup> The name I have called this village is a pseudonym.

<sup>6</sup> When I asked Teresinha about her arranged marriage, she said that her mother and the man's father and sister planned this after the death of her female cousin. She said that during that period, younger people followed their parents' directions and there was no room for objection. I was unsure if the wife-takers paid any bridewealth payments to the wife-givers for Teresinha's marriage. Teresinha's father had died when she was very young, and from my interviews with her, it seemed that she spent long periods living in the household of her husband long before her cousin died. She told me that she went to live with her husband's household when she was approximately 14 years old, but did not marry until she was about 24 years old. She wore a cream and purple *kabaia* (long sleeved blouse) and batik skirt for her marriage in the Catholic Church. Although she stated she was happy enough with the marriage arrangements, she expressed disappointment with the small party that followed the church service. For this small celebration, there were no invitations extended to other families. There was only a meal shared with her mother, sister and her husband's nuclear family, and the event did not include any dancing. According to Teresinha, the reason for this simple party was that her husband had previously been married. A large gathering attended his first wedding followed by a *festa*.

<sup>7</sup> Traube (1986:88) discusses uxorilocal residence patterns in relation to the Mambai and points out that when the husband dwells with the wife's father it is a low status situation for him. In these cases, according to Traube, a man does not pay bridewealth but is obliged to work for his wife's kin. Mambai also associate the man's low status in spatial terms. "He is identified with the "walls and veranda," the periphery of the wife-giver's house, a concise metonymy for his subordination" (Traube 1986:88).

<sup>8</sup> Nuptial Masses could be as early as 6.00 a.m. The time depended on the priest's schedule. I attended nine Nuptial Masses and *festas* that followed on the same day, and some ceremonies were scheduled very early in the morning with others around lunchtime. Ceremonies varied in the number of couples. One wedding had two couples exchanging their wedding vows. Another I attended had eight couples. The

liturgy during which the two couples exchanged vows was marked by sharp differences in display of wealth and status. My friends had gone to great expense to ensure that their wedding would be worthy of favourable comment. They had decorated the church with elaborate displays of artificial flowers on all aisle seats and had two lavishly decorated chairs for the bridal couple in the centre of the church. They believed they were the only couple being married on that morning and were surprised when another couple with only a small group and one photographer arrived to exchange their wedding vows in the church. My friends had four bridesmaids each dressed in an identical dress of a different colour escorted by partners with matching coloured bowties, and flower girls and pageboys. They had several photographers as well as another family member making a video of the ceremony. My friends had the reception at a function centre and catered for approximately 1,000 people.

<sup>9</sup> The *mane* (male) *tais* consists of a large piece of woven fabric worn in sarong style around the man's waist. The *feto* (female) *tais* is sewn at the seams and resembles a long tube which a woman steps into and wears like a dress (Alola Foundation/Oxfam 2002:5).

<sup>10</sup> Luisa wore a gold pendant that she said Alberto had given to her years after their wedding for her birthday. Gold chains were a status symbol in Bidau. At one wedding I attended, the groom presented a gold chain to the bride in a ceremony in front of church entrance just prior to the procession into the church for the start of the Nuptial Mass. For this ritual, the bride stood with her father near a table decorated with a large candle and flowers and the groom approached them, placed the chain around the bride's neck and then hugged his future father-in-law. In Birunbiru and in some other rural districts, gold chains did not form part of bridewealth, but were substituted by orange bead necklaces known as *gaba*. I observed many older women dressed in *kabaia* (blouses) and sarongs when attending public ceremonies were adorned with several *gaba* which was evidence that much bridewealth had been paid. Although I did not attend any weddings in Birunbiru, my friends from that district told me that old Makassar swords formed part of primary exchange that were demanded by the wife-givers. Some of the swords that were valued as precious items had their own special name. Informants said that the value of a sword in the 1980s was US\$200 while the value in 2003 had increased to US\$1,000. In other districts *belak* (T), circular metal chest ornaments, had previously formed part of bridewealth payments, and although transactions agreed upon in contemporary times refer to a number of *belak*, these are symbolic, and the number of *belak* have to be converted to a cash amount.

<sup>11</sup> Dili was different from other districts where the amount for bridewealth varied. In some rural districts, the payment can exceed Rp. 4,000,000 (A\$800). One Timorese friend told me that in Lospalos (a town renowned for large bridewealth demands), as many as 12 buffalos can be demanded, or a cash amount as much as Rp.12,000,000 (A\$2,400). This may have been the situation in the past; however, I found that, even in rural districts where large amounts for bridewealth had been formerly stipulated, there was room for negotiation and flexibility. It should be noted, however, that in the city as in rural districts there were changes to these customs over time. One friend who came from Lospalos and had a child with his girlfriend during 2002 did not have a church ceremony. He told me that he had not entered into formal bridewealth negotiations with his girlfriend's family but had to contribute a buffalo to her kin when there was a family event. He said that this was a way of keeping his kin and her kin connected. He said that if all the bridewealth was paid in one payment there was some fear that he could sever ties with his girlfriend's parents and take her to live in another country. His situation showed that adopting a flexible approach to payments that were affordable sometimes created better relationships between families. A friend whose wedding I attended believed in bridewealth and followed traditions from Ermera. He said that his kin had to pay the equivalent of nine buffaloes and nine gold *belak* (round metal chest ornaments) to his wife's kin. These transactions were paid in money. Prior to the wedding, his family paid US\$800 to the wife-givers and there was still an amount of Rp.5,000,000 (A\$1,000) and three buffalo to be made at some stage. Another friend who was part of the same discussion came from Viqueque district and said the amount of bridewealth his family paid was one horse, one buffalo and Rp.4,000,000 (A\$800). When I asked these two men what they thought about these payments in light of the debate that was happening in Dili about marriage transactions, both of them thought it was still a good idea for families to enter into these negotiations. They believed that it showed an appreciation of the dignity of the woman and jokingly commented that it made men think about what they were doing. They said young boys would have to think "don't touch (women), if you touch you pay". Another friend in Bidau Motaklaran said he was trying to educate his parents not to ask for bridewealth when his younger sisters became of age to marry.

<sup>12</sup> The dress was not the second hand one previously shown to me that belonged to Chico's wife that Filomena's kin were considering she wear. It looked similar to those hired from the hairdressing salon, "Sakura". I doubted that it was possible to purchase one or have one made in Dili for A\$50. I noted that when the bridal shop opened in Hotel Timor, wedding dresses ranged in cost from US\$150 to more than

US\$300. This became a popular shop, catering to the dreams of young girls, and several young women from Bidau visited it.

<sup>13</sup> I received an invitation to attend another *festa* in Bidau when the bride-to-be called to my house to invite me personally a few days before the wedding. However, I was out of the Dili at the time. Upon my return, I went to the woman's house to enquire what time the *festa* would commence believing that I had missed the church service in the morning. Embarrassed relatives told me that the wedding had been cancelled. Wedding decorations destroyed by the angry groom-to-be were strewn around the garden. The wedding did not eventuate; however, the couple who had a child, continued to reside virilocally in a neighbouring village.

<sup>14</sup> Fr. Antonio, a Catholic priest from Motael Church confirmed that this was still the situation as at March 2004. During the Portuguese administration, the church gave an official notification of the marriage to the Governor's office. During the Indonesian administration there was a *Kantor Pencatatan Sipil* (I) (Civil Registration Office).

<sup>15</sup> It is common practice in parts of Indonesia for hosts to invite foreigners to weddings to add status to the function. Robinson (1986:236) in writing about a wedding in Soroako, Sulawesi, states that she was "always pressed to distribute invitations to foreigners."

<sup>16</sup> Millar (1989:114-120) in writing about Bugis weddings in South Sulawesi identifies the way printed wedding invitations are composed provides insight into the hierarchical relations between sponsors and guests. Printed invitations add more status and sponsors select a number of their closest and high status associates (usually family members) to add their names on the invitations as co-sponsors to attract guests. Lower-status people and those from rural districts often used verbal invitations. Most of the more elaborate weddings I attended in East Timor also had printed invitations that were delivered to my home.

## Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup> The sources that Connor draws on that have in recent years criticised these approaches include Rosaldo (1984; 1989) and Seremetakis (1991).

<sup>2</sup> Malarney (2001:60) discusses the situation when a corpse is missing parts or is otherwise incomplete in Vietnam. Vietnamese believe that in these circumstances the soul "is theoretically barred from making the transition and therefore is doomed to forever roam the earth and never cross to the otherworld" (Malarney 2001:60). Vietnamese also conduct secondary burial ceremonies (*cai tang*) during which time great care is taken to collect every bone of the deceased.

<sup>3</sup> Residents in Bidau Motaklaran did not talk about any incidents of relocating the remains of their kin buried in the mountains to other sites closer to their places of origin or to a cemetery in Dili. However, I did interview two men living in another area of Dili on 14 February 2002 (names withheld for confidentiality) about secondary burial. One man's family was in the process of sorting out remains of family members who were killed in 1979. A group of 15 people were tortured and taken to another place and shot. People in the village fled; however, when it was safe some time later they returned to the village and collected the skeletons. An aunt, uncle and some cousins of the man were killed in this incident. They relied on information about the deaths from Amnesty International. At the time of my interview, the family still had to negotiate with the villagers about the handover of the skeletons and would have to rely on DNA testing and assistance from the Serious Crimes Unit to identify whose skeletons were those of family members as not all the 15 people were related. People in the village wanted a memorial or monument to mark the place where the deaths happened. In relation to this case, one family member had a dream about the aunt who died. In the dream, the aunt said, "Have you prepared my bed because I have no place to sleep?" After the dream, the relative who lived overseas, telephoned her son in East Timor and relayed the contents of the dream. The relative stressed that they had to pay attention to the message contained in it. They must do something. They must prepare because the process is not complete. The family believed the spirit of that aunt was talking and was telling the family that they must fulfil their obligations. As the skeletons had not been buried but stored after their deaths, a more accurate term would be secondary disposal. The other man interviewed discussed how his grandfather had been killed in the 1975 invasion by Indonesians and how his remains would be taken to his birthplace in Maubisse and the family would perform a *kore metan* ceremony. The two men also discussed the role of the *matadalan* (T) (person who knows the way; a guide) who worked with Falintil who may be able to recall sites where people had been killed and buried.

<sup>4</sup> Langer (1978:xi) discusses how atrocity may transform our view of human destiny by identifying a case in which a woman had spent her childhood years in Europe during the Hitler era. After the war, she

attended a funeral when she was young and was horrified that there was only one coffin in the grave, as she had believed a grave included many dead people. Therefore the concept of grave “becomes not a fine and private place but may have consisted of a dumping ground for innumerable anonymous corpses” (Langer 1978:xi). For details about an investigation into mass graves in the former Yugoslavia, see Stover (1997).

<sup>5</sup> A fourth child from the previous relationship was residing with an aunt in another district in Dili. Joana is a Catholic who attends church on Sundays and observes Catholic traditions, but also participates in traditional practices conducted in her partner’s kin’s *umalulik*. Joana’s parental family remained living in West Timor, and although she does not have kin in Bidau, she stated that she had good neighbours who were like family. She said that there were no problems in the area. Her views conflicted with other neighbours who told me that there were problems with thieves stealing clothes, pigs and chickens during the night. The difficulties Joana experienced were lack of space in their dwelling and that close proximity to the canal created an extremely dusty environment, especially when there was no rain. Due to these conditions, their health suffered, in her words, with members of the household “becoming sick, having colds and coughs.”

<sup>6</sup> “Post-referendum violence left an estimated sixty-thousand female-headed households, with husbands or fathers either dead or exiled outside East Timor” (Tanter *et al.* 2001:247).

<sup>7</sup> There is vast literature on widowhood. An early study by Marris 1958 presents the findings of a study of 72 London widows whose husbands died in middle age or younger. Marris explores grief and mourning patterns experienced by widows and the assistance they obtained following the death of their partner. He also provides a statistical summary at the end of the book containing data on age at widowhood, status of children, reactions to bereavement, change in family relationships and change in income. In the chapter on mourning, he describes the conventions of mourning as the public recognition of bereavement and provides excerpts from widows on the rituals they performed. He also includes comments by their partners during the course of their illness. One woman comments on her reactions to visiting her father’s grave and the practices performed by her mother:

... she had dressed in half mourning for the funeral, out of deference to her mother’s wishes, and afterwards until it wore out. Visiting the grave, too, sometimes only upset them, and seemed an empty gesture: ‘What’s the use when they can’t appreciate it? I think it is better to do something for those who can appreciate it, like giving to people in hospital. I just put the best flowers I can buy in that vase up there for him. But my mother goes, I can’t stop her from going – I’ve been, but it gives me the hump, it upsets me all week. As a matter of fact, he said while he was in hospital (I think he must have had some idea he was going) ‘Don’t keep coming putting flowers on my grave, I won’t be able to smell them. And flowers are so expensive and then there’s the fares ...’ (Marris 1958:35)

Hyman (1983) draws on material from nine surveys of the American population to document the effects of widowhood. This study also included a small-scale study of widowers. Other matters in this book focus on the grieving and recovery process of widows and historical changes of widowhood throughout the ages. Pat Jalland (2002) in *Australian Ways of Death* also includes a chapter on “Women, Widowhood and Gendered Mourning.” Jalland examines some of the customs of the wearing of mourning dress in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Australia, traditions that were inherited from Britain. “Widows were expected to wear full black mourning for two years – deepest black paramatta and crape for the first year of deep mourning, followed by six months of dull black silk, replaced by half-mourning colours of grey or lavender for the last six months” (Jalland 2002:130). Jalland includes an informative section on men’s grieving and letters of condolence. Throughout the book, Jalland makes several references to the use of flowers in death rituals. In the Australian context, fresh floral tributes are an important aspect of any funeral. In some cases, great care is taken and expense incurred when kin choose flowers to be placed on top of the coffin. These remain on the coffin in the hearse, and other floral arrangements provided by kin and friends are included in the hearse, which transports the corpse to religious observances and the cemetery. In some places in Australia, rose gardens have been created in contrast to traditional cemeteries, and rose bushes mark the site for the remains of the deceased after cremation. In some cultures, particular colours and types of flowers have more significance. In Vietnam, white is a mourning colour, and tuberose commonly feature in funerary ceremonies (Malarney 2001:56).

<sup>8</sup> Several anthropologists have noted that some ethnic groups position a corpse towards a particular direction before burial. Traube (1986:200-201) describes the Mambai of East Timor positioning the head of a corpse toward the south and its feet toward the north when it is taken to the cult house before burial. According to Fox (1993:161), the Rotinese in ritual chants describe the coffin “as the ‘ship’ of the dead

and it is pointed 'eastward' inside the house before it is lowered into the ground 'to sail' in a westward direction." For the Ata Tana 'Ai of eastern Flores the corpse is placed in the house with its feet facing uphill. The orientation of the corpse is reversed for burial with the head pointing uphill (i.e. toward the east) (Lewis, E. Douglas 1988:277).

<sup>9</sup> I did not witness or hear about any sick East Timorese receiving this sacrament.

<sup>10</sup> Geertz (1960:70) highlights that a pointed grave marker in Java symbolises a male, while a rounded or flat one is used to signify a woman's grave. Feldore McHugh (1999:30-39) provides a comprehensive overview of the gender dimensions in mortuary studies in chapter 3 of his work, *Theoretical and Quantitative Approaches to the Study of Mortuary Practice*. This chapter looks at male/female symbolism in burial and information about structural details of graves.

<sup>11</sup> Frazer expands upon the practice of purification by fire or water after pollution contracted by contact with the dead. He states that the original intention was to place a physical barrier of fire or water between the living and the dead. However, he suggested that the conceptions of pollution and purification were merely the fictions of a later age, invented to explain the purpose of a ceremony for which the original intention was forgotten (Frazer 1886:80). The Aoheng, a Dayak group living in the centre of Borneo, fear that the spirit of the dead might hold the souls of some of the living present at the graveyard. To prevent this happening, when they leave the burial ground they place two saplings across the path after the last attendant has passed to prevent the spirit of the dead, seeking reunion with its family, from following the living back to the village (Sellato 2002:10-11). People following Jewish traditions also perform a ritual of purification after contact with the dead by washing the hands, in which the water is poured from a cup first on the right hand and then on the left (Levine 1997:111).

<sup>12</sup> This was the usual practice in terms of the timing of events after the death of a person. I did notice however, some variations, e.g. when a man died on 6 April 2003 in Bidau Motaklaran, the ritual of *ai-funan moruk* and procession to put the cross on the grave was delayed because it was during Lent and the family waited another week until after Easter Sunday. Other variations that I came across are contained in a poem "Sweet Flowers," which cites that the sweet flowers go on graves on the twenty-first day. This poem is contained at the beginning of the book *Bitter Flowers, Sweet Flowers: East Timor, Indonesia and the World Community*. Gunn (1999:39) cites the placing of sweet flowers on a grave is held after 40 days, but this timeframe was not widespread practice.

<sup>13</sup> His family also had an *umalulik* in Camea, Dili, where they participated in an annual ritual before they harvested maize. They would sacrifice a chicken and sprinkle its blood under the poles of the traditional house. The elder in the family would recite traditional prayers and then the family would share a meal.

## Chapter 7

<sup>1</sup> Caraveli (1986:175) found that lamenters often preferred to recite texts for her rather than perform them thereby allowing the woman to avoid entering into emotional pain which a performance might trigger. Seremetakis (1991:100) noted that women may recite the narrative of a lament rather than sing it outside the ceremony because it may be polluting to do so.

<sup>2</sup> I would join in the good humour and go along with their jokes. My interest in lamentations also surprised other people in the village. However, from my enquiries with several male and female residents, I was able to confirm that many of them engaged in this practice. The men I spoke to who engaged in these performances were proud that they had this knowledge. Other people responded that they only prayed. Caraveli (1986) also found that people teased her when she expressed an interest in lamentations. "In public conversations, they would laugh and tease me about my desire to record such worthless songs, echoing the general devaluation of lamentation practices that one heard from many nonparticipants in the village. Others were shocked by what they saw as a macabre preoccupation on my part" (Caraveli 1986:170).

<sup>3</sup> While Lola stated she was too *moe* (T) (shy) to perform these rituals again, I knew this was not the reason as she was definitely not a timid person. I wondered if my request intruded into their private worlds of grieving, so I did not persist with my requests.

<sup>4</sup> This collective process of mourning and support offered to other mourners is found in many cultures (Caraveli 1986:173; Seremetakis 1991:99; Briggs 1993:930). In relation to Wari' funerals in Brazil, Conklin (2001:70) states:

Wari' see crying as more than an expression of individual emotion or an outlet for private grief. Crying is, they say, also a kind of service that must be done to honour the

dead individual, and they speak of the need to “help” the dead person’s family by crying and thus contributing to the expression of collective sorrow.

<sup>5</sup> There has been debate about the practice of lamentations in urbanised areas being seen as backward and unnecessary in some countries. In rural Greece, Panourgíá (1995:215) discusses the issue of authentic emotions being expressed in lamentations and suggests that the inauthentic has found “its extreme expression in the professionalization of laments.” She states that the existence of paid professional mourners in places such as Mani, Greece, is widely known. In contrast, Seremetakis (1991:125) states that “there is no evidence of professional, paid mourners (in other parts of rural Greece).”

<sup>6</sup> I first met Maria Soares a year before her death. Manuel had introduced me to her and asked me to photograph her with various members of her kin group. Her family was proud that she had reached old age and had wanted to photograph her while she was in good health. Residents place great importance on photographs as keepsakes. The photography session became a special event with Maria Soares’ daughters changing into formal clothes, including *tais* draped over their shoulders, as they posed with different relatives. The family rearranged leafy pot plants in the garden with a plastic chair in between to seat Maria Soares, who was then partially blind and required assistance to walk. I did not have an opportunity to meet her again before she died. When I received the news of her death, I visited the house to pay my respects to her kin.

<sup>7</sup> As noted in Chapter 5, the exception to the virilocal pattern of residence for this family was Lola, who remained with her mother Aurora to care for her because she is the eldest daughter.

<sup>8</sup> The Guardian of Myths and Traditions (*Data Gi Gauaha*) is the Makassae term for the ritual specialist described by Forman (1980:155).

<sup>9</sup> Cords are small balls of pork, wrapped in plastic and tied with a string. I acknowledge the assistance provided by Isabel Guterres who helped me understand some of the expressions contained in this lamentation.

<sup>10</sup> Sack refers to a sack of rice.

<sup>11</sup> Antoine, Lorenzo, Simon, Manuela, Maria, Beatrice and Cipriano are Filipe da Costa’s children.

<sup>12</sup> Manuel explained to me that normally the property would have been inherited by Joaquin and Ernesto; however, as Joaquin was residing there, he inherited the property as he had nowhere else to live.

<sup>13</sup> *Mana* (T) is the term for older sister and older female cousin and also can be used more broadly as a polite form of address to a woman of similar age. Eliza is Ernesto’s sister-in-law, but in the lamentation he uses the term *mana* as a polite form to address her.

<sup>14</sup> Maria Soares is instructing Aurora to look after her five children. Ametu is Aurora’s youngest son.

## Chapter 8

<sup>1</sup> Winter (1995:78-116) provides a comprehensive chapter on “War Memorials and the Mourning Process” and examines three distinctive spaces and periods that war memorials inhabit, including the home front before 1918, post-war churches and civic sites in the decade following the Armistice, and in war cemeteries. I am grateful after reading this book that in May 2002 I visited the “*Cité de souvenir*” mentioned on page 53. This is a housing project for poor families, which was originally started by a Parisian parish priest, Abbé Alfred Keller, after the First World War, dedicated in 1934. Each family “adopted” a dead soldier and painted his name and dates of birth and death over the door of each apartment. There is a chapel in the courtyard with murals painted by Desvallières. The “*Cité de souvenir*” is located at 11 Rue St Yves in the 14<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* of Paris.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolau Lobato was killed by Indonesian troops in a six hour battle on 1 January 1979 in the Maubesse mountain range, south of Turiscai (Taylor 1999:97).

<sup>3</sup> Pelikan (1996:178-181) provides a brief account about this event and is a good source on Marian apparitions. Taussig (1987) includes material in this book on the subject of Christian saints and virgins and Putumayo Indians. The Niña María of Calota, whose annual fiesta is celebrated on 8 September, is one example of the Virgin who was believed to be a “saint of the Indians” and supposedly performed miracles. Taussig offers an explanation of this saint according to official Church history as opposed to accounts given by people from the town of Caloto (1987:190-208). The Indian practices associated with faith in the saints and visits to shrines need to be situated within the broader context of shaman rituals, including the drinking of *yagé* brew derived from a plant and used to rid oneself of evil (Taussig 1987:140).

<sup>4</sup> Michael Allen (2000:302-309) provides a concise summary of the historical background to the Marian tradition as well as providing additional sources for further reading on the subject. For criticisms of



traditional Marian devotion, which argue that such devotion is counterproductive for women because of the idealized notions of womanhood contained within the cult, see the article by Callahan (1993).

<sup>5</sup> Saint Margarida Maria Alacoque (1647-1690) was born in France. She belonged to the religious order of the Visitation, and after appearances from Jesus she spread devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She was canonised in 1920. Her feast day is held on 16 October each year.

<sup>6</sup> During Indonesian occupation, the office used an Indonesian flag, which everyone had to respect. If they did not respect it, according to informants, there was trouble. After the 1999 conflict, the CNRT flag flew from the flagpole at the village office.

<sup>7</sup> According to the *xefe-suku*, between 1975 and 1999, Indonesian soldiers killed approximately 300 Birunbiru people who were scattered in different parts of the mountains.

<sup>8</sup> The audience at the hearings was a small group between 80-100 people being mostly those who worked with the Commission including religious sisters and friends of the victims. I attended other hearings of the Commission, which attracted an increased audience including groups of university students. In addition to the work of CAVR, the work of the Serious Crimes Unit (the organisation charged with investigating and prosecuting crimes against humanity in East Timor) has played a significant role in investigating serious crimes, though it has experienced difficulties with downsizing and funding. For additional information about this unit, see the report of the Judicial System Monitoring Programme (2004).

<sup>9</sup> For services during Easter 2002, I estimated that approximately 7,000 people went to communion at St. Anthony's Catholic Church, Motael. Combined with the people who did not go to communion, including young children, the number would have come close to 10,000. During 2003, I noticed that Sunday services had reduced in numbers. However, when there was a significant feast day, attendance increased. Many reports cite the percentage of the population who are Catholic as 97-98%. I believe there needs to be some caution in using these numbers without clarification. While most of the population is nominally Catholic, it does not mean everyone attends church; as I observed in Bidau some people felt they had to say they attended when asked. I found that some people wanted freedom from the church and said that they prayed at home. This matter requires further investigation, and a census may not reflect this point accurately because people may feel pressure to say they go to church even if they do not.

<sup>10</sup> Bishop Belo also included in his homilies references to people's dress. One Sunday in 2002, when he preached during Mass at Bidau Lcidere, he commented about young people's choice of T-shirts. Reacting to what he interpreted as western influences upon younger people, he asked them what pop stars had done for East Timor and questioned why they should wear images of them on their clothing. He suggested that they should wear images of the Sacred Heart and other religious themes. His attitude did not allow for youth fads as a normal part of development, nor the fact that many people purchased second hand T-shirts at the markets because these were all they could afford, and they sometimes had no awareness of the content displayed on the shirt. During my time in East Timor, I observed that people followed a strict dress code for church. I only once noticed a woman wearing trousers to church. However, sometimes women's fashions included long glittering evening dresses.

<sup>11</sup> Aurora's husband came from Ermera and their *umalulik* had been in that district. Accordingly, he belonged to the people known as the Mambai, a group with a rich history of rituals that Traube (1986) has written about. Traube devotes a chapter of her book, *Cosmology and Social Life: Ritual Exchange among the Mambai of East Timor*, to marital life and exchange relations (1986:81-97). I found this chapter useful to understand transactions between wife-givers and wife-takers, even though for Aurora's daughter's marriage (and some others in Dili, which were contracted between different ethnolinguistic groups) alliance relations and exchange relations differed from those that involved wife-givers and wife-takers from the same district. During the period of my fieldwork, Aurora's kin group no longer had an *umalulik*, and unlike some residents from Birunbiru who stated that they were in a process of rebuilding their sacred houses, members of Aurora's household did not indicate to me that they were planning to rebuild their one. As Aurora indicated, she still strongly believed people would become ill if they did not follow traditional practices, and her belief corresponds with Traube's description that Mambai can become angry and wife-givers can curse wife-takers and can cause illness and even death if certain obligations are not met (Traube 1986:86). My discussion with Aurora confirmed that older people in Bidau combined traditional beliefs and practices with their Catholic devotion.

<sup>12</sup> For the expression, "people of one house," I have followed Traube's (1986:253) explanation in relation to the Mambai; it refers to the wife-givers and wife-takers who are in an alliance. The expression is also relevant for the Makassae.

<sup>13</sup> An older resident in Bidau originally from Baukau district keeps a small piece of areca nut, which belonged to his ancestors, in a pouch and believes that this protects him from danger and sickness. He sleeps with it in his bedroom, and if he goes on a trip, he takes it with him in its small bag. Similarly, I

found that people in Lospalos also carry around small stones or precious objects called *etelari* (Fataluku term) which they believe protect them.

<sup>14</sup> The chicken practice is a reference to a practice that a number of people from Birunbiru follow. Several Birunbiru people said that they killed a chicken and then looked at its intestines, which revealed answers to certain questions. They performed this ritual to obtain information about whether it was safe to leave Bidau during 1999 and for other purposes. My informant said people in his origin village did not perform this; however, I knew that some people who were born there participated in these practices conducted in Dili prior to 1999. Ricardo's brother Dionisio joined the quasi-religious clandestine movement *Sagrada Familia* in 1992 in a ceremony conducted in Dili. This ceremony was facilitated by L4, a man called Andre, who later resided in Bidau Tokobaru following the 1999 invasion. The induction ceremony into this movement included ritual speech in which the names of their ancestors were recited, followed by the killing of a chicken and the reading of its intestines to determine whether it was good for those being inducted to join. After a positive reading, they sealed their membership by drinking a concoction of chicken blood mixed with whiskey.

<sup>15</sup> Interview conducted with local resident in Birunbiru district on 3 February 2002. Following this interview, my hosts took me to a valley where they pointed out the area where the snake lived.

<sup>16</sup> A popular beach for foreigners is known as "dollar beach." It is situated 45 minutes drive east of Dili on the main road near Fatumetak before Manatuto. A local East Timorese group used to manage it and charged international people US\$1 for entry. They maintained and cleaned it, and it had thatched grass shelters for shade. The group had a disagreement about how to distribute the funds collected and burnt down the boom gate and shelters in 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Other sporting events linked to religious celebrations are organised in different districts. During the month of February each year, a festival of events is staged at Liquica to mark the feast of St. João de Brito, the patron saint of the parish. More than 23 villages from Liquica district participate in this festival, which commences with a Mass. In the park opposite the Catholic Church, each village organises a display of agricultural products or other products in a temporary construction, which resembles a traditional house. I attended the opening day of the celebrations on 4 February 2001. They commenced with a church service followed by lunch prepared by women in the parish from contributions of food from each village. During the afternoon, sporting events, including canoe races, were the highlight of the activities. Bishop Belo attended the opening day. Throughout the month, soccer and basketball games were organised every afternoon.

<sup>18</sup> Vondra (1968:67-74) devotes a chapter of his book to cockfighting.

<sup>19</sup> Not all cockfights were held in semi-private locations. Cockfights in Liquica were held at the markets, and the ones staged in Komoro, Dili, were held within sight of the main road. In the latter months of 2003, a high walled fence was erected around the cockfighting ring in Bidau Lecidere. However, it did not become a concealed activity as the number of men walking to the venue with their birds, the large crowds attending and the increased traffic, with many parked taxis looking for fares and parked motorbikes were evidence it was publicly, a very popular hobby.

<sup>20</sup> These figures were my estimates of attendance around the months of December 2002. With the construction of a new ring, I observed that by the latter months of 2003, the numbers had increased considerably with the attendance of men from many places in Dili as well as from rural districts.

## Chapter 9

<sup>1</sup> The Shelter Program, funded through UNHCR, did not operate in Dili.

<sup>2</sup> As I noted in Chapter 5, pigs are an important form of exchange. Everyone knew their own animals, and even though pigs scavenged in the streets, they always returned to their own places. There was some attempt by a few families in the early months of 2003 to confine pigs to their gardens. When I did my interviews, I met a family who guarded their pigs each night until 1.00 a.m. being cautious to protect their livestock from theft. If a pig was purchased or given away, the new owner conducted a traditional practice, which she/he believed would prevent the pig from running away from its new home. The owner plucked some of its eyebrows, and these were placed under rocks used for cooking in the kitchen. This practice was supposed to ensure that the pig returned its new premises. Pigs are not given names by their owners, unlike in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. When I purchased a sling back, black piglet for Rp.130,000 in July 2001 to give to my husband as a birthday present, it provided much amusement to the neighbours that a *malae* (T) (foreigner) owned a pig. At that time, there were not many gift shops in Dili to purchase presents. I went with some East Timorese friends who worked at PRADET to purchase a

piglet from someone they knew. Prior to this, I was going to buy one from the markets. However, I was warned that I needed to be sure that the seller was the true owner of the pig. My friends negotiated for what was the market price for piglets at that time. When I purchased the piglet, the seller who had her pigs penned in a small enclosure, plucked a couple of eyebrows from the piglet she sold to me and threw these back into the pen to its mother and the other piglets. It provided even more amusement in our neighbourhood that I named the piglet Francesca after my husband Frank. Once she gave birth to six piglets on 25 April 2002, on my birthday, not only did we learn something about the gestation period of pigs, but Francesca increased her status in the community. On 27 November 2002, Francesca gave birth to another six piglets, producing twelve piglets for the one year. On the 2 June 2003, Francesca gave birth again to another six piglets. On 22 January 2004, Francesca died while giving birth to another litter of six piglets. In total, she produced 24 piglets.

<sup>3</sup> In parts of East Timor, people consume dogs as part of their diet. At some of the smaller *warungs* (I) (restaurants) near Komoro airport in Dili, dog (advertised as R.W.) is on the menu. I asked a number of residents in Bidau about this practice and all of them responded that they did not eat these animals.

<sup>4</sup> Television was introduced into East Timor in 1978. Print media and radio broadcasts were important sources for disseminating information throughout Timor and to the international community during Indonesian occupation. Dunn (1983) provides several references indicating that the Indonesian media, including the official Antara news agency and the leading daily newspaper, *Sinar Harapan*, were involved in falsifying reports and circulating disinformation during 1975 prior to and after the invasion. In a different context, an influential use of media was the film of the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre recorded by Max Stahl. The capturing on film of this tragedy was pivotal in focusing international attention on the plight of East Timorese. How the media can influence the thinking of the population warrants further consideration, but is beyond the scope of this thesis. I have included the medium of television because of its appeal as a form of entertainment enjoyed by groups of friends.

<sup>5</sup> The *Besi Merah Putih* (I) (Red and White Iron) militia, who were very active during 1999 in Maubara, 12 kilometres from Liquica, had killed Carlos' uncle. The death of relatives killed by militia distressed Carlos. In addition, he witnessed members of militia groups killing people in Dili. As a trained nurse, he worked at the National Hospital in Bidau Tokobaru during the worst of the conflict and assisted people who required attention until InterFET arrived. On 17 September 1999, he found a vacant house in Bidau Tokobaru, cleaned it and moved in. In April 2000, he adopted eight children whose ages ranged from four to fifteen years. Previously he worked with religious sisters and priests in Dili. In his work, he became aware of children whose parents died during the 1999 conflict and others who were not attending school because their parents were too poor to educate them. Carlos said that a couple of children he adopted were experiencing problems arising from their experiences of witnessing militia kill their parents. He also said that when the children first came to live with him some of them did not know how to wash themselves properly so he had to be patient and teach them about hygiene. Although he received donations of clothes for the children from NGOs, he did not receive any financial support for school fees and funded the children's general upkeep and education expenses himself. He said that when he thought about the past it made him feel sad. Some disturbing sights he saw, including dead children with their heads twisted, were images he said he would not forget for at least 50 or 60 years. He made a cemetery and buried children in front of his house. His way of coping with the past was to invest his time and energy in supporting deprived children.

## Chapter 10

<sup>1</sup> I was not able to find a translation in English for this term. I discussed the word with several other residents in Bidau, none of whom knew the word.

<sup>2</sup> *Tais* are made on a bamboo loom, have intricate designs, and vary in size and production time. Some are completed within a week, with larger complex designs taking a year to make. A number of women were observed during the day weaving these traditional cloths in between carrying out their household tasks and childminding duties. As well as being used in traditional *adat* (I) (customary law) ceremonies, *tais* play a central role in marriage negotiations and funerary rites.

<sup>3</sup> *Teki* (T) is the name of a small lizard and is the slang used for a young woman. Madalena's humour in this scenario was to pay me a compliment on my dress and to joke that I had better be careful of attracting men's attention. *Tokee* (T) is a larger singing lizard, which makes a similar sound to its name and is the slang for a young man.

<sup>4</sup> During 2001, I worked at Bekora prison on a voluntary basis with the young offenders' program conducted by Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor (PRADET). A nurse with mental health training and myself visited the prison once a week and implemented a therapeutic program which consisted of workshops on topics such as anger management, positive role modelling, drug and alcohol abuse and stress management. We started each program by interviewing new members who joined the group and then focused the first hour on a therapeutic intervention; the second hour included exercise, drawing, singing or guitar playing. At the end of each session, the East Timorese practitioner wound up the program by telling a "joke" to the group of approximately eight to ten young men aged from 15-20 years. The nature of these jokes, which I interpret as moral stories using humour, but which my colleague referred to as "joking", always incorporated some message that would hold meaning for the group. Two examples follow:

This is a joke about a deer and crabs. A deer is a big animal in the mountains. One day he went to the beach and had a meeting with the crabs. He told the crabs "You are a small animal; I think that you are not important here. I am an important person. I am a big person, I have power, I am a stronger man and I can do everything in this world." The small animals, the crabs, replied, "We do not believe it. You are a very bad person. You are a very stupid person." The deer became angry. He said "Ok. You wait here. Next week I will come back and we will have a competition. We will then know who the winner is, and who the stronger person in this world is." After that, the deer went back to the mountains, and the crabs called together all of their crab friends for a meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to make a good plan. The leader of the crabs said "Next week the deer will return and we need to have a good plan to win the competition. The deer will lose. When the deer returned, they all discussed the competition. It was a competition to see who could run the fastest. The deer and the crabs prepared themselves. The deer and the crabs had an argument. They then decided the rules of the competition. Every five metres they ran they had call each other's name. For example, every five metres the crabs ran they had to call 'deer' and every five metres the deer ran he had to call 'crab'. The deer said "Ah! I think I will become the winner because I am a big person and I can run very fast. After they prepared themselves, they started the competition and started to run. The deer commenced very fast. After every five metres, he called 'crab'. At each five metres checkpoint a crab called "I'm here." However, this was not the first crab. The crabs had strategically placed themselves at every five metre post. The deer kept running very fast and every five metres called 'crab'. The deer became very tired and did not get to finish because he lost his energy. The crabs had outsmarted him and became the winner." The meaning of the story is that we cannot be arrogant. We cannot think, "I am a big person or I am an important person so I can do everything." Therefore, we must also try to understand, like the crabs, that if we work together we can do anything and we will become winners like the crabs.

This narrative reflects on trickery in the rivalry between different classes of people in Timorese life, i.e. between those classified as *ema-boot* (T) (big people) and *ema-kiik* (T) (small people). Hicks (1978:63-71) highlights that in addition to folktales (T) (*ai-knanoik*) providing entertainment, they are also used as a vehicle for transmitting cultural values from one generation to the next. Howe and Sherzer (1986:682-685) examine joking and humour among the San Blas Kuna of Panama who also use animal pairs, including the monkey and tortoise, in their fictional tales which have "true to life" semblance. Trickery and antagonism are concepts that are reflected in Kuna joking. Howe and Sherzer (1986:691) expand their analysis of humour to show "that it is not just *about* something but is a way of *dealing with* something" and illustrate how members of Kuna society use humour to deal with insiders and outsiders. They point out that Kuna use humour to deal with anthropologists and foreigners whom they relate to with varying degrees of acceptance and rejection (Howe *et al.* 1986:668). Another "joke," which my colleague shared with the young offenders' group, also referred to important animals in Timorese culture.

This story is about a monkey and a fish. During the dry season, the monkey went to the river and played with the fish and they became good friends. They developed a very close friendship and treated each other well. When the rainy season came and there was 'big rain', (*udan boot*) (T) the monkey thought about his friend the fish and wondered if he had died because of the rain. The fish was happy because the rain had come and he was dancing in and out of the water. The monkey thought that because the fish was jumping he needed his help. Therefore, the monkey went to the river, paddled into the water and took the fish out. He put the fish on the ground near the river. After five

minutes, the fish died. The monkey became very sad. He thought – why I already helped him, why did he die? The meaning of this story is that if you want to try to help someone you need to know what exactly he or she needs. You can believe that you can help everyone. However, if they do not need your help, like the monkey tried to help the fish, but the fish did not need help at that time, sometimes if you try to help people, you may also make a problem for them.

My colleague provided the above interpretation for the group. The members of the group found these stories humorous, displayed by laughter and smiling as they listened attentively. While the above story was told in the prison, it has a powerful message for outsiders who come to work in the country. Bidau residents were disappointed that the government and non-governmental organisations did not give them zinc to fix their houses, but they were proud that they had coped with difficulties after 1999 themselves. It reminded me that what residents voiced as their primary needs were material goods to fix their houses and not other forms of intervention.

<sup>5</sup> In Kabul, Afghanistan, a clown mission called “A Patchwork for Peace,” led by Patch Adams for the first few days of its performances over a three-week period from 25 February 2002, mobilised a global network of clowns to visit hospitals and war victims using humour to assist people overcome their tragedies. As was noted in the transcript of the program broadcast on ABC Radio National, while the clowns evoked laughter at many of the sites they visited, there were also problems with Beach clown’s aggressive love clowning style that threatened the safety of the group. For further details see program, “Clowning in Kabul,” Background Briefing, ABC Radio National, 17 March 2002. “Clowns without Borders” is another group that was started by Catalan clown, Tortell Poltrona, in 1993. The group performed in a Croatian refugee camp and has since conducted over 90 expeditions to zones of conflict. Its main office is in Barcelona, Spain.

<sup>6</sup> *Arte Moris* is a group facilitated by a Swiss artist who lived with and encouraged East Timorese to express themselves through art. This group started in early 2003 and operated out of the premises that were formerly the Australian Military Hospital in Komoro. During the Indonesian occupation, the site had been a museum.

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