

Epilogue of Empire: East Timor and the Portuguese Postcolonial Catharsis

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The demonstrations of solidarity with East Timor that occurred in Lisbon in September 1999 were the first major political demonstrations since the fall of the dictatorship in 1974. Solidarity with East Timor demonstrated the importance to the Portuguese of emotional and cultural ties to people whom they saw as sharing their language and Catholic religion. These commonalities have a clear colonial history and are now being reconstructed around the idea of Lusophony, which is taken to be the core of a Portuguese postcolonial identity. East Timor, a Portuguese colony that was occupied by Indonesia after the Portuguese revolution of 1974, used diacritical signs such as Portuguese and Catholicism in its nationalist struggle against Indonesia. These signs are the cultural patrimony of a local creole elite and are exaggerated in Portuguese perceptions of East Timor. The colonial and postcolonial ironies of this case of mutual constitution of identity are analyzed.

Key Words: East Timor, Portugal, Colonialism and postcolonialism, Nationalism, politics of language and religion

INTRODUCTION

On the 30th of August 1999, East Timorese cast their ballots in a referendum that took place under the auspices of the UN and was based on a signed agreement between Portugal and Indonesia. At stake was the acceptance or rejection of a proposal for special autonomy within Indonesia, which if rejected would surely eventuate in real

independence for East Timor. On September 4, in simultaneous televised appearances, the secretary general of the UN, Kofi Annan and the head of UNAMET (UN mission in East Timor) in Dili, announced the results of what they considered to be a legitimate voting exercise: approximately 21% in favor and 79% against. The following day the Indonesian army and the pro-Indonesian-integration militia began a systematic destruction of East Timorese territory. Part of the population fled to the mountains, others to voluntary or forced refuge in West Timor, while others were killed outright. This situation spearheaded a civic movement in Portugal of a proportion unseen since the revolutionary activities of 1974–1975, subsequent to the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship.¹ The movement had an explicit objective: to force the Security Council of the UN, and especially the United States, to intervene in East Timor so as to guarantee the results of the referendum and to put an end to violence. The characteristics of the Portuguese movement to support East Timor—from the point of view of its implicit context and of its process—make it an exceptional case for reflecting on the Portuguese postcolonial moment.

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC REPORTAGE OF THE EVENTS

What happened in Portugal in September 1999? We can analyze the first events of the movement through a form of ethnographic reportage. By this I mean a description of events that is marked by my participation in them as a citizen, without the conscious purpose of using ethnographic methodology or initiating a research project. This is the reason why this article should be seen neither as an academic paper nor as an experimental text, but rather as an essay written by an anthropologist who pays attention to the politics of representation in his own society. When the pro-integration terror began in East Timor, I immediately felt the same revulsion and indignation as millions of other citizens. The first reading was obvious: how was it possible not to accept the results of a referendum (sanctioned by the international community) in which the East Timorese had so unequivocally opted for independence? Democratic legitimacy was put on the line, and this in relation to what was seen, in Portugal, as a poor, illiterate, and suffering people: the moral superiority of democracy was thrown in our—*we*, its western inventors—*faces* by those we had judged so many times as incapable of even understanding it. Moreover, I felt repulsed by the violence that was used by the occupation army and by the militias. Finally, I was surprised at

myself, because I had always been cautious in my support for the "Timorese cause," because it seemed (in Portugal and for its protagonists) to smack of colonial nostalgia.

The first event that I remember—that solidified my support for the civic movement—was the "three minutes of silence" on the 8th of September, an initiative that was called for by several organizations and announced on the radio stations. I went outside a few minutes before the set time expecting nothing to happen. But my skepticism (and maybe even cynicism) were countered: at exactly three o'clock, in a neighborhood that was not central, and in which one would not expect a public performance of any significance, the traffic stopped and people got out of their cars. The stores around closed and people came out onto the sidewalk. Everyone was still. Someone shouted "Fascist!" to a car that did not stop. Above the skyline of buildings I noticed that traffic crossing the "25 de Abril Bridge" had also halted. As I stood silent on the sidewalk, I remembered images I had seen of Holocaust Day in Israel where citizens do the very same thing. But above all, I felt a new emotion: I identified myself with all of the strangers around me who were doing what I was. "Communitas" was taking hold.²

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

The third episode that served to constitute the solidarity movement was the "dress in white" day. A radio station made an appeal that at least one white article of clothing be worn on that day or white banners be hung from the windows and that cars use a white ribbon. On the day, I dressed in a white pair of pants and shirt. I went out to the street and looked—as other passers-by did—to find that many had done the same. Not only was there a white streak of clothing visible on the street, there were also many windows draped with white sheets or bedspreads. Cars not only displayed white ribbons but also were decorated with little homemade-looking signs

inscribed with ringing phrases like "Timor Lives," "Save Timor," and "Viva Timor Loro Sae" (Timor of the Rising Sun). In a building along side of the American embassy, long rolls of computer paper were hanging down out of the windows.

A fourth episode, in which I did not participate, was a demonstration in Madrid on the 12th of September. As Portugal did not have diplomatic relations with Indonesia, the closest Indonesian embassy was in the Spanish capital. At the suggestion of the mayors of the region of the city of Oporto (Portugal's second largest city) a demonstration was called for in front of the Indonesian embassy, buses were rented, and the Railway Company made a train available. Taking advantage of the freedom of circulation within the European Union, this demonstration took place, therefore, outside the national territory.

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

The same day the media announced that B. J. Habibie, the Indonesian president, had accepted the intervention of an international peacekeeping force in East Timor. The forces would start arriving in Dili on the 18th or 19th of the month. From that moment on the movement started to dwindle progressively until a few days before the Portuguese elections on October 10th—immediately following the death of a national icon, Amália Rodrigues, the "Fado" singer—The subject of East Timor was then relegated once again to the back pages of the newspapers.³

STRUCTURE AND MEANING OF THE EVENTS

These manifestations had three recurring and overlapping aspects: organized gatherings and demonstrations, spontaneous performances, and the catalyzing role played by the media. The United

States Embassy and the area around the delegation of the United Nations were rapidly established as the prime locations for demonstrations, gatherings, and spontaneous performance. Groups of demonstrators went back and forth between the two locations whenever there wasn't a demonstration that linked both. The location of the American embassy was evident but the location of the United Nations delegation was not so obvious. As it happens the delegation of the UN occupies a suite rented at the Sheraton Hotel—Lisbon's tallest building. Nothing on the exterior of the building signals its presence, it was never known which window the office lay behind, and no one ever appeared at that window. What I mean to say here is that the demonstrations took place in front of the "virtual" United Nations delegation headquarters, but in reality they took place in front of the Sheraton Hotel—a recognizable symbol of the globalization of American capitalism. Furthermore, the space in front of the hotel is far from a proper square, but rather a tangle of intersections. It doesn't have a name other than that given to it by demonstrators on improvised signs: Timor Loro Sae Square. The appropriation of urban space took place through an act of topological creation.⁴

From early on this "square" became the center of events. At any moment of the day there were people there, increasing in number as the afternoons turned to dusk. A pattern developed: the evenings began here and later moved to the American embassy. In front of the Sheraton, an encampment was established where some staged a hunger strike and others left their tokens of grief: posters, paintings on the ground, lit candles, and crosses. Out of this chaos on the sidewalk an authentic altar was created. Public figures and representatives of organized groups came by, even people like me, who went knowing that they would meet someone they knew or a friend, ended up staying longer than they had planned, canceling appointments, and getting home late. On the adjacent avenue, drivers got in the habit of honking car horns. At certain moments groups of bikers would come by in noisy demonstrations. Suddenly, as if coming out of nowhere, small demonstrations would congregate in the square. At crosscurrents, other groups leaving the square flooded into the avenue and fouled up the traffic, at which point drivers, rather than respond angrily, would explode with a supportive honking of horns. They would then disappear. Where to? No one knew.

Spontaneity and unpredictability became the dominant tone, perhaps only surpassed by the surprising social composition of the participants: people from the right and from the left, Catholics and

non-religious, many more women than might be expected, and many children and youth. In addition, it was frequently noted that it was the first time that many who were active had taken to the streets; many were participating in the first demonstrations of their lives. Even people in the habit of only going about town by car, honked at the symbolic points in the city or wherever they might meet a demonstration in progress. The feeling that people were out in the streets, that they had "taken to the streets" was accentuated by the fact that during these days, many people, including me, met acquaintances from long ago, high school friends not seen for some twenty years—and all expressing the same surprise at finding each other, unexpectedly, out on the street.

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

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

The role of the mass media in the mobilization of the people reached unimagined proportions. One feature of this mobilization must be highlighted: the intensive focus on information regarding East Timor. This aspect raises two further questions: the role of the media in creating events and the way in which the media's interpretation of events in East Timor heightened Portuguese self-esteem (an experience common to practically the whole of the movement) in fueling the mobilization. The mobilization for East Timor was not stimulated by television, as much as one might have expected in a

contemporary context. Rather it was radio that played a more evocative role (by way of voice and language), proving the greater capacity of this medium to mobilize the listeners' imagination. Radio, geared as it is to the urban context and the automobile, provided news and information more rapidly than television, spreading quickly via cars and transistor radios. The privately owned station TSF was transformed into a virtual political committee. The appeal for the "three minutes of silence" or the "dress in white day" was broadcast via TSF. Setting aside the news about other subjects and even canceling commercial spots, the station dedicated its broadcasts exclusively to the situation in East Timor and to the national mobilization in Portugal. An incantation was instituted which lasted until the 10th of October: before the news and every half hour a voice announced: "it's ten o'clock in Continental Portugal and in Madeira, an hour earlier in the Azores and five P.M. in Dili." An everyday informative phrase thus became a statement. The ambiguity of this statement (including East Timor in Portugal, but doing so to express support for that country's struggle) encapsulates the ambiguity of the whole process, be it in the significance of civic mobilization or in the more general framework of the question of East Timor for the postcolonial reconfiguration of Portugal. The boundary between solidarity with East Timor and its inclusion in a transnational "Portugueseness" bordering on colonial nostalgia was never drawn. But this is a fundamental question to which I turn in the last part of this paper.

The mobilization also extended into media that had not been used on such a massive scale in Portugal before, particularly the Internet. There were many initiatives that circulated widely, including petitions during demonstrations, media appeals for the donation of funds and proposals from all sorts of organizations suggesting that a day's wages be turned over to support the struggle. However, the petitions promoting international solidarity that circulated by way of the Net were, by far, the greatest in number. I remember, for example, the day in which Portugal Telecom had to increase the number of lines it made available for all of the free of charge messages to the United Nations so as not to have its services jammed. On national sites it was very easy to find direct links to the White House and other centers of power.

In the meantime, the Portuguese legislative elections of October 10 and their respective campaigns were drawing near. From the beginning, a behavior code and an interpretation of reality in respect to East Timor were established. On the one hand, it was said that

electoral and party advantages could not be gained from the events in and about East Timor. On the other hand, a "national consensus" that surpassed any political differences was assumed. As for the first issue, the high point was certainly when the opposition party leader of the PSD (the opposition right of center party) requested that the election date be pushed back. The President, making it very clear that the cause for East Timor would be kept "pure," refused the request. He said that it should not be corrupted by politics, suggesting perhaps the "impure" nature of politics itself.

The call for a national consensus was by and large publicized by the organs of political power and civic institutions, leaving the opposition parties no choice but to subscribe to it. It also intensified the media's focus on East Timor and the civic movement. However, together with many others, I felt uncomfortable when the Portuguese national anthem was sung at demonstrations, or the Indonesian people were demonized, and calls were made for Portuguese military intervention. Those of us who were discomfited by this nationalism felt unable to protest.

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

The whole of the movement, by its very character as a mission to generate consensus, concentrated on a demand that the United Nations intervene in East Timor and an accusation of passivity on the part of the "international community," especially the United States, but also the other permanent members of the Security Council. The Indonesian political and military leaders were demonized: B. J. Habibie, Ali Alatas, and Wiranto. Clinton was also turned into a dishonorable figure and ridiculed through invocation of the Lewinski affair. Comparisons were made between the situation in East Timor and the relative illegitimacy of the intervention in Kosovo.

A few questions remain to be addressed. In the first place, who initiated these events? Although much of the answer is contained in the above description, it is worth remembering that the explicit actors calling these events were always civic associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, and student associations. The Roman Catholic Church, associated with an important sector of the independence movement in East Timor, kept a lower profile than expected. Governmental organs were surpassed in their efforts by civilian initiatives, and political parties were careful not to become protagonists, although some days before and after the elections there were speculations about who would profit from the mobilization. In addition to the crowds' spontaneous enthusiasm, grassroots organizations and activists engaged in extensive, non-partisan forms of protest activity.

Finally, what symbolic resources were mobilized? Apart from those already mentioned, the symbolism of suffering was used much more than that of aggression: crosses, blood or red paint, candles, vigils, and mourning. The image of Xanana Gusmão became symbolically equivalent to those of Che Guevara or Nelson Mandela. This could be seen in the iconography produced in stickers, t-shirts, and other kinds of political merchandising. East Timorese symbols—especially the flag—were appropriated. In terms of music, however, it was above all the song "Por Timor" (For Timor) by the Portuguese band "Trovante," written on the occasion of the Santa Cruz Massacre in 1991 (see below), that was interpreted as an authentic East Timorese hymn, although it was "Made in Portugal" rather than a song originating from East Timor itself.

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

I conclude this part by admitting to a frustration: that of not being able to bring to this text the hundreds of pages of text and photos from the press, the hundreds of hours of television and radio reporting, and all of the sites on the Internet having to do with the events surrounding East Timor. But as an anthropologist doing an ethnographic reportage without recourse to interviews with an array of participants, I am struck by the ambiguity that characterized the discourses and the actions of the mobilization. They revealed a fascination with the Lusophonic aspects of the East Timorese, including their Catholicism, and their supposed adoration of Portugal, which relieved the guilt felt by the Portuguese over their colonial past. Apart from the genuine solidarity of the movement, from the lesson of resistance and struggle exemplified by the East Timorese, apart even from the opportunity this movement gave to citizens to express their discontent with globalization, national politics, and the absence of participation in it, the question remains: why East Timor (and not Angola, for example)? What place does East Timor occupy in the Portuguese imaginary? What "Timor" is this—beyond and despite East Timor—that the Portuguese have been constructing? On April 25, 1974 the Portuguese freed themselves from a dictatorship and accepted the independence of the colonies. What is happening now, 25 years later? My interpretation of the events is that what was at stake—more than the demand for intervention, the questioning of the "new world order," or the demonstration of a strong affective bond of solidarity for the East Timorese—was, rather, a national catharsis around issues of colonialization, decolonialization, and the reconfiguration of national identity through new processes of participatory politics.

EAST TIMOR, INDONESIA AND PORTUGAL: COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL ENTANGLEMENTS

A presentation of the context of the September 1999 events is more productive if it transgresses the traditional regional criteria of many fields of scholarship including anthropology. Indonesia, East Timor, Portugal, and the "new international order" must be analyzed together. The island of Timor—comprising East and West Timor—lies in the Indonesian archipelago, an area that has experienced European expansion since the beginning of the sixteenth century. For the following 300 years, the Portuguese and the Dutch were the main protagonists in the struggle to control commerce in the

archipelago. According to Nancy Lutz (1995), the real local power was in the hands of a mestizo class called Topasses, or "Black Portuguese," who played an important social role.

The weakness of Portuguese colonialism and the distance between East Timor and the metropolis meant that the Portuguese never effectively colonized Timor. As a consequence of the process of concentrating resources in other colonies, the island was marginalized. Thus, in 1859, the Portuguese general headquarters were moved to East Timor when Solor and Flores were sold to the Dutch. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and only very gradually, Portugal gained control of the colony, thanks largely to the introduction of coffee as an export cash crop in 1815. East Timor, however, has a history of rebellion against Portuguese rule, as testified by uprisings in 1870–1892 and a rebellion in 1959. The creation of the notion of a special bond between East Timor and Portugal during the 1999 events in Lisbon was only possible on the basis of selective forgetting (of both these rebellions and the anti-colonial movement)—a common procedure in the construction of collective memory.

The Portuguese presence, with an ineffective colonial administration, depended in large measure on the influence of the Catholic Church. In the section of the archipelago they controlled, the Dutch capitalized on the centrality of the island of Java and its ancient empires. They were later confronted with a national independence movement that started in the beginning of the century and continued until independence was gained in 1949. A new nation and regional power, Indonesia, emerged.

The political project of the Indonesian independence leader, Soekarno, was the unification of the archipelago. The principal cultural instrument used was linguistic: the establishment of Bahasa Indonesia as the national language in the place of Dutch. Soekarno's power depended on a balance between the influential communist party and the military caste—the latter being the base of the unity of the new state, as in many other new ex-colonized nations. Soeharto—commander of the Strategic Army Reserve—launched a coup in 1965 and established the New Order. This new, anti-communist regime was based on the introduction of army officers into civil service posts, thus militarizing the administration.

Meanwhile, the Portuguese presence continued on the eastern section of Timor, which remained a small colony of a country practicing a backward, persistent colonialism. For a long time, Portuguese colonialism was actually a surrogate colonialism, because the

power behind Portuguese interests were the stronger states within the international economy, especially Britain.⁵ After the demise of the British Empire, Portuguese colonialism continued as a political project tied to the maintenance of the dictatorship and its isolationism. Although such colonies as Angola and Mozambique became economically significant in the late colonial period, East Timor was important primarily as a symbol of the cohesion and continuity of the Empire.

After the conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955, Portugal was obliged to change its colonial policy in order to become a member of the United Nations. This was done by changing the designation "colonies" to "overseas provinces" and by adopting the rhetoric that the empire was a unified national and multicultural community—a fact that marked the beginning of the influence and political impact of Gilberto Freyre's theories of "Lusotropicalism."⁶ Freyre, a Brazilian sociologist, developed a theory of Portuguese exceptionalism that portrayed its expansion and colonialism as different from and superior to the colonialism of other European powers because it promoted miscegenation and the creation of a new hybrid society in the tropical lands.

In 1965, Portugal was subjected to an authoritarian regime and international anti-colonialist pressures at the same time that it was also engaged in war on three fronts: Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau. Goa, Damão, and Diu (then "Portuguese India") had already become part of India. Finally, on April 25, 1974, young military officers who were fighting in the colonial wars led a pro-democracy military coup against the Salazar-Caetano dictatorship. The coup, which was motivated by opposition to colonialism, dictatorship, underdevelopment, and by the international isolation of the Portuguese dictatorship, ended Portuguese colonialism.

According to Pinto (1999), East Timor represented the most extreme case of the crossroads of Portuguese decolonialization. A small territory of a merely symbolic importance to Portugal, East Timor did not experience a full-fledged war of independence, such as those waged in the African colonies. Instead, three East Timorese political parties arose. The first, UDT, defended the idea of a progressive autonomy within the framework of a Portuguese language community. The ASDT/FRETILIN party advocated independence with a transition period of 3 to 8 years. And finally, the APODETI party defended integration with Indonesia with some form of autonomy for East Timor.

In 1975 Portugal affirmed East Timor's right to self-determination. On November 28, 1975, with an Indonesian invasion imminent, FRETILIN issued a Unilateral Declaration of East Timor's Independence. The Portuguese authorities, with a weak military force, had already moved to the island of Ataúro on August 27. The Indonesian army invaded in December 1975 (Oliveira 1996: 161–165) and by July of 1976 had completed the formal integration of East Timor into Indonesia. Portugal recognized neither the independence nor the Indonesian occupation. Until the referendum in 1999, the UN recognized Portugal as the "adminstrating power of a non-autonomous territory," since an internationally recognized decolonialization process had not occurred.

The Indonesian invasion was carried out under the pretext of avoiding the spread of a communist threat in the region. In the framework of international relations at the time, Indonesia was a strong ally of the United States, which, along with other governments and the Portuguese government's tacit recognition, supported the invasion. At that time, the Portuguese former colonies were anti-American threats, as was, in its revolutionary jubilation, the former metropole itself. Without a doubt, however, the oil wells and the potential for natural gas off the Timor coast also played an important role, especially for Australia, the other party that found the Indonesian invasion convenient. After the Indonesian invasion, three important developments took place: the growth of an East Timorese resistance movement (as an aftermath of the anti-colonial movement inside and outside the territory), as part of a strengthening of East Timorese nationalism; a crisis in the Indonesian regime; and the creation of an East Timorese agenda in post-revolutionary Portuguese politics and society.

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

break with the occupiers during the crisis that would overthrow Soeharto.

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

Portugal had meanwhile ended its revolution by 1975 and had begun "democratic normalization," with a return to a market economy and preparation for incorporation into the European Union. In the context of the global restructuring of capitalism, the independence of the colonies did not decrease opportunities for Portuguese private and public investment, at the same time that financial aid for infrastructure development was injected into Portugal from the EU. Simultaneously, the old colonial rhetoric, now rephrased as universalism, non-racist humanism, miscegenation, and "cultural encounter," continued to be a structuring element of Portuguese official and common sense narratives of identity and self-representation.

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

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

For Portugal and the world, the massacre in the Santa Cruz cemetery in 1991 marked the turning point for the East Timorese question, bringing it front and center. In November of that year, Indonesian soldiers opened fire on a peaceful demonstration in Dili, killing several people, mostly students, in the cemetery of the Santa Cruz church. The fact that U.K. journalist Max Stahl filmed the events unleashed a process of international mobilization, which culminated

in Ramos-Horta (of the CNRT, Timorese National Resistance Council) and Bishop Ximenes Belo winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 as representatives of the people of East Timor. In Portugal, the images of people in despair as they prayed in what was interpreted as being Portuguese⁷ endowed the event with an almost religious aura, and planted the seeds of an affective identification. In the Portuguese eyes, East Timor was represented as Catholic and Lusophone (Portuguese speaking), contrary to the evidence that Portuguese is not spoken by the majority of the population.

A social and cultural characterization of the principal actors in the leadership of East Timorese nationalist movement is key to understanding its postcolonial character. Beginning in the 1960s, a small, educated elite with nationalist (or regionalist) aspirations started to express its ideas in the Catholic East Timorese press. This elite was in large measure a product of Catholic schools and especially the seminaries of Dare (near Dili) and S. José (in Macao). Some administrators and bureaucrats, as well as some rural property owners became important leaders for both UDT and ASDT / FRETILIN. The Church constituted, on the one hand, the principal Portuguese presence of a continuous sort, and at the same time, given its transnational nature, a link between the territory and the rest of the world. It was also the major promoter of literacy. Due to the fragility of Portuguese colonialism, local education was in the hands of the Church. After the Indonesian invasion, influences within the Church in the United States and Europe were able to safeguard the autonomy of the East Timorese Church and not integrate it into the Indonesian one, as the Vatican wanted. This may have allowed for the creation of an authentic national church.

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

This idea was opportunely reinforced by the fact that the leaders of the East Timorese resistance inside and out of the territory were part of the Lusophone elite formed during colonial times. Although speculative, the question of "racial" identification, given the mestizo phenotype of these leaders cannot be ruled out either. Being the spokespeople of the movement, they easily captured Lusophonic sympathies. But they were a minority, and the Indonesian government actually used this image to discredit them, just as the selective perception of the Portuguese media used it for the opposite purpose. What is, however, the real dimension of the linguistic question? I wish to link this question to that of the emergence of East Timorese nationalism: both issues are marked by an originality that I classify as post-colonial.⁸

Lutz (1995) reviews the ethnolinguistic complexity of East Timor: 12 mutually incomprehensible local languages, four of them Australian and eight non-Australian, which can be divided into 35 dialects and sub-dialects. Tetum functions as a lingua franca of sorts. During the colonial period, Portuguese was the official language and a pre-requisite for citizenship according to a policy of "assimilation." Following the colonial categories, in 1950 the population (totaling 442,378) was made up of 568 Europeans, 2,022 Mestizo, 3,128 Chinese, 212 other non-indigenous (from Goa, etc.), 1,541 "civilized indigenous," and 434,907 "non-civilized indigenous" persons (Weatherbee 1966: 684). To sum up, less than 1% of the population was "civilized," mestizo, and Lusophone. In East Timor the social order was "typically Iberian" (Anderson 1993): beneath the Portuguese directors, there were the Chinese merchants, the mestizos (of local, Arab, African, and Portuguese origin) and a large diverse group of native ethnolinguistic communities.

It was precisely the above-mentioned small elite that led the resistance or served as intermediaries to the Indonesian occupiers. And it was members of this elite who emerged as representatives for an independent East Timor. According to Lutz, in the 1974–1976 period, FRETILIN, drawing on the Paulo Freire's model, encouraged a Tetum literacy campaign, the leaders of which were, nevertheless, primarily Portuguese speakers. On his October 1999 stopover in Lisbon, Xanana Gusmão said he composed poems in Portuguese, for that was "the language in which I feel," and admitted to not having completely mastered the Tetum language.

One should not forget, however, that Tetum was used before the Indonesian invasion as a form of resistance to Portuguese

colonialism and that the leadership of the independence movements went beyond the *assimilado* elite.⁹ As a matter of fact, Portuguese colonialism promoted a bilingual policy, with Portuguese targeted at *assimilados*, leaving the field open for Tetum as the language of the folk—a situation that provided the foundation for the Church's further popularizing Tetum as the language of liturgy. Thus a situation of diglossia could be a good description for East Timor. One in which Portuguese was for the *assimilados*, Tetum for the *gentios* or heathen (see Ferguson 1985).

After the Indonesian invasion, Portuguese was abolished and Bahasa Indonesia implemented. Lutz suggests that this was done not so much out of nationalist concerns, or even due to a focusing on criteria of citizenship, as during colonial times, but more as a measure of control, the reflection of a Foucaultian kind of governmentality. In fact, Indonesia built schools at an accelerated pace. Indonesia used the argument of national development, contrasting its politics to Portuguese neglect, as the justification for the benefits of integration—an argument that even the Portuguese acknowledged. In this process, the Church protested against "Indonesianization." Given the prohibition of Portuguese, in 1981 the Church got approval from the Vatican to hold Mass in Tetum. Lutz defends the idea—which is seconded by official Indonesian documents—that the teaching of Bahasa Indonesia was directed by security concerns. Portuguese would be a challenge to governmentality. It would represent a secret language, and thus an everyday form of resistance, "a weapon for the weak," in the sense that Scott (1985) gives it. Benedict Anderson's (1993) argument, writing about East Timor, moves in a similar direction but asks the bigger question: how did East Timorese nationalism arise?

The question is provocative. In Portugal, the common sense notion was that East Timorese nationalism came about on its own, flowing from the fact that the East Timorese were perceived as both Lusophone and Lusophile. In reality, in the first years of the Indonesian occupation, Portugal could be accused of having simply abandoned East Timor. But starting from the 1980s, the East Timorese "fever" in Portugal coincided with a growing and more articulate East Timorese nationalism. Anderson—who observed the facts from the Indonesian side—said the problem was how to integrate East Timor into the national narrative. This national narrative stipulated how Indonesia was to incorporate the many ethnolinguistic and religious groups acquired from the Dutch East Indies. Unity would be secured by the historic

experience and by mythology, especially around the fight against the Dutch and the myth of pre-colonial states, particularly as exemplified by the Javanese Majapahit of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁰

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

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

In addition, the definition of Indonesia that emerged from the anti-Communist massacres of 1965–1966 was also seen as part of a fight against atheism. The obligation of every Indonesian to select one of the world religions was stipulated. According to Anderson (and, I add, to the contrary of what the Portuguese commonly believe) in 1975 a majority of the East Timorese practiced indigenous religions, the Catholic population having more than doubled only in the last 17 years. Beyond the fact that the Church chose to use the Tetum

language, which had nationalizing effects, the Church also offered protection by the very logic of the Indonesian State itself, which sponsored and supported the main religions of Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism, and not indigenous religions. In addition, Catholicism reinforced an expression of common suffering among the people.¹¹ For Anderson this is what substituted for the nationalism of print capitalism, lacking in East Timor.¹²

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

At the end of October 1999, the CNRT decided that Portuguese would be the official language of the country and Tetum the "national language." The decision was contested, since a great number of youths do not speak Portuguese. In another contested strategic decision, the U.S. dollar was adopted as the new currency. In this instance, Portuguese diplomacy "lost the battle" of the Escudo and the Euro, and the U.S. dollar was adopted. CNRT's decision to adopt Portuguese as the official language was very unpopular, widening gaps between generations, men and women, rural and urban populations. One could say that it put back in place colonial divides, given the small numbers of Portuguese speakers when compared to those of Tetum or Bahasa Indonesia speakers. However, Bahasa Indonesia was the "enemy" language that had been historically imposed and that the leaders wanted to marginalize (see Crockford 2000).

BACK TO LISBON, BACK TO EMPIRE?

The civic movement in Lisbon was not a univocal one. This was noticeable from the start from its non-partisan character and in the confluence of "the people," be they Catholic or agnostic, from the right or the left. The creation of a "national consensus" permitted, side by side (and not necessarily incompatible) demonstrations to take place that were staged to attract international solidarity and yet

had a subtext of colonial nostalgia. The religious identification can be seen simultaneously as an emotive force for the creation of transnational solidarity that had as its subject a Lusocentric and potentially nationalistic discourse. The international context of the new world order allowed for arguments from "the left"—anti-global capitalism—and from "the right"—nationalist—to coincide. But, a set of unresolved issues were common to all, including the place of the memory of colonialism in the construction of a national identity and the traumatic place of decolonialization (liberating and progressive but recognizably poorly executed). And all actors share the dilemma that Portugal is itself simultaneously a part of the center—as a member of the European Union—and a peripheral country within this emerging power. Finding itself peripheral within the European Union, Portugal relocates itself within a global framework as the center of the Lusophonic community.

What the events in East Timor, Indonesia, and Portugal reveal is a threefold postcolonial irony that can be added to the colonial ironies pointed out by Anderson: (1) nationalism in the former colony (East Timor) uses the culture of the colonizer as a mobilizing symbol for action (anti-colonial feelings notwithstanding); (2) a new Third World nation (Indonesia) becomes a regional power and invades another colony, surpassing the limits of its own national narrative; (3) the former colonizing nation also reconfigures its identity in the midst of ambiguous nostalgia as being in solidarity with "the outpost of the Empire" that it had neglected the most.

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

The area of postcolonial studies has been marked by a concentration on topics around hybridism and the dependency of postcolonial societies on the representations of the "natives" by the colonizers for their self-construction. But little has been done in some areas that seem important to me: (1) the reconfiguration of the former colonial

metropolis after the independence of their colonies; (2) the comparison between the diverse colonial and postcolonial experiences. In this comparison the singularities of Portuguese expansion and colonialism could render more sophisticated the discussion of post-modern identities and at the same time (and it is here that the contribution of postcolonial studies is important), "modernize" the eternally parochial discussion of Portuguese exceptionalism; (3) the empirical and ethnographic study of processes of identity reconfiguration conditioned by political economy and relations of power, without subscribing to the primacy of representation and discourse.

The central question raised by the events portrayed at the beginning is why East Timor (and not Angola, for example)? What place does it occupy in the Portuguese collective imagination? We have seen that religion and language were central in Portuguese identification with the East Timorese cause. This identification denied, however, counterevidence, namely the presence of the voice of the East Timorese, who are the active cultural makers of East Timorese national identity, and the confrontational aspects of colonialism. During the events of September 1999, the Portuguese *imagined* East Timor. Its small size, its distance, the existence of a big, dictatorial, and Muslim enemy (Indonesia), the denunciation of an unjust international order in which the strong (the United States) fail to protect the weak were the narrative elements for the construction of a mythical place. Any narrative of East Timor made in Portugal, is a narrative of Portugal, its colonial experience and postcolonial reconfiguration.

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

NOTES

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1. The dictatorship was overthrown in 1974; the "revolution" encompasses the subsequent period of struggle between "democrats" and "socialists," April 1974 to November 1975.
2. In his discussion of liminality, Turner says, "I prefer the Latin term 'communitas' to 'community,' to distinguish this modality of social relationship from an 'area of common living.' The distinction between structure and communitas is not simply the familiar one between 'secular' and 'sacred,' or that, for example, between politics and religion" (1969: 96). This *communitas*, he says, "... emerges recognizably in the liminal period, ... society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals ..." (1969: 96).
3. Fado is a traditional popular urban singing style that was highly supported and promoted by Salazar's dictatorial regime (1926–1974). It has been interpreted by the left-wing intelligentsia as a cultural product that reproduces Portuguese cultural notions of nostalgia, acceptance of fate, and the valuing of suffering. Marginalized after the 1974–1975 revolution, Fado made its way back to the center stage of representations of the national character and cultural authenticity in the 1990s.
4. It was also proposed that United States Avenue be renamed Timor Loro Sae Avenue.
5. This was also the case with Angola and Mozambique, which were "sublet" to Britain and, later, to South Africa.
6. The ideas of Gilberto Freyre, the author of the classic analysis of Brazilian slavery, *The Masters and the Slaves* (1947), were appropriated by the official propaganda of the dictatorial and colonial Portuguese regime throughout the 1950s and 1960s.
7. But could easily have been Tetum, the language of Catholic liturgy in East Timor.
8. In the sense that it is posterior to colonialism and to the failure of national liberation movements (such as the Indonesian) based on an anti-colonial logic to end foreign domination and win meaningful sovereignty.
9. *Assimilados* (literally "assimilated") were colonial natives who spoke Portuguese, practiced Catholicism, and could work in the administration. They were seen by the colonial regime as the ultimate product of a process of "civilization."

10. See Geertz (1980), on Indonesian political mythology.
11. A similar process occurred in nineteenth century Ireland. This may help explain the force of the pro-Timorese movement in Ireland, the largest second to Portugal's. The identification between national identity and Catholicism is obvious, as well as the transnational connections the latter can trigger.
12. See Anderson (1983).

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