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Myth, resistance, and identity in Timor-Leste's Nino Conis Santana National Park

Nick McClean

Since the end of the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste in 1999, a significant revival of local cultures and identities in public life has been occurring. In this article I discuss aspects of identity and culture among Fataluku-speaking people in relation to the recent establishment of the Nino Conis Santana National Park over much of their homeland. Today Fataluku cultural and historical stories provide a basis for their status as an autonomous and sovereign cultural group, as well as a legacy of intercultural negotiation and alliance that arguably reflects regional patterns of migration and social change over thousands of years. With the park's 15,000 residents continuing to rely on its forests and reefs for subsistence, recent restrictions on hunting have highlighted the need for increased local community support if the park is to achieve its conservation aims. I argue that long-standing traditions surrounding the negotiation of social and political change within Fataluku society provide a potential basis for cooperation with the new nation-state and for developing community-oriented park management policies.

Since the end of the brutal 24-year Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste in 1999, there has been a significant revival of local cultures and identities in public life. While an East Timorese national identity that arose under occupation has found its most public expression through the constitution and political parties of the new nation-state,¹ for many, particularly rural East Timorese, the freedom to practice ceremonies, reclaim customary lands and re-establish local institutions and relations curtailed under Indonesian rule has proven equally significant.² In this

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1 See Michael Leach, 'Valorising the resistance: National identity and collective memory in East Timor's constitution', *Social Alternatives* 21, 3 (2002): 43–47.

2 See Deborah Cummins and Michael Leach, 'Democracy old and new: The interaction of modern and traditional authority in East Timorese local government', in 'Timor-Leste: Challenges of postcolonial state construction and nation building', special issue, *Asian Politics and Policy* 4, 1 (2012): 89–104; Andrew McWilliam, 'Exchange and resilience in Timor-Leste', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17, 4 (2011): 745–63; Andrew McWilliam and Elizabeth Traube, ed., *Land and life in*

article I discuss aspects of identity and culture among Fataluku people, a linguistic and cultural group some 35,000 strong, in relation to a recent development in the shifting landscape of culture and politics in the Fataluku homeland of Lautem district — the establishment of the Nino Conis Santana National Park in 2008. My intention is grounded in the problem of how to translate into a functional reality what is at the moment a park in name, but little else, in an area that remains intimately bound up with the lives of some 15,000 Fataluku people. By sketching some of the ways in which local people are approaching the national park as a new reality in their lives, I aim to show how local reactions to this government-initiated protected area are grounded in practices seen to be inherently connected to being Fataluku, while simultaneously mirroring broader cultural patterns in Timor and the Eastern Indonesian archipelago.

In exploring how Fataluku people engage with this new setting in ways that reflect what could be called culturally specific attitudes and values, particularly those relating to social and political change, I argue that Fataluku cultural and historical stories provide both a sense of the strength of Fataluku tradition as a basis for their status as an autonomous and sovereign group, while simultaneously providing a legacy of intercultural negotiation and alliance that helps today to justify and maintain a degree of integration and cooperation with the new nation–state. I draw on my own enquiries in Lautem,³ a growing body of ethnography that has emerged since Timor-Leste’s independence that explores this re-emergence of local customs and traditions in public life, as well as an established body of anthropology relating to Eastern Indonesia and the wider Austronesian world. Through this I extend the broad territory of numerous scholars, most notably in the Timorese context Andrew McWilliam, Elizabeth Traube, Lisa Palmer and Miguel de Carvalho, who explore the tendency for marginal communities to assert their cultural autonomy while simultaneously claiming rights and benefits from the state.⁴

With independence still a recent event and allegiance to a sense of common purpose and identity still a powerful notion, one particularly interesting aspect of the East Timorese case is that stories of the past that have long mediated intercultural relations are today being deployed in debates over the role and legitimacy of the fledgling East Timorese state. Questions surrounding Timor-Leste’s diverse cultural groups’ relations with and within the new nation–state may well be usefully understood then within these more lengthy histories of cultural interaction, exchange and adjustment. That traditions and histories deployed by actors in the ebb and flow of their

Timor-Leste (Canberra: ANU ePress, 2011); Lisa Palmer and Miguel de Carvalho, ‘Nation building and resource management: The politics of nature in Timor-Leste’, *Geoforum* 39, 2 (2008): 1321–32; Elizabeth Traube, ‘Unpaid wages: Local narratives and the imagination of the nation’, *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 8, 1 (2007): 9–25; Sandra Pannell, ‘Welcome to the Hotel Tutuala: Fataluku stories of going places in an immobile world’, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 7, 3 (2006): 203–19; Dionisio Babo-Soares, ‘Nahe Biti: The philosophy and process of grassroots reconciliation (and justice) in East Timor’, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 5, 1 (2004): 15–33.

³ These enquiries span four months in Timor-Leste during two separate trips in 2011 and 2012. Material directly quoted here can be found in Nick McClean, *To the head of the crocodile* (Feature-length radio documentary, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Ultimo, 2011) unless otherwise attributed. All interview excerpts from this source were translated from Fataluku into English.

⁴ *Land and life in Timor-Leste*, ed. McWilliam and Traube; Palmer and de Carvalho, ‘Nation building and resource management’; Traube, ‘Unpaid wages’.

contemporary settings necessarily bring about their re-evaluation and reinterpretation, and that ‘the transformation of a culture is an aspect of its reproduction’,⁵ brings a further element to this discussion. If the accounts provided here can indeed be viewed as a reinterpretation of Fataluku culture in this new social and political context, I suggest then that it supports a carefully maintained stance, allowing for the possibility of cooperation while also asserting resistance to blanket assimilation into a post-independence mainstream.

I will begin with the park itself and some developments in its still youthful history, before exploring aspects of Fataluku culture in a regional context, particularly in relation to some of the park’s more prominent cultural heritage sites. I then consider the history of resistance in Lautem and finally discussions surrounding the livelihoods of those within the park who depend on it for subsistence.

Conservation and modernisation

The forests and reefs of Lautem have long been recognised for their conservation value and were informally reserved by the Portuguese, Indonesian, and United Nations administrations.⁶ In 2008 the Timor-Leste government formalised this status, declaring the new nation’s first national park (see Fig. 1). Named after the famous resistance leader Nino Conis Santana,⁷ it speaks to broader themes of national identity and unity that remain intimately bound up with the anti-Indonesian resistance struggle,⁸ while offering a nod of respect to the long history of clandestine resistance in Lautem district itself. In a remote and underdeveloped district the park is something of a symbol of national development, and also of the state’s reach into the furthest corners of its territory. However, Nino Conis is not yet a fully functioning national park, with very little development of management systems or supporting infrastructure undertaken so far.⁹

The very existence of a national park in a place as physically and culturally distant from the societies in which the concept was born, conversely, speaks to the state of flux in which East Timorese society exists. With an influx of international aid and nongovernment organisations (NGOs) accompanying United Nations peacekeeping forces in 1999, the chronic poverty and destruction left by departing Indonesian forces and the periodic violence and upheavals of the last decade-and-a-half have nonetheless been accompanied by a notable flowering of idealism and hope. In spite of all the problems, these foreign aid workers, the various civil society groups that mushroomed up around them, and since 2003, the Timor-Leste government

5 Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of history* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 168.

6 Andrew McWilliam, ‘Customary claims and the public interest: On Fataluku resource entitlements in Lautem’, in *East Timor: Beyond independence*, ed. Damien Kingsbury and Michael Leach (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2007), pp. 165–78.

7 Santana was born near the hamlet of Tutuala inside the park boundary and was commander-in-chief of the Timorese resistance forces during the mid-1990s.

8 Leach, ‘Valorising the resistance’.

9 See Sandra Pannell, ‘Struggling geographies: Rethinking livelihood and locality in Timor-Leste’, in *Land and life in Timor-Leste*, pp. 217–40; Sue O’Connor, Sandra Pannell, and Sally Brockwell, ‘Whose culture and heritage for whom? The limits of national public good protected area models in Timor Leste’, in *Rethinking cultural resource management in Southeast Asia*, ed. John N. Miksic, Geok Yian Goh, and Sue O’Connor (London: Anthem, 2011), pp. 39–65.

itself, have all operated within an atmosphere of ‘widespread expectation that the achievement of independence would usher in a general utopian transformation’.¹⁰ Such a transformation has so far been a process of trial and error, undertaken by this aspiring modern, rational state and its leaders in dialogue with the East Timorese people on the one hand, and the international establishment in its many guises on the other. Elite visions of post-independence life have so far self-consciously reflected a modernist, internationalist stance, yet popular visions have more often been couched in religious and mystical rhetoric.¹¹ While Timor-Leste’s educated elite may well occupy the major positions of power and privilege in the new nation–state, as well as have the ear of international allies, popular articulations promoting Timorese ‘tradition’ and ‘culture’ nonetheless have real implications for the configuration of Timor-Leste’s post-independence political landscape. Contributing to the competing visions of the ideal polity promoted in this new political realm, they build on ‘a common reservoir within East Timorese popular political thinking’.¹²

With Lautem one of the most remote parts of Timor-Leste, and development still a slow process, the park is perhaps the most significant post-independence state initiative in the district so far. It offers promises of financial reward through tourism and employment, and the opportunity for recognition and protection of one of Timor’s richest areas for natural and cultural heritage. Such potential benefits seem appealing to state actors and local communities alike, yet with the forests and reefs a continuing source of subsistence and cultural identity for almost half of the resident Fataluku population, making conservation work in this setting poses compelling challenges for the semi-functional and underfunded East Timorese state. As a symbol of change then, the issue of the park represents an intriguing process of negotiating such well-worn dichotomies as state/local, traditional/modern, and nature/culture. In eliciting articulations of local culture in the face of national development, the new park has become entangled in debates over ‘competing visions of who the East Timorese people are and who they wish to be’.¹³

The primary purpose of the park is to protect East Timor’s most extensive block of tropical monsoon rainforest, growing on the slopes of the Paichao Range, which runs more than 30 km along the southern coastline, as well as the fringing coral reefs that form the southern extent of the Coral Triangle, a new regional framework for marine conservation that contains the world’s most diverse coral reef ecosystems.¹⁴ Occupying 65,000 ha of land and 35,000 ha of seascape, Lautem district is one of the few areas in Timor-Leste containing extensive and relatively undisturbed natural ecosystems, yet it is by no means pristine. The 15,000 people who live within the park’s borders have practised swidden agriculture as well as subsistence hunting and fishing for thousands of years, and the highly mosaiced pattern of secondary forest cover and diverse coral reef ecosystem are

10 Traube, ‘Unpaid wages’, p. 18.

11 Douglas Kammen, ‘Fragments of utopia: Popular yearnings in East Timor’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40, 2 (2009): 385–408.

12 Ibid.: 405.

13 Ibid.: 387.

14 See The Nature Conservancy, ‘Delineating the Coral Triangle, its ecoregions and functional seascapes’, report on an expert workshop held at the Southeast Asia Center for Marine Protected Areas, Bali, 30 April to 2 May 2003, <http://community.middlebury.edu/~scs/docs/Nature%20Conservancy,%20Coral%20Triangle.pdf> (last accessed 6 Dec. 2013).

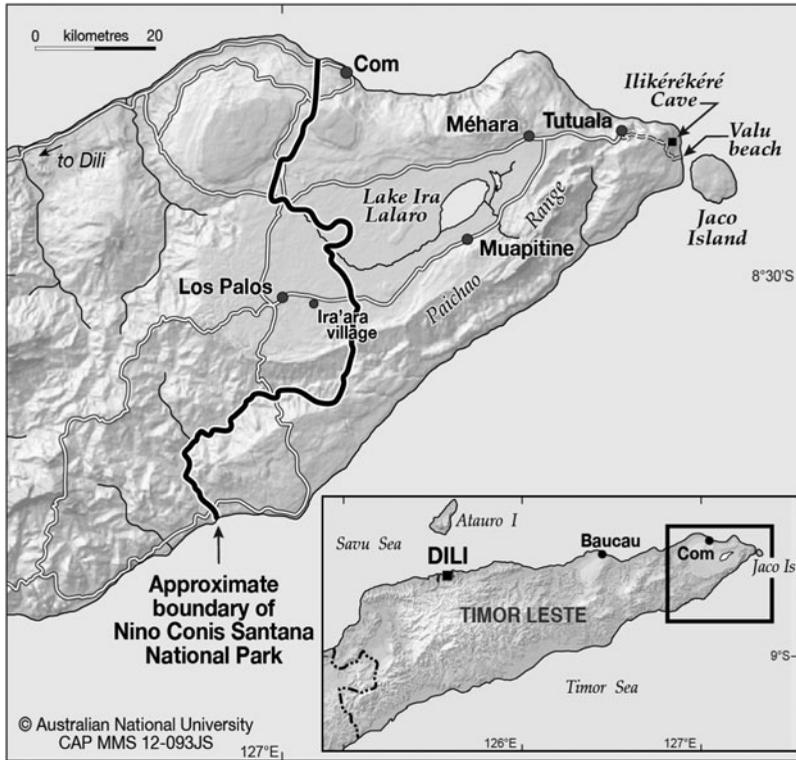


Figure 1. Lautem District, Timor-Leste
 Source: AUP Cartography

the result of maintenance through careful small-scale management practices rather than through the absence of human activity.¹⁵ Interestingly, O'Connor et al. have noted that all animal species found in the park, with the exception of birds, reptiles, and some native rats, originated outside of Timor, arriving as a result of human migration to the island.¹⁶ Their analysis underscores that the so-called 'natural' values of the park are the product of an intimate, long-standing, and continuing relationship between people and the environment.

The formal gazettement of the park was initially driven by international conservation NGOs lobbying the new Timor-Leste government. BirdLife International has had a sustained interest in the area,¹⁷ while the Coral Triangle Support Partnership (CTSP), a network of regional and international conservation NGOs, has been providing funding and resources since 2007 to assist the national government to develop the park.¹⁸ The early focus on nature conservation has led some commentators to

15 See Pannell, 'Struggling geographies', for a detailed exploration of Fataluku subsistence strategies.

16 O'Connor et al., 'Whose culture and heritage for whom?'

17 See C. Trainor, F. Santana, F. Xavier and A. da Silva, 'Status of globally threatened birds and internationally significant sites in Timor-Leste (East Timor) based on rapid participatory biodiversity assessments' (Report to Birdlife International, Asia Programme, 2003).

18 Recent community consultations undertaken by the CTSP, for example, were jointly funded by the

question the ethics of conservationists who have until recently largely neglected local relationships to land and the involvement of local people in park management. O'Connor et al., for example, note that the director of BirdLife International stated in 2003 that despite the 'immense historic and cultural significance' of the park, the primary benefit to the local people would be 'giving [them] a sense of identity'. To this, her team of anthropologists and archaeologists added the observation that this view assumes that 'they did not already have one'.¹⁹ While these comments highlight some nature conservationists' social disengagement in early debates, the park has nonetheless been designated a Category V Protected Area according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This category explicitly recognises interrelationships between human society and nature that have resulted in distinct ecosystems, cultural values, and landscapes. As a result, key management objectives for Category V parks include maintenance of the 'harmonious interaction of nature and culture ... lifestyles and economic activities which are in harmony with nature', and 'the preservation of the social and cultural fabric of the communities concerned'.²⁰

Within this context, a number of relevant developments have taken place. The initial vesting of ownership of natural resources with the state that occurred in 2002²¹ has not been disrupted by the new national park. With the majority of customary and many historic land claims yet to be settled, community involvement in the park's management thus remains a matter of policy rather than a legal obligation for the state. On the other hand, in the absence of legislation to frame any such settlement, customary relations to land remain the primary mechanism for determining management regimes in many of Lautem's forested and agricultural landscapes.²² While restrictions on hunting inside the park has been introduced as a policy mechanism for achieving conservation goals, ongoing collaborative work mapping clan boundaries and documenting resource use is an initial step in developing policy strategies that might make such restrictions effective. The recent employment of two Fataluku rangers and the establishment of a small community-run tourism venture at Valu Beach also aim to provide alternative livelihoods for residents of several hamlets in the park's easternmost section.²³

United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as well as the US-based environmental NGOs, The Nature Conservancy and Conservation International. See CTSP, 'Com: Results captured during community consultations 2010' (n.p., 2011); and Neil Andrews, Kam Suan Pheng and Michael Phillips, *Mapping fisheries dependence and aquaculture development in Timor-Leste: A scoping study* (Jakarta: CTSP, 2011).

19 O'Connor et al., 'Whose culture and heritage for whom?', p. 11.

20 International Union for the Conservation of Nature, *Guidelines for protected area management categories* (Gland: IUCN, 1994), p. 22. This is of course in addition to those which identify biodiversity conservation strategies and goals.

21 Palmer and de Carvalho, 'Nation building and resource management', p. 1328.

22 See McWilliam, 'Customary claims and the public interest'.

23 On the restrictions on hunting see Pannell, 'Struggling geographies', pp. 233–5. For recent community consultations surrounding resource use and customary ownership, see Raimundo Mau, 'Ecosystem and community based model for zonation in Nino Konis Santana National Park', M.Sc. thesis (Bogor Agricultural University, 2010); CTSP, 'Com: Results captured during community consultations 2010'; Andrews et al., *Mapping fisheries dependence*. Information on the employment of Fataluku rangers is

If the park were more functional, questions about the extent to which these developments are in concert with the requirements of the Category V listing, or to what extent the listing provides an adequate framework for the recognition of Fataluku culture and rights to land in park management programs would perhaps be more pressing. Nonetheless Pannell, raising such questions at the end of a detailed discussion of Fataluku subsistence practices, considers that with the restrictions on hunting declared, 'Fataluku people are in real danger of being excluded from the very landscape that they and their ancestors have shaped and transformed over the course of thousands of years',²⁴ a landscape they continue to rely on for day to day subsistence. Whether or not these restrictions and various other proposed policies will bring about an erosion of the Fataluku 'social and cultural fabric' is one question I will attempt to shed some light on. O'Connor's comments raise questions that remain important, particularly at this early stage of park development. That is, what might a Fataluku identity consist of in relation to the national park, and what are its implications for those taking up the challenge of a community-based and culturally-oriented park management approach? The remainder of this article sketches some key elements of that identity and its implications.

Fataluku cultural–historical stories in a regional context

Historically, Timor-Leste displays the hallmarks of its position at the crossroads of the Austronesian and Melanesian worlds (see Fig. 2). It has 33 officially recognised precolonial languages, alternately of Austronesian and Papuan origin, and the zones where these languages overlap, such as Lautem district, have provided some of the more interesting recent scholarship. McWilliam, for example, describes how the Fataluku, whose language is Papuan in origin, nonetheless display a compelling degree of commonality with neighbouring Austronesian language-speaking groups in their cultural life, suggesting that Fataluku are 'Austronesians in linguistic disguise', existing on one of the boundary zones of the Austronesian world.²⁵ While the spread of Austronesian languages across Southeast Asia and the Pacific occurred around five to seven thousand years ago, the exact chronology of cultural and linguistic change is often unclear. Were Papuan languages once dominant in Timor and receded in the face of early Austronesian settlers and later Malay traders? Or is the lack of intelligibility between some Papuan languages on Timor the result of numerous different episodes of exchange and interaction overlaid on this border zone? While theories have been offered on a broader scale²⁶ these are questions for which there are no definitive answers in the Timorese context. That being said, the patchwork of language and, to a lesser degree, archaeological data, suggests an extremely long history

based on a personal communication (Sue O'Connor, Aug. 2011), while I have personally visited the tourism cooperative and interviewed a number of its members.

24 Pannell, 'Struggling geographies', p. 233.

25 Andrew McWilliam, 'Austronesians in linguistic disguise: Fataluku cultural fusion in East Timor', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 38, 2 (2007): 355–75.

26 Bellwood, for example, citing Wurm, notes three separate phases of expansion of Papuan languages westwards into the Eastern Indonesian archipelago approximately 15,000, 10,000, and 3,000 years ago. Timor in this context is considered significant as it may provide linguistic evidence for languages arriving from Papua both prior and subsequent to the establishment of Austronesian languages. Peter Bellwood, *Archaeology of the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago* (Canberra: rev. ed., ANU ePress, 2010), p. 126.

of inter-island migration passing through Timor from both directions.²⁷ Widespread trade and exchange networks continued identifiable regional processes placing diverse groups in contact with one another, sometimes intermittently, sometimes permanently.²⁸

The significance of McWilliam's piece is that it situates Fataluku language and culture within these broader trajectories. James Fox undertakes a similar program, providing a reflection on some key aspects of Timorese articulations of tradition, largely taken to be indicative of its place within broader Eastern Indonesian and Austronesian constellations.²⁹ I draw here on these authors' focus on certain common metaphors that provide continuity among groups in a region recognised as having a marked level of social and cultural diversity. Two broad patterns which I highlight here as having relevance to discussions surrounding the national park are the focus on origins, precedence, and journeying in establishing authority in the ritual domain, and the relations between secular and sacred authority in the context of shifting relations between groups.³⁰

Traditions that bind Timorese to the land, 'to specific places and specific origins', remain important in contemporary rural life — indeed, Fox considers them 'the very substance of life'.³¹ For many Timorese, these relations can be traced through a multiplicity of stories narrating the voyages and journeys of ancestors, often interconnected and overlapping across the landscape. This is no less so in Lautem where Fataluku recount the origins of different clans, known as *ratu*, through journeys their ancestors made across the seas and across the landscape. Many of those who claim their origins from ancestral journeys across the seas identify particular stones dotted around Lautem's coast as being the fossilised remains of boats their forebears travelled in.³² Some other groups recount ancestral journeys on the backs of whales and dolphins and various other sea creatures and similarly point to particular sites that represent the point of disembarkation on Timor.³³ At least one *ratu* traces its origins to a series

27 On archaeological evidence for migration see Sue O'Connor, 'New evidence from East Timor contributes to our understanding of earliest modern human colonisation east of the Sunda Shelf', *Antiquity* 81 (2007): 523–35.

28 See, for e.g., Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, vols. 1 and 2 (Chiang Mai: Silkwood Books, 1995).

29 James J. Fox, 'The articulation of tradition in Timor-Leste', in *Land and life in Timor-Leste*, ed. McWilliam and Traube, pp. 241–57; 'Contending for ritual control of land and polity: Comparisons from the Timor area of Eastern Indonesia', in *Sharing the earth, dividing the land: Land and territory in the Austronesian world*, ed. Thomas Reuter (Canberra: ANU ePress, 2006), pp. 237–51; and 'Models and metaphors: Comparative research in Eastern Indonesia', *The flow of life: Essays on Eastern Indonesia*, ed. James J. Fox (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 327–34.

30 McWilliam ('Austronesians in linguistic disguise') for example tracks nine of Fox's 'metaphorical continuities' in his analysis of Fataluku culture. Here I have selected those I consider most immediately relevant to a discussion of shifts in contemporary land relations among Fataluku, while acknowledging the potential for a more detailed approach to shed further light on current social transformations.

31 Fox, 'The articulation of tradition in Timor-Leste', p. 242.

32 O'Connor et al., 'Whose culture and heritage for whom?', p. 42; Sue O'Connor and Sandra Pannell, 'Cultural heritage in the Nino Conis Santana National Park Timor Leste: A preliminary survey' (n.p., report to the New South Wales Department of Environment and Conservation, Hurstville, 2006), pp. 35–6; Andrew McWilliam, 'Fataluku forest tenures and the Conis Santana National Park (East Timor)', in *Sharing the earth, dividing the land*, ed. Reuter, pp. 257–8.

33 See Andrew McWilliam, 'Harbouring traditions in East Timor: Marginality in a lowland entrepôt', *Modern Asian Studies* 41, 6 (2007): 1113–43.

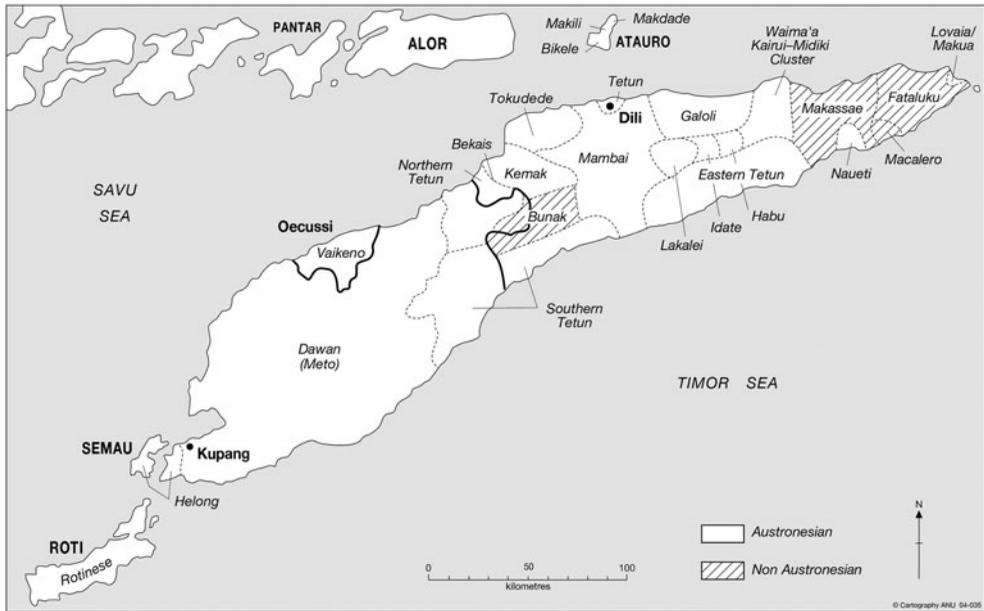


Figure 2. Languages of Timor
 Source: AUP Cartography

of caves in the vicinity of Tutuala (see below).³⁴ These sites represent the origins of each separate *ratu* clan and are a marker of identity and differentiation. As ancestors moved across the landscape, they traced out territories and made settlements that, along with origin sites, are imbued with an immanent sacrality that continues to inform contemporary understandings of place.³⁵ As McWilliam describes, ‘careful and privileged preservation of narratives of origin ... are combined with continuing practices of sacrificial communication with ancestor spirits that link individual members of the *ratu* with sites of ancestral origin’.³⁶

These relations revolve around the common Fataluku designation *tei*. While generally glossed as ‘sacred’ in the literature, *tei* is a much more active and present force in daily life than this term implies. As Pannell notes, *tei* is an abiding presence capable of offering assistance as well as malice to those who engage its power.³⁷ McWilliam describes *tei* beings as inhabiting certain places, rather than being an emergent property of the landscape itself,³⁸ and in so far as this implies that *tei* in its many variations is in large part a relational entity constantly in interaction with those who also inhabit the landscape, *tei* sites ‘are not regarded as “cultural archives”. Rather many are seen as “alive” or “active” participants in the landscape and peoples’ lives, past and present’.³⁹ Various places throughout the landscape are considered *tei* to different

34 See also O’Connor et al., ‘Whose culture and heritage for whom?’; Pannell, ‘Welcome to the Hotel Tutuala’.

35 Pannell, ‘Welcome to the Hotel Tutuala’.

36 McWilliam, ‘Fataluku forest tenures and the Conis Santana National Park’, p. 257.

37 Pannell, ‘Welcome to the Hotel Tutuala’, pp. 207–8.

38 McWilliam, ‘Fataluku forest tenures and the Conis Santana National Park’.

39 O’Connor et al., ‘Whose culture and heritage for whom?’, p. 4.

ratu, from the ‘stone boats’ and origin villages, to abandoned settlements recounted in the mythic journeys of founder settlers across the landscape, to forested groves and ceremonial sites associated with fertility and abundance.⁴⁰ It is the direct relationship of male elders to the ancestral *tei* of a *ratu* that legitimates their high status and ritual authority within Fataluku society, while also conferring a responsibility to mediate between the ancestral *tei* spirits and the community’s daily life. Through offering ceremonial sacrifices, these elders are said to safeguard their community by placating the wild and untamed nature of *tei* beings.

In this context certain *ratu* occupy a privileged place within the traditional Fataluku social hierarchy. ‘Over generations of interaction and engagement, of ritually feeding (*fané*) and placating the wild, unrestrained nature of *tei*, the senior land-owning group ... confirms their entitlement and authority over the land in question’.⁴¹ As clans who claim precedence in a particular locale, ‘founder’ *ratu* assert this ritual authority and thereby confirm their status as landholders, maintaining higher status over ‘immigrant’ *ratu*, as well as *paca* clans, who according to McWilliam occupy ‘younger sibling’ status, and *akanu* descendants of war slaves and those in bondage through debt.⁴² Important for the present discussion is the development of a nested set of land relations over time. While founder *ratu* clans claim landownership, immigrant clans gain rights to cultivate and live off the land, often cemented through a complex system of marriage relations between ‘wife-giving’ and ‘wife-taking’ clans. This relationship is expressed through the dictum *mua cao vele ocawa: horo cao vele hocava*, which translates as ‘land head skin lord: gravel head skin lord’.⁴³ This invokes a common Fataluku distinction between the body of the earth, associated with landowning *ratu* whose elderly male ritual leaders are known as ‘lords of the land’, and the skin of the land, available to be cultivated by immigrant clans with the permission of the relevant lord of the land, but without rights of inheritance.

One aspect of this pattern of ritual authority — landownership and its relations to the shifting patterns of migration both into and within Lautem — is its correlation to broader patterns of authority and governance in Timor and the Eastern Indonesian archipelago, particularly in terms of what Fox has discussed as the ways Timorese have in the past ‘installe[d] the outsider inside’.⁴⁴ Thomas Reuter has similarly commented on the fact that ‘founders and newcomers are afforded a place in Austronesian cosmological models, and their harmonious interaction is no less integral to society than male and female is to the perpetuation of life itself’.⁴⁵

Commentators as far back as the pioneering Dutch anthropologist F.A.E. van Wouden describe in Eastern Indonesia a widespread system of ‘complementary opposition’ between ritual authority and political authority. This pattern has been

40 See O’Connor et al., ‘Whose culture and heritage for whom?’, pp. 42, 47; O’Connor and Pannell, ‘Cultural heritage in the Nino Conis Santana National Park’, pp. 35–6; McWilliam, ‘Fataluku forest tenures and the Conis Santana National Park’.

41 McWilliam, ‘Exchange and resilience in Timor-Leste’, p. 70.

42 McWilliam, ‘Austronesians in linguistic disguise’, p. 362.

43 McWilliam, ‘Customary claims and the public interest’, p. 365.

44 Quoted in Traube, ‘Planting the flag’, p. 117.

45 *Sharing the earth*, ed. Reuter, p. 15.

best described in reference to contemporary settings by Traube in discussing the widespread ‘stranger king’ mythology, which she observes has ‘the historical expansion of the Austronesian speaking peoples as its original matrix’, elaborating that:

[t]he Austronesian mythology of the stranger king links political order to an encounter between an indigenous presence and a newcomer from somewhere beyond the borders of the realm, often from overseas. Typically, their encounter involves a transfer of power whereby the newcomer takes over functions formerly vested in the indigenous authorities and is installed as ruler of the realm. Origin narratives of this general type are commonly associated with diarchic systems of leadership, in which political power over humankind and ritual authority over the cosmos are vested in complementary offices.⁴⁶

According to Dionisio Babo-Soares, under this latter philosophy ‘for life to proceed there should be a balance between [these] two worlds’⁴⁷ and the flexibility and process orientation implied within it is for Traube the key to understanding the significance of these distinctions. ‘[R]ather than rigid typologies of power ... they are related ways of talking about a range of institutional arrangements, all deriving from a single, pervasive, multi-level code’.⁴⁸ The pervasive code is an “epistemology of origins” that makes the categorical distinction between “inside” and “outside” into a signifier of status distinctions’,⁴⁹ a code which unites the many variations on this theme encountered in the Austronesian literature.⁵⁰

Fataluku epistemologies of origins are closely guarded and spiritually empowered elements. Held by elderly male ritual authorities within a clan,⁵¹ it is these origin narratives that identify landowning founder *ratu*. However, in the course of histories that have encompassed inter-clan warfare and local migration within Lautem, as well as subsequent arrivals from outside Lautem, migrant *ratu* have been able to negotiate into a position where power over land use and distribution is devolved from the founder clan in a qualified sense. Significantly, this is cemented through a prescribed system of marriage relations, tying *ratu* together in lifelong bonds of mutual exchange and reciprocal obligation. As described in the following section, even in the counter-examples to the majority view of Fataluku origins, such as the *Tutuala Ratu*, which claims an autochthonous origin and ancestry in Timor that predates the arrival of

46 Traube, ‘Planting the flag’, p. 117.

47 Babo-Soares, ‘Nahe Biti’: 22.

48 Traube, ‘Unpaid wages’, p. 117.

49 Fox, as quoted in Traube, ‘Planting the flag’, p. 117.

50 As far as wider Timorese examples in the literature are concerned, Traube’s discussions of Mambai thought are joined by Fox’s explorations of this specific mythic pattern at Amunaban and Wehali in Indonesian West Timor. See Elizabeth Traube, ‘Mambai rituals of black and white’, in *The flow of life*, ed. Fox, pp. 290–316; Elizabeth Traube, *Cosmology and social life: Ritual exchange among the Mambai of East Timor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), ‘Unpaid wages’, and ‘Planting the flag’, in *Land and life in Timor-Leste*, pp. 117–40; Fox, ‘Contending for ritual control of land and polity’, pp. 240–44. A number of other authors have also considered the relevance of this general attitude for contemporary social issues in Timor-Leste, e.g., Pamela Dale and David Butterworth, *Articulations of local governance in Timor-Leste: Lessons for local development under decentralization* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2010); Babo-Soares, ‘Nahe Biti’. Sahlins’ exploration of the ‘stranger-king’ ideology is the classic work on this mythic pattern. Marshall Sahlins, ‘The stranger-king; or Dumézil among the Fijians’, in *Islands of history*, pp. 73–103.

51 McWilliam, ‘Exchange and resilience in Timor-Leste’, p. 67.

immigrant Fataluku-speaking peoples, the mythic pattern of offering land to immigrants while maintaining ritual authority and status remains. Being mindful of the considerable variations found regionally in this highly flexible institutional form, it appears to be one that does not prescribe particular outcomes. Instead it prescribes mechanisms of negotiation and alliance, framed within the generalised notion of the 'flow of life' and centred around principles of precedence and ritual authority.

Locating Fataluku culture and heritage in the present day

The case of the *Tutuala Ratu* may be something of an anomaly as far as wider ethnographies of Fataluku culture are concerned, yet it has so far occupied a prominent place in discussions and research surrounding the national park. One reason for this is its proximity to Tutuala village and Jaco Island, a popular and relatively accessible tourist area, well known for its extensive coral gardens and its high concentration of cultural heritage sites. Tradition states that the island of Timor is the body of a mythical crocodile, and in Fataluku tradition Jaco Island is considered the head of that crocodile and thus a particularly sacred place. Overlooking Jaco Island on the adjacent mainland is an extensive collection of rock art in the caves surrounding Tutuala, situated in the far eastern end of the park. The rock art is distributed through numerous limestone caves within 5 km of the village, with the ochre motifs and painted figures making up one of the richest collections of rock art in island Southeast Asia.⁵² Since independence, numerous archaeological expeditions have sought to establish settlement dates through radio carbon dating of cave deposits, revealing a history of human settlement that predates any other site in the archipelago east of the Sunda Shelf.⁵³ Displaying images of horses, boats, and numerous anthropomorphs, as well as sacred designs that are replicated in woven fabrics for traditional Fataluku marriage offerings, the cave paintings display aspects of the history and culture of Fataluku people that offer clues to the origins of human habitation in the area. As such they occupy a central place in Fataluku ontological imaginings, particularly for the traditional owners, senior members of the *Tutuala Ratu*.⁵⁴

My own experience of meeting members of the *Tutuala Ratu* occurred in the context of producing a radio documentary on Fataluku culture and history, with an explicit focus on the new national park.⁵⁵ Like many other visitors to Lautem, be they researchers or tourists, Tutuala with its caves and nearby reefs was mentioned

52 O'Connor et al., 'Whose culture and heritage for whom?', p. 5.

53 O'Connor, 'New evidence from East Timor'. The Sunda Shelf is the southeastern extension of the continental shelf of Southeast Asia, extending eastward to the Sulawesi Sea between Borneo and Sulawesi and the Lombok Strait between Java and Lombok. Its eastern edge charts the southern extent of Wallace's Line.

54 For recent reports on Fataluku culture and history as articulated by the traditional owners of these caves, see O'Connor et al., 'Whose culture and heritage for whom?'; O'Connor and Pannell, 'Cultural heritage in the Nino Conis Santana National Park Timor Leste'; Palmer and de Carvalho, 'Nation building and resource management', also provide a significant exploration of the annual harvest of *mechi* (sea worms) on the shores of Valu Beach, on the mainland looking out towards Jaco Island. They discuss contemporary aspects of Fataluku engagement with ideas of nature conservation, highlighting the role of the *Tutuala xefe de suco* ('head of village') as the local political functionary, working in tandem with the many ritual leaders who converge on Valu Beach to perform the harvest ceremonies. No other *ratu* has had such detailed attention from researchers in the post-independence period.

55 See McClean, *To the head of the crocodile*.

as a first port of call. We began with a visit to Ili Kerekere Cave, the largest of the painted limestone caves, and the origin site for *Tutuala Ratu*. We then sat down with the traditional custodian of this cave, Rafael Guimarez, and asked him to talk about the stories associated with it. I was told by my interpreter that initially it was not appropriate to ask questions, that we should simply 'let him talk', and once he had finished conveying the information of key importance, we could ask him about other aspects of the caves we were interested in. Much of what we heard was not considered his personal opinion or memories of something taught to him, but the voice of the ancestors speaking. In the classic terminology of shamanism, Rafael acts as the medium for ancestral spirits, and in the minds of the Fataluku people I discussed this with the authority of the interview only grew as a result of this realisation.

Rafael talked of a time when his 'grandfather lived in the cave', which he called 'the village of my ancestors'. His ancestors were three brothers living in the cave 'making *masi* to get food, to get water'. Roughly translated, *masi* means 'miracle', and the tone of this history evokes a mythic period 'when the earth began and was not yet strong enough to be called earth'. According to Rafael, his ancestors 'lit up' the caves with large beeswax candles, thus attracting the attention of seafarers and those on the distant, but perfectly visible, Indonesian islands to the north. 'The people who came with the boats' may have been mysterious in origin, but they were 'black people ... and their name was *Papua*'. Each boat that arrived was said to contain the founders of a particular *ratu*:

So when the *ratu* arrived, the first foot that entered this land, wherever it was, they put their *ete uru ha'a* there, their holy statue. Then when they found a place that the owners agreed to give to them, they put another *ete uru ha'a* there.

In this version of events, the owners of the land before immigrants arrived were Rafael's cave-dwelling ancestors. According to Pannell's account, the dividing and gifting of land occurred at a site not far from Tutuala, where the various *ratu* congregated:

Upon landing at various sites along the coast in the vicinity of *Ili Kerekere*, the boats of these new arrivals turned into stone. The occupants were then summoned by the ancestors of *Tutuhala Ratu* to the site known as *Patipatin*, and accorded a bounded area of land upon which to settle. For local people, *Patipatin*, with its distinctive fourteen-holed rock feature, provides tangible evidence of this division and the subsequent emplacement of these fourteen groups or *ratu* in the landscape. The rock-solid proof provided by *Patipatin* also accords with local ideas about the ancestral immobility of *ratu*-designated lands and boundaries.⁵⁶

To digress briefly, according to one Fataluku interlocutor I interviewed, the Fataluku language was brought by these immigrants, while the original cave-dwelling ancestors spoke Lovai'a, an Austronesian language today spoken by only a handful of old people in Tutuala and neighbouring Mehara. So while McWilliam notes that there is no objective evidence that verifies the *Tutuhala Ratu's* claims to autochthony, there nonetheless exists a view, extrapolated from wider anthropological and linguistic

56 Pannell, 'Welcome to the Hotel Tutuala', p. 206.

evidence and loosely corroborated here in the mythology surrounding the Tutuala caves, that the Papuan language of Fataluku has been overlaid on a previous history of Austronesian culture and language.⁵⁷

It is the claim of descent from these presumably Austronesian ancestors which underpins the *Tutuhala Ratu* clan's assertion that they occupy the apex of the Fataluku hierarchy. That this relationship is ritually sanctioned and associated with the continuing power of their *tei* sites produces a similar effect — if ancestral power is still present in these places at all times, if it is immutable, then one consequence is that traditional forms of ownership, tied as they are to such power, can be considered equally immutable. This sense of hierarchy is also expressed in the designation of a particular *tei* site known as Titiru as the 'President *tei*'.⁵⁸ It is not only the most powerful *tei* site in the *Tutuhala* domain, but in the eyes of some, the most powerful in Timor. According to this version of events, the genesis of Fataluku society as we now know it hinges around the relations and negotiations between these immigrant Fataluku speakers and the autochthonous cave-dwelling ancestors surrounding the land, with Lautem divided up between different immigrant *ratu*. Meanwhile *Tutuhala* has maintained ritual ownership and authority over the caves and surrounding territory, seen by local people to be the most potent *tei* sites in the Fataluku cultural landscape.

While the cultural history of *Tutuhala* has received much recent attention due in large part to the concentration of heritage sites within its domain, its particular version of Fataluku mythology and history is not a universally accepted one.⁵⁹ Nonetheless this myth shares common elements with published accounts of other *ratu* origin myths from in and around the park boundaries⁶⁰ in that it exhibits a focus on origins and precedence in the context of migration and settlement on the one hand, and the maintenance of ritual authority in the face of historic political and social change on the other. These are the key elements that have so far emerged in what might be called 'traditionalist' accounts of the spatial and hierarchical organisation of contemporary Fataluku society. Indeed, given the contestation over the meanings and values ascribed to the landscape by various Fataluku groups, the story explored here can be considered an example of how many Fataluku groups, particularly those associated with founder *ratu* clans, are positioning themselves within present-day discussions surrounding heritage, falling back on their own particular variants of the 'stranger king' myth to assert precedence and ritual authority as key contemporary valencies.

57 See McWilliam, 'Harbouring traditions in East Timor': 371–5.

58 Pannell, 'Welcome to the Hotel Tutuala', p. 211.

59 Informants I worked with from other *ratu* expressed support for Rafael's story, but I was also told that it was not accepted by all Fataluku. Likewise Mau ('Ecosystem and community based model for zonation', p. 29) notes dissent to *Tutuhala Ratu*'s claim of sole ownership over Jaco Island from some of his informants, while McWilliam's sustained explorations of the variety of origin myths among Fataluku demonstrate clearly that the stories of any one *ratu* cannot be taken to hold for all. See McWilliam, 'Exchange and resilience in Timor-Leste'; 'Customary claims and the public interest'; 'Austronesians in linguistic disguise'; 'Fataluku forest tenures and the Conis Santana National Park'; and 'Harbouring traditions in East Timor'.

60 See, for e.g., McWilliam, 'Fataluku forest tenures' and 'Harbouring traditions in East Timor'.

Heritage and resistance

While the material and symbolic importance of armed resistance to Indonesian rule is widely acknowledged, the Indonesian period in general appears to have had relatively limited attention as far as the literature on heritage protection is concerned. In a notable study, Michael Leach⁶¹ observes that attempts at the 'universalisation' of values by particular political groups in post-independence Timor-Leste, an aspect of nation-building that frequently draws on the unifying narrative of local resistance and shared suffering, has been rendered problematic by the complicated and varied experiences of Timor-Leste's people. Such tensions mirror those which emerge in general political discourses, and a relevant example is Traube's discussions of a recent manifestation of a Mambai variant of the stranger king mythology. Here the experience of suffering under Indonesian occupation, symbolised by a maligned and mistreated stranger king once denied his right to rule by local elders, is deployed to invoke a moral economy where national leaders are seen to have an obligation to ensure the welfare of the *povu*, the poor rural folk who shed their blood to give birth to the nation.⁶² In this section I will discuss some articulations of resistance and culture that have emerged in Lautem that point to some similar conclusions where negotiating post-independence heritage protection politics is concerned.

The steady concentration of the rural population into small roadside settlements that occurred under successive Portuguese and Indonesian regimes was of course accompanied by an opposing flow of people, much smaller yet of huge symbolic significance, into the forests in order to fight a clandestine guerrilla war. The forests of Lautem played a particularly important role in this resistance, being one of the few heavily forested areas in Timor and therefore a stronghold for armed fighters throughout the 24-year occupation. At different times they harboured the park's namesake, as well as Timor-Leste's inaugural president, Xanana Gusmao, who famously led resistance forces during the 1980s.

For many Fataluku, this resistance had its basis in a sense of the authority and legitimacy of the East Timorese people in their homeland, underpinned by their relationship to ancestral origins and powers. One way this has been expressed is through traditional divination methods used to predict the outcomes of battles:

About the heart of the rooster,⁶³ when they [the guerillas] were in the forest, and they were planning a battle, they always communicated with their fathers For example if they want to blockade a road, and the message was brought by the clandestines to the town, two different old men from different *ratu* would sit together to read the signs in a rooster's heart. So they will tell when is the good time, where is the good place to do the blockade, and about the safe way to do it Once, there was a big guerilla fight, commanded by Luis Monteiro. An old man called Carlos read in the heart of a rooster that it was not a good time to fight. But Luis Monteiro believed that he was

61 Michael Leach, 'Difficult memories: The independence struggle as cultural heritage in East Timor', in *Places of pain and shame: Dealing with 'difficult heritage'*, ed. William Logan and Keir Reeves (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 144–61.

62 See Traube, 'Unpaid wages', and 'Planting the flag'.

63 Such practices are frequently undertaken with the liver across the Indonesian archipelago, however as this organ is considered to be the emotional and spiritual centre of a being, it is commonly translated as 'heart'.

strong and still fought on. But he died, because the rooster's heart came from our ancestors, to keep believing in that and stay strong with that as a part of our *tei*.

Pannell's discussion of the President *tei* touches on similar issues surrounding resistance and culture, describing how the *Tutuhala Ratu* 'lord of the land', at the request of Xanana Gusmao, sacrificed a pig to invoke the President *tei* to unleash its power and drive the Indonesians out of Timor-Leste.⁶⁴ This story was corroborated by my informants, one of whom articulated this history in terms of a common perception among Fataluku regarding the spatial distribution of spiritual power and authority in Timor:

So about the war. The enemy was only afraid of Baucau, Viqueque, and especially Los Palos,⁶⁵ because people stayed strong with the *tei*. They used their *tei* against the enemy. Every time they fought, they would bring their *tei* with them. Because there was so much blood falling like rain, flowing like a river, that's why they were using the *tei* to protect the land. So for example, about Xanana Gusmao, if there was no *tei* from Lovai'a people, Xanana would not have survived. He became a part of Lovai'a, he was protected by the Lovai'a *tei*, that's why he's still alive today. Because the war was fire from the head, if it was fire from the feet, then it would not work, we wouldn't have won the war. So we took the Indonesians, they couldn't fight the head. What could they do?

For another elderly male Fataluku informant, it was the connection to ancestral *tei* that made it 'impossible for anyone to fight against us culturally', arguing that the history of the resistance and its victory must be understood in this light: 'It's not about the guns that we had, and it's not about the negotiations, it's about our ancestor.'

That independence was hard won is beyond doubt, built on sacrifices claimed and defended with pride. In this regard Lautem is no different to the rest of Timor-Leste, where the overwhelming experience of the Indonesian occupation was of surviving a violent and abusive rule. Yet many of my informants were also content to temper their recollections of hardship with observations about the good relations they had with individual members of the Indonesian armed forces, of their desire to maintain a good knowledge of Bahasa Indonesia even after independence and with their positive experiences of travelling to Indonesia for study and work. One informant interestingly characterised colonialism generally as a process where people come from overseas and are welcomed into the homes of local people in the traditional spirit of generosity and hospitality toward strangers. Bearing gifts of clothes, they then proceed to tell the local people how they must wear the clothes and why they must leave their old ways behind. It was the last part of this description which was designed to make the point that colonial powers had overstepped the mark in how they interacted with the local people, not in the initial fact of their arrival. My own enquiries thus suggest a similar theme to Traube's, that Indonesian rule was judged not only in terms of whether they had a right to rule in the first place, but also on the fact that in abusing their power, the Indonesians subsequently forfeited any claim they may have had to political legitimacy. While Timor-Leste's long history

64 Pannell, 'Welcome to the Hotel Tutuala', p. 211.

65 Los Palos is the principal town of Lautem, while Baucau and Viqueque districts border Lautem to the west.

of incorporating outsiders into established social hierarchies may have arguably left open the possibility of a new foreign authority being accepted in time, ‘the scale and force of the invasion undercut any effort to frame it as the arrival of peace-bringing stranger kings’,⁶⁶ as did subsequent autocratic rule.

This is illuminating in relation to Rafael Guimarez’s description of Tutuala under occupation: ‘The history here has a lot of *tei*. During the occupation, everybody fed their *tei* here so that’s why bad things didn’t happen. That’s why especially in Tutuala, the Javanese didn’t kill anyone. Even the Javanese weren’t get killed here’. The focus on the behaviour of the Indonesian forces, rather than the fact of their presence, implies a point made quite clearly in Rafael’s statement — even the Javanese were subject to the power of *tei*, and could therefore be aided or destroyed by it. Such points are similarly made through relating the power of the traditional divination methods. The fate of the clandestine commander Luis Montero illustrates well that such powers cut across ethnic and nationalist lines, as the power of *tei* is considered ‘the ultimate moral authority’.⁶⁷ Such acts as the destruction of a sacred carved wooden post in Ili Kerekere Cave during the 1980s,⁶⁸ the scratching of its paintings, the taking of tourists to the cave without the company of traditional custodians, and the wholesale removal of people from ancestral lands (all accusations levelled at the Indonesian forces) are considered evidence of a lack of respect for traditional ritual authority and the power of *tei* spirits. It is in this light that Fataluku claims that the war was won as a result of appeals by senior custodians to the President *tei* can be understood. It was by no means a *fait accompli* that Indonesian rule was unjust, rather it was shown to be so by their actions; in their displayed lack of respect for Timorese traditions, the Indonesian forces invited their own fate — in this case to be ‘eaten’ by the hungry, dangerous, and unpredictable President *tei*.⁶⁹

In relating how their forebears honoured the request of Xanana Gusmao, a native of Manatutu district to the west of Lautem, and a leader of a resistance movement who urged East Timorese to rise above their tribal-oriented identities and fight for a unifying, multi-ethnic nation, Fataluku are again reasserting the primacy of their ritual authority in Lautem and the power of *tei* in negotiations surrounding historic social and political change. While independence may bring new possibilities, alliances, and relations between Timor’s cultural groups, respect for *tei* is still presented as a fundamental value, and as we will see in the following section national leaders, as much if not more than foreign visitors and NGO workers, are expected to understand and acknowledge this.

Conservation and livelihoods

Pannell’s discussion of Fataluku livelihoods raises some interesting questions about the role of culture in the management of the new national park, arguing convincingly that Fataluku subsistence strategies display a diversity that belies their previous categorisation solely as shifting agriculturalists. The complex interrelations between agricultural and hunting and gathering practices are, among other things,

66 Traube, ‘Planting the flag’, p. 127.

67 O’Connor and Pannell, ‘Cultural heritage in the Nino Conis Santana National Park Timor Leste’, p. 5.

68 Ibid.

69 Pannell, ‘Welcome to the Hotel Tutuala’, p. 211.

mediated through the sacrificial feeding of *tei* beings at sites deep within the forests.⁷⁰ In Fataluku eyes the good fortune of harvests are reliant on these ceremonies. The forest has thus long been a source of identity and culture for Fataluku, a reliable source of subsistence, and a safety net during the upheavals and destruction of recent times. On the recent restrictions on hunting forest animals, Pannell comments:

In banning this dimension of local Fataluku productive practices, the actions of the National Government appear to be focused upon producing the same social effects as previous colonial regimes — notably, the creation of dedicated agrarian communities. Government prohibition of hunting and gathering in the new national park not only has the potential to adversely affect the kind of subsistence flexibility that has enabled local people to deal with chronic environmental uncertainty and acute political instability, but it also seems to be blind to the important micro-strategic role this back-and-forth social movement between garden and forest played in securing the new nation-state of Timor-Leste.⁷¹

This last observation refers in part to Fataluku views about the role of their *tei* sites deep in the forest during the resistance. The wider implication, however, is that such restrictions come as an imposition, and if indeed the Timor-Leste government intends to coerce Fataluku villagers into preferred management regimes, Pannell's position appears well-founded. But is this the case? With no reported examples of enforcement of restrictions yet published, it would appear at face value that it is not, at least at this stage of proceedings. My own enquiries also suggest that while hunting and fishing in particular remain valuable and much cherished aspects of Fataluku daily life, the proposals of the government to change such practices have by no means been met with outright opposition. Take for example the following statement, from a man in his 30s who regularly fishes the reefs in and around Valu Beach and Jaco Island:

You know I think it's a positive idea from the government, to run this place to be a national park. But if they can still let us continue fishing it would be a good thing. Also until today we've only heard that the government wants this place to be a national park. But so far they have never actually come here to discuss with the people the details of the national park, and how it will be run. I am aware that by law this land does not belong to me. But there is something here that the government cannot occupy in the name of a national park. Because here, we have our *tei*. If the government's idea of a national park doesn't destroy our *tei*, it's fine.

While on a hunting trip in the forests adjacent to the national park boundaries, a former guerrilla fighter discussed similar issues:

Today I am in the forest doing hunting, and we have caught two cus-cous.⁷² This is the life like my mother and father lived in the forest ... from our ancestors this has been taught — that you take only one or two animals to stay alive. To talk about the

70 Pannell, 'Struggling geographies'.

71 Ibid., p. 234.

72 The cus-cous (*Phalanger orientalis*) is a species of possum considered to have originated in Papua, having spread to the Moluccas, the Bismarck Archipelago, the Solomon Islands and Timor. T. Leary et al., *Phalanger orientalis*, in IUCN, *IUCN Red list of threatened species* (Gland: IUCN, 2008).

government, well the law is law. It's not that we are against the law, it comes down from the state, so it's not a bad thing, I do agree as my contribution for this country during independence. But this national park will be hard for our lives. I hear that the government is about to set up forest police, like they have in Indonesia. Until it becomes a reality, I will still try to find a way to catch one or two cus-cous to eat with my wine. When it becomes really serious and we have to stop, that means the government must already have enough capacity to give me another option for my life. If they don't, then I'm not going to stop, because this has been my life from the beginning. But it's not the only way. If the government has a project in the village with the people there, then we can work together.

There are a number of aspects of these statements worth considering here, the first of course being the explicit references to traditional culture. Casting subsistence strategies in terms of ancestral relations, the fisherman draws a categorical distinction between that which can be owned by the government in law and the ownership of *tei* sites, while the hunter reiterates the importance of tradition in regulating the numbers of animals that can be hunted in the forest. Both these statements provide a sense of the embedded nature of Fataluku traditions, woven as they are into the everyday activities of life, directly contrasted in each case with the sense of the appropriate limits and scope of government authority.

Alternately, both men discuss the idea of a national park in positive terms, which they consider to be an idea fundamentally coming from the government. They are both well aware of the effect of the rule of law in their district, and in doing so provide an implicit acknowledgement of the legitimacy of its presence. A former member of the guerrilla forces in Lautem, the hunter provides an illuminating comment when he states that respecting the law is his 'contribution for this country during independence'. Despite his own reservations about the plan, there is a sense in which outright resistance to it would be absurd, given the sacrifices he and his people have already made to reach this juncture. Instead he casts his reservations in specific, concrete issues that provide a means by which he can maintain qualified support for the government.

Any attempt to separate the spiritual realm from subsistence strategies in the Fataluku case is difficult at best, both are after all considered important and interconnected aspects of Fataluku customary practice. Yet the responses from these two men to the current dilemma are interesting. *Tei* sites are considered categorically as un-ownable by a government, while livelihood issues are considered to be an appropriate realm of intervention for a government, and therefore provide the point through which potential ground is mapped out for negotiating a direction forward. If, for the sake of argument, we view the national government as an 'outsider' who has quite recently arrived in Lautem, the responses presented here certainly appear to be in line with those of Lautem residents to previous arrivals from afar. Offering the possibility of negotiation surrounding political authority over land, the primacy of ancestral relations, and therefore the ritual authority of residents, is nonetheless restated, and done so in a way that presents such authority as non-negotiable.

Tradition and change

Timor-Leste's independence has brought new influences, ideas, and possibilities to even the remotest corners of the country, and local people are well aware of their

own agency in bringing this about. While state-based interventions may well be habitually viewed with skepticism, and not without good reason, change itself is by no means perceived negatively. At least in this case it appears to be more readily considered within established frameworks of meaning that highlight the nature of change, and the rights and responsibilities of those involved in its negotiation. The explicit preservationist orientation of the Category V listing therefore provides an interesting dilemma for conservationists. While social theory has for a number of decades viewed matters cultural through a transformative lens, the framing of conservation laws and policies, even those that seek to explicitly recognise local cultural relations to protected areas, appears to adopt an approach that leaves the door open to forms of essentialism. So while Pannell demonstrates that Fataluku subsistence strategies have often been viewed in a reductive fashion and bundled into the agrarian model that holds for much of Eastern Indonesia, the reverse notion that Fataluku relations to forests must necessarily be maintained as they are today in order to 'preserve the cultural and social fabric' of Lautem seems also to border on an essentialist view of Fataluku culture, and one that may well prove invalid in time. This debate revolves around the process by which restrictions on hunting, or any other park management policy, will be enacted. Certainly the complex and embedded nature of Fataluku spiritual practice means the negotiation of such restrictions may well lead to the cessation of some forest-based sacrificial rituals. On the other hand conservation initiatives elsewhere have demonstrated that limited hunting and harvest of natural resources by Indigenous landowners can at times be dovetailed successfully with wildlife conservation programs.⁷³

My central point though is that in contemporary articulations of Fataluku history and culture, as well as in debates surrounding livelihoods, culturally specific modes of negotiation and alliance have emerged that can be connected to wider cultural patterns in Timor and Eastern Indonesia. These patterns have developed within a deeper historical context of long-standing relationships of interaction, exchange, and adjustment between groups, arguably reflecting the multiple waves of migration back and forth through the archipelago. The myth of the stranger king alerts us to a pervasive reality in this region — social and political change appears not only to have been a continual theme in archipelagic life, but it has even been a problematic around which specific cultural tropes have developed. Such traditions can hardly be essentialised without arguably missing the point as to why they have proven valuable in the first place. In this way Fataluku traditions can themselves be viewed as transformative in their orientation, at least in so far as they account for and assimilate certain types of social and political change.

73 See R. Siddappa Setty, Kamal Bawa, Tamara Ticktin and C.M. Gowda, 'Evaluation of a participatory resource monitoring system for nontimber forest products: The case of *Amla* (*Phyllanthus* spp.) fruit harvest by Soligas in South India', *Ecology and Society* 13, 2 (2008): 19; Lisa Campbell, Bethany Haalboom and Jennie Trow, 'Sustainability of community-based conservation: Sea turtle egg harvesting in Ostional (Costa Rica) ten years later', *Environmental Conservation* 34, 2 (2007): 122–31; Sharachandra Lele, Veena Srinivasan, and Kamalajit Bawa, 'Returns to investment in conservation: Disaggregated benefit-cost analysis of the creation of a wildlife sanctuary', in *Tropical ecosystems: Structure, diversity and human welfare: Proceedings of the international conference on tropical ecosystems*, ed. K.N. Ganeshaiah, R. Uma Shaanker and K.S. Bawa (New Delhi: Oxford-IBH, 2001), pp. 31–3.

It is the flexibility and orientation of this institution that allows the Fataluku to appeal to tradition in order to maintain their status as the rightful authorities where matters spiritual are concerned, the basis of their claims to cultural autonomy and sovereignty, while at the same time mapping out a path for negotiation and collaboration with the new nation-state surrounding land and livelihoods. With Timor-Leste in an extended phase of democratisation, development, and social renewal, such attitudes and approaches represent a deployment of these inherited notions of tradition and culture in this new political setting, negotiating change through traditional institutions in a manner that could well be considered characteristic of their place in the archipelago. Practically speaking such traditions appear well suited to the position adopted by many Fataluku today, remaining open to the possibility of cooperation with state programs, while also asserting resistance to blanket assimilation into a post-independence mainstream.

Perhaps encouragingly for advocates of the new national park, the vesting of political authority in outsiders is by no means unprecedented or unacceptable in even the most traditional Fataluku accounts, and current discussions surrounding the park, both those presented here and in recent CTSP community consultations,⁷⁴ indicate a degree of qualified support for such a shift. That the East Timorese state currently does not have the resources to bring the issue of restrictions on hunting to a head, on the other hand, underlines that this issue goes beyond a matter of principle or theoretical approach. Fataluku villagers may not have a legal basis to compel their government's collaboration, but neither are they powerless in this equation. After all, the Indonesian government with all its resources provoked sustained resistance to its rule, resistance that it was unable to subdue for the entire period of occupation. If the current government insists on disrupting long-standing cultural and economic relations with the forests and reefs of Lautem, then it will need to take seriously the concerns of those who remain dependent on the national park for their subsistence. With chronic poverty common in Lautem and the social networks that supported the resistance and evasion of authority for so long still in place, it would appear that any attempt to do otherwise will almost certainly prove fatal to the state's plans for wildlife conservation in the district.

74 See CTSP, 'Com: Results captured during community consultations 2010'; Andrews et al., Mapping fisheries dependence.

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ERRATUM

Myth, resistance, and identity in Timor-Leste's Nino Conis Santana National Park– ERRATUM

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An Error has been found in the caption of Figure 1 and Figure 2 on p. 157 and p. 161 of the above article by Nick McClean (2014). The Source for both Figures should read “ANU Cartography” and not “AUP Cartography”.

Reference

Nick McClean (2014). Myth, resistance, and identity in Timor-Leste's Nino Conis Santana National Park. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 45, pp 153–173. doi:10.1017/S0022463414000046