Hearman, Vannessa. "Displacement, Urban Transformations and Resistance in Indonesian-Occupied Dili, East Timor." *Spatial Histories of Occupation: Colonialism, Conquest and Foreign Control in Asia*. Ed. David Baillargeon and Jeremy E. Taylor. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. 25–50. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350257023.ch-001>>.

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Displacement, Urban Transformations and Resistance in Indonesian-Occupied Dili, East Timor

Vannessa Hearman

Introduction

Dili has in many ways come to resemble a little Jakarta, with its mushrooming kiosks, shanty houses, dense car traffic spewing pollution and a wildcat building boom producing projects with no link to Timorese tradition.

Joliffe 2010: 14

Veteran Australian journalist, Jill Joliffe, is no stranger to Dili.¹ She was one of the few journalists who covered East Timor in the lead up to its declaration of independence on 28 November 1975, just prior to the Indonesian invasion. Banned from returning there by the Indonesian government, Joliffe spent the following decades reporting on East Timor from afar. Joliffe's eventual return to Dili, after the historic United Nations ballot in 1999 in which the East Timorese voted to reject Indonesian rule, prompted reflections on the city she had been evacuated from in 1975. She contrasts the charming backwater she had visited then, with its mixture of thatched roofed, Indigenous houses and whitewashed, Portuguese colonial buildings, to the city that now resembles, in her eyes, a pale reflection of the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. In her recollections of the then capital of Portuguese Timor, Joliffe echoes the views of other foreign visitors. Some Anglophone writers, such as the naturalist, Alfred Wallace who also saw it as a backwater when he visited in 1861, appeared to suggest that Dili's state reflected the underdevelopment they associated with the Portuguese colonization of the eastern part of Timor Island (Wallace 2008: 449; Dunn 2004).

The transformation of Dili under Indonesian rule, in terms of its changing urban space and the governance of that space, has yet to be described and analysed by scholars. Indonesian scholar George Aditjondro (2000) discusses sites and monuments in Dili in a larger chapter on death squads in East Timor, including them in an analysis of the prevailing Indonesian regime of oppression. Extant accounts of Dili are found most commonly in human rights bulletins and newsletters, and in a handful of travellers' accounts. When Indonesia annexed East Timor in December 1975 and closed the territory to visitors until 1989, these accounts came to describe Dili as simply a frightening place under the total control of the Indonesian Army (e.g. Sword and Walsh 1991).

Taking a different approach and drawing on a range of sources in Portuguese, Indonesian, Tetum and English, this chapter analyses East Timorese responses to changes to urban space during the Indonesian era and the use of the city as an arena of struggle by a generation of clandestine youth activists opposed to the Indonesian occupation – an approach that is also adopted for studies of occupation in other parts of Asia by other contributors to this volume. The chapter draws on activist memoirs, the final report of the East Timor Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação Timor Leste, CAVR) and provincial reports in the Indonesian language, as well as observational research in Dili and oral history interviews in Timor-Leste and Australia. Focusing on the lives of five former clandestine activists who sailed to Australia illegally in 1995 as asylum seekers, I examine how the city's layout and construction interacted with clandestine activism. This case study illustrates, in turn, how urban occupation and spatial transformation contributed to the imagining of an embryonic vision of national identity in East Timor.

Dili before the Indonesian invasion

The Portuguese first arrived in Lifau on the island of Timor in what is now the enclave of Oecusse.² They moved their capital to Dili in 1769 where they had earlier established a settlement in 1520. Dili consisted predominantly of swamps and mudflats (Wallace 2008: 450; Forbes 1987). While at first the Portuguese settlement was modest, consisting of a small collection of buildings, such as the governor's palace and the garrison, facing the Wetar Strait, population growth in the twentieth century created demand for land and the rise of commercial districts. The swamps were progressively drained under the Portuguese to make

Figure 1.1 Map of Timor-Leste.

way for construction, to improve sanitation and to prevent floods (Boavida 2011).

Under the Portuguese, Dili assumed the characteristics of a colonial city, taken to mean, following Brenda Yeoh (2003: 1), a place containing 'a diversity of peoples, including colonialists, immigrants and indigenes' in 'a social matrix of newly constituted relations of dominance and dependence', with the European colonial administrators at the top. According to Boavida (2011: 21), however, in Portuguese Timor, there was an even greater and more complex mixing of races than in most Portuguese colonies, with political exiles, troops, mariners, sandalwood traders and officials – including those from the metropole, Goans, Chinese and Malays – intermarrying with local women.

Being the capital of one of Portugal's most far-flung territories, Dili developed only very slowly under the Portuguese (Dunn 2004: 84; Lockwood 1964). It was badly damaged during the Second World War and Dili's population grew subsequently with demand for labour to reconstruct the city. By 1974, the population of Dili had grown to 30,000 from 6,000 in 1954 (Ranck 1977: 126). Military conscription and the expansion of education facilities in Dili also increased the city's population. Children and youth from rural areas stayed with relatives to study in the city.

The fall of the Caetano regime in Portugal with the victory of the Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974 placed decolonization on the agenda. In preparation for decolonization, the East Timorese formed several political parties, including the ASDT (Timorese Social Democratic Association) that later became Fretilin (Revolutionary Front for Independent East Timor); the pro-Indonesian party, APODETI (Popular Democratic Association of Timor); the monarchist KOTA; and UDT (Timorese Democratic Union) (Leach 2017). Despite forming a coalition in January 1975 to advance the cause of national independence, a brief armed conflict broke out in August between Fretilin and UDT. UDT and APODETI sought assistance from Indonesia, a neighbouring country that made no secret of its designs on East Timor. When the civil war ended in September, Fretilin took over administration and declared independence in Dili on 28 November 1975, with a full-scale invasion by Indonesia imminent.

The invasion of Dili, liberated zones and resettlement camps

On 7 December 1975, Indonesia invaded Dili with a full-scale military attack involving warships, paratroopers, Marines and ground troops (CAVR 2013:

206). By afternoon, the invading forces had gained control of central parts of Dili, while Fretilin and its military forces, Falintil (Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste – the Armed Forces for the Liberation of East Timor) controlled the southern parts of Dili and the hills to the west of the city. In the first two days following the invasion, execution of civilians and extensive looting in Dili and its surrounds were recorded (CAVR 2013: 210). While total Indonesian troop numbers are not precisely known, the CAVR estimated that several thousand landed on 7 December and 10 December 1975, with another 10,000 to 20,000 personnel thought to have landed during the following weeks, including a large number on 25 December 1975.

Across a territory of just under 15,000 square kilometres in size, most of the population was displaced as a result of the invasion. To evade the Indonesians, civilians and Falintil forces based themselves in the mountains in the period from 1975 to 1978. The Matebian mountain range in the centre of the territory was one of several mountainous regions where refugees gathered. Matebian's rough terrain held the invading force at bay for some months. Fretilin designated the mountainous resistance bases (*bases de apoio*) in mid-1976 as 'liberated zones' (da Silva 2011: 27), where they implemented a nascent form of popular democracy and health and agricultural programmes, and continued Fretilin's political education and literacy programmes in Tetum and other local languages. However, as the tide of the war began to turn and Indonesian forces gained more territory, the programmes had to be abandoned. Those hiding in the mountains were forced to be constantly on the move, surviving only by eating wild animals and plants. Thousands died from hunger and illness.

By the late 1970s, most mountain bases were destroyed and those who survived were progressively captured or surrendered and were placed in resettlement camps by the Indonesian Army. By early December 1978, army data showed that some 318,921 people – almost half the estimated total pre-invasion population – were in such camps (CAVR 2013: 2217). The East Timorese were relocated to villages under army control or to those which were closer to the main roads to enable easier surveillance. The army also opted to turn some camps into permanent settlements for the displaced. In 1984, the Indonesian government reported that it had built, since 1977, some 2,708 'simple houses in tens of resettlements' (Provincial Government of East Timor 1985: 38). While these 'resettlements', according to the government, were designed to improve crop production and to reunite 'families who had been scattered during the period of strife', life was highly regulated in them, including by the institution of a pass system that enabled residents to leave only during the day to tend land

elsewhere (Budiardjo and Liem 1984: 83). The restriction of access to farmland, designed to break contact between the community and Falintil fighters, led to widespread famine and the gradual abandonment of arable land (Budiardjo and Liem 1984: 80). As a result, food cultivation declined, livelihoods were destroyed and customary rituals were disrupted.

Displacement and its effects

Displacement was an experience widely shared by the East Timorese population across all age categories, and a phenomenon that was an important precursor to the demographic, social and political changes that would be visible in Dili by the late 1980s. The CAVR estimates that, while most forced displacement (55 per cent) was still only within a *posto* (formerly a 'subdistrict' representing the second-tier administrative unit of the territory), displacement was usually for long periods of time, with half of all displacement events lasting more than two years (CAVR 2013: 2217). Longer term displacement also resulted from local land conflicts as well as Portuguese and Indonesian state territorialization policies, involving 'the establishment of formal regulations on land boundaries, property rights, political administration, and population movement' (Thu 2012). Hence, long term colonization, state formation and land control practices entrenched temporary instances of displacement associated with violent conflict.

The trajectories of displacement of the cohort that is the focus of my study – five young men involved in the clandestine movement who then went on to sail illegally to Australia in 1995 as asylum seekers – show that many East Timorese were displaced multiple times following the invasion. The five young men discussed in this chapter, while by no means representative of the clandestine movement in East Timor, share certain characteristics, the most important being the experience of having grown up under Indonesian occupation.³ They were all born in the 1970s, just prior to or just after the Indonesian invasion. Three of the five – Antonio Gouveia, Jose da Costa and Nicolau Fraga – came from families from the district of Baucau, East Timor's second largest city. Gouveia was born in Baucau in 1973, one of three boys; his mother, a sole parent, took all three boys to Dili when Gouveia was only about four years old. They came to Dili, Gouveia recalls, by an Indonesian ship that sailed from Baucau (interview, 26 October 2017). His cousin, Nicolau Fraga, was born in 1972, in Samalari, Baucau (interview, 4 November 2017). Fraga's family stayed in their village and did not take to the mountains in response to the Indonesian invasion. However, they

decided to leave in 1980 for the relative safety of the city of Baucau to avoid the military operations in Samalari. Fraga recalled:

I was born in '72, that time I see a lot of things, bombs, aeroplane dropping [things], destroying the crops, the animals. [At the time of the invasion], we were in a small town they called Samalari in Baucau, close to Quelicai, near Seiçal. Seiçal is on the river and near where [Falintil commander for the eastern region] David Alex was based. We were living in the village, but because of the occupation, our parents said we had to leave, because it was not safe anymore. Kids had nothing to eat. We had to leave the village to move to the city, Baucau.

After about four years in Baucau, in 1984, the Fraga family was allowed to return to Samalari, but only to tend crops and animals on their land, as Indonesian troops were still involved in anti-guerrilla operations in the area.

The last young man from Baucau in this group, Jose da Costa, was born some six months after the invasion, in 1976, while his extended family were on the run from Baucau and sheltering in the neighbouring district of Viqueque (interview, 16 February 2015). Before the invasion, the family had lived and farmed in the village of da Costa's father (Bie Ono), Nambu'u – adjacent to Baucau Airport. During the three years that the family spent on the run, half of da Costa's ten siblings died from malnutrition and illness, and his relatives died from hunger and Indonesian bombardment. Suffering malnutrition and shrapnel injuries, the family was eventually captured and taken by the army to Baucau town. There they were forced to rely on their relatives for food and shelter, before eventually being allowed to return to da Costa's mother's village, Buasare, located some five kilometres away from Nambu'u. Ongoing military operations meant Nambu'u was out of bounds. Ono was only allowed to go to his land during the day to farm as long as he had a valid travel pass.

The other two young men in this cohort, Jose Verdial and Sixto Guterres, came from other parts of East Timor. Verdial was born in 1973 in Aileu, a district bordering Dili to the south (interview, 27 October 2017). Guterres was born in Viqueque, east of Baucau (interview, 20 October 2019). Both their fathers had been separated from their families at the time of the Indonesian invasion and were then recruited as Indonesian Army auxiliaries ('partisans') before being trained and inducted as regular soldiers in Indonesia. The involvement of East Timorese men in the Indonesian Army and militias stemmed often from them being caught up in military operations and then being drafted into the ranks. Starting as 'partisans' (supposedly volunteer forces on the side of the Indonesians), they were then recruited more formally into the Indonesian security apparatus.

With the whereabouts of his father unknown, the two-year-old Jose Verdial, his baby sister and his mother all fled to the mountains following the invasion to join her extended family – Verdial's maternal uncles were Falintil soldiers based in the mountains. With the hardship of life on the run, his baby sister died and Verdial's mother decided to surrender, taking along her son Jose. He recalled their time on the run:

The three of us had to flee to the mountains, and from place to place, for almost two years. My mum really couldn't [handle] it. So, we decided to come down to Aileu town to surrender. That time, my sister had just passed away, because [there was] no food, no medications, so [my mother] was suffering a bit. She decided to surrender in Aileu.

The young Verdial was to move many times, his life constantly disrupted by army operations in different parts of the rural areas. Displacement led to the scattering of the population and fragmentation of the social fabric as families and kinship networks were torn apart. In some instances, family members were, by virtue of Indonesia's annexation strategies, forcibly placed on different sides of the conflict.

Organizing an occupation: space, architecture and control

In July 1976, East Timor was 'integrated' into Indonesia, with Dili as the capital. However, the city remained closed to visitors, with 'Indonesian media access to Timor-Leste [being] tightly controlled, and international media ... virtually banned' (CAVR 2013: 231). There was only very limited access for international agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and official delegations were permitted only on extremely tightly controlled visits. Indonesia assumed control over former Portuguese installations, continuing to use some in much the same way as the Portuguese had done. These included the Comarca Balide (the city's prison) and the military and police headquarters.

Combat operations continued under the Indonesian military's Operations Implementation Command (Komando Pelaksana Operasi, Kolakops), while in 1979, a territorial military structure, the Sub-regional Military Command (Korem)¹⁶⁴/Wira Dharma, was established to demonstrate that East Timor was now pacified and was to be administered in the same way as the other provinces (CAVR 2013: 353). Two organic Korem battalions, infantry battalions 744 based in Dili and 745 in Los Palos, were established. These consisted of many East Timorese soldiers in order to 'Timorize' the war (Kammen 1999: 63; van Klinken

2005: 120). The Indonesian Army installed military auxiliary groups, mirroring those in place in Indonesia, such as the civilian defence units (*pertahanan sipil, hansip*) and militia groups in support of Indonesian integration. Without denying degrees of free will among some East Timorese who joined such groups, recruitment to them involved various elements of coercion.

The military introduced new security and surveillance systems and operated a number of detention and interrogation sites in police and military headquarters as well as in private buildings that had been seized following the invasion of Dili. For example, the stores and warehouses belonging to Sang Tai Hoo, a Chinese-Timorese-owned commercial company, were used as detention and interrogation sites. Aditjondro (2000: 169) suggests that Indonesia's use of 'private torture arenas' was linked to the involvement of the army's special forces, Kopassus, and its preferred method of operating undercover. The Intelligence Task Force (Satuan Tugas Intelijen, SGI) was a key military intelligence unit over which the Kopassus wielded enormous influence (CAVR 2013: 375). It conducted the torture of East Timorese opponents in an unmarked house in Colmera. The Indonesian intelligence network relied on informants, or *mau'hu* (meaning 'spy' in Tetum), and the CAVR (2013: 376) blames the widespread use of spies under Indonesian rule for the breakdown of trust and the high degree of suspicion amongst the East Timorese. From the 1980s, the army also used 'non regulars', mainly the *preman* (thugs) and black-clad *ninja*, to attack and intimidate its opponents (Kammen 1999: 74).

Although the beginnings of stronger civilian rule sat uneasily alongside ongoing repressive operations and the heightened militarization of East Timorese society, in 1982, the East Timorese participated in the Indonesian national elections for the first time. A forty-member regional parliament and a new governor, Mario Carrascalão, took office in Dili in June and September 1982, respectively (Pemerintah Provinsi Daerah Tingkat I Timor Timur 1986: 24).⁴ New government buildings began to be constructed and basic services such as telecommunications and post resumed, and roads and transport networks reopened (Pemerintah Daerah 1996: 86–7; Provincial Government of East Timor 1985: 27–31). In 1984, it was no longer necessary to possess a travel document (*surat jalan*) to leave Dili (Pinto and Jardine 1997: 100).

The appearance of East Timorese cities during Indonesian rule was influenced by the application of architectural regionalism, a highly important concept in architecture during the Suharto New Order period. Abidin Kusno (2000: 92) defines architectural regionalism as 'largely a movement intended to give local inflection to modernism by advocating sensitivity to the indigenous climate and

Figure 1.2 Map of Dili.

local materials'. Indonesian architects eschewed the modernist approach that had been favoured by the radical nationalist president Sukarno, who was deposed by Suharto in 1968 (Kusno 2000: 90). In searching for the essence of authentic Indonesian architecture, the profession had moved closer to the approach of Dutch colonial architects, such as Thomas Karsten and Henri Maclaine Pont, who worked in the pre-Second World War era and had formulated 'Indies architecture' as being composed of the noble, spiritual yet modern and powerful aspects of the Indigenous (Kusno 2000: 47). For the Indonesian postcolonial state (that in turn had become a colonizer in East Timor), the practice of architectural regionalism aimed to 'reduce the potential threat of social and political disintegration' across the archipelago by displaying and 'properly represent[ing]' cultural differences (Kusno 2000: 93). Encapsulating this approach on one site is Jakarta's Indonesia in Miniature Park, which was opened in 1971, a 'park' filled with 'traditional' houses and artifacts drawn from across Indonesia.

In East Timor, architectural regionalism led, firstly, to the preservation and maintenance of Portuguese colonial-era buildings, understood as reflecting East Timorese culture. Street and suburb names from the Portuguese era, commemorating colonial governors and municipal leaders, were largely

Figure 1.3 Provincial administration buildings, Dili, 1990. Photo by Gerhard Joren/LightRocket via Getty Images.

preserved, though some names were rewritten in keeping with Indonesian spelling and pronunciation. For example, the Portuguese spelling of the suburbs of Caicoli and Becora was Indonesianized to become Kaikoli and Bekora (Dalton 1995).

Secondly, architectural regionalism led to the incorporation of design elements adopted from regional East Timorese architecture to suggest Indonesian cultural sensitivity to the new members of the nation. One of the most recognizable elements incorporated into Indonesian construction in East Timor was the triangle-shaped roof design of the traditional houses of the Fataluku Indigenous group from the Lautem region. Architects incorporated the Fataluku roof style into buildings erected during the Indonesian era, such as at Dili airport in Comoro, built in 1981. The striking design of the Fataluku traditional house became co-opted as a symbol of East Timor Province more generally, as evidenced by the addition of one such house to the Indonesia in Miniature Park to represent the province (McWilliam 2005: 31).

While the Indonesian administration sought to exploit the importance that the Indigenous East Timorese accorded to their sacred houses (McWilliam 2005), these houses of origin were no mere physical structures to the East Timorese, but also represented a way of organizing sociality. Members of a particular community, orientated around a 'house', usually as a result of marriage alliances, are 'located and identified within a particular cultural landscape in terms of their common relationship to founding ancestors of the group and, by extension, the land to which they claim and assert historico-mythic connection' (McWilliam 2005: 32). By preserving aspects of the past, and including local architectural features in new constructions, the Indonesian government had hoped to convince the East Timorese that becoming part of Indonesia did not lead to their complete cultural and historical erasure. Such a view, however, failed to understand the significance of the sacred house and the mutual obligations and affiliations that exist among members of the house in Indigenous East Timorese society.

Despite intending to promote continuity with the past and recognizing East Timorese culture in spatial design, the Indonesian administration was concerned with the rise of social and economic stratification and its implications for stability, being influenced as they were by Dutch colonial-era architects such as Karsten, who had identified stratification as a key feature of European colonial towns (Brand 1958: 66). Aiming to tackle stratification, Indonesian architects transferred supposedly authentic Indonesian architecture (itself a Dutch colonial construct) to East Timor, thereby altering the appearance of East Timorese cities and towns.

Buildings not dissimilar to those erected in New Order Indonesia sprung up, including whitewashed, low-cost housing for public servants, and government buildings that underpinned Indonesian claims of bringing development to the territory. For example, low-cost housing using standard designs was built by the early 1980s in Dili and its then-outer suburb of Comoro (Provincial Government of East Timor 1985: 38). Although much of Dili's layout and many of its buildings survived into the Indonesian occupation, the transplantation of Indonesian-style architecture in such development schemes contributed to the sense that Dili appeared to mimic Jakarta or other Indonesian cities.

While maintaining the presence of Portuguese-era buildings, such as markets and meeting halls in the old part of town, the Indonesian administration constructed new buildings in areas designated as 'new towns' or specific suburbs to host clusters of government buildings. Natural swamps in Dili's Caicoli were progressively drained to make way for construction. In combining a superficial deference to the pre-existing built environment with the transfer of supposedly authentic Indonesian architecture to East Timor, Indonesian building practices in the territory reflected what Homi Bhabha (2003: 154) describes as the ambivalence of colonial discourse in moving between recognizing difference between the colonizer and the colonized, and also disavowing it.

Colonization brought an influx of Indonesians into the territory. This created friction and the government's much dreaded stratification. Population data in 1999 showed that there were 105,000 non-East Timorese in the territory out of a total population of 900,000, with most of these being voluntary migrants, such as public servants and Bugis traders from South Sulawesi (Fitzpatrick 2002: 27). Indonesia's transmigration programmes – internal resettlement programmes to reduce population density – brought in involuntary migrants. Between 1982 and 1999, some 25,000 transmigrants were settled in East Timor, with most of these being from Java and Bali. In 1985, the East Timorese provincial government described Indonesians arriving in East Timor as those answering 'the call from their countrymen' to assist with development efforts (Provincial Government of East Timor 1985: 43).

However, Commander of the Falintil armed resistance, Jose Alexandre 'Xanana' Gusmão, condemned Dili as a city stratified by race, social status and origin, not dissimilar to Karsten's reflections of the stratification of a European colonial town. Writing in 1992, he described Dili as a city where 'Indonesians and integrationists' occupied the top rung, followed by a 'lower minority of Timorese who, one way or another, succeed apparently in living a life without setbacks', referring to a handful of East Timorese elites who were relatively protected as a result of their wealth and

status (Niner 2000: 172). They were then followed in the third tier by the security and intelligence forces, consisting of both Indonesian and Timorese, with Indonesian civilians among them 'having the mission of observing and informing' (Niner 2000: 172). In this sense, the East Timorese inhabitants of Dili on the lowest rungs were being marginalized and excluded from their own city – physically, economically and socially. When asked to discuss life during the occupation, interviewee Jose Verdial said, 'A lot of immigrants came and occupied [East Timor], most of the government employees were immigrants, all the business and markets controlled by them.' Far from bringing the East Timorese closer to Indonesians, the influx of Indonesians of different ethnicities, religions and economic status deepened the perception of living under an occupation.

East Timorese perceptions of being colonized also resulted from certain, wholly new, spatial features generated by the Indonesian administration, such as monuments to celebrate East Timor's integration into Indonesia designed to create a new collective memory. These monuments were built in Dili and in other cities, such as the western town of Balibo, near the Indonesian border. They have common features, such as the statue of an East Timorese man dressed in traditional costume mounted on a marble plinth, breaking free from what could be presumed to be colonial shackles binding his wrists. The monument in Dili, built in 1981, was, according to one newspaper report, to honour the 'sacrifices of the partisans', East Timorese volunteers who had fought on the side of the Indonesians 'against troublemakers' (*perusuh*) (*Kompas* 2017). New memorials to non-East Timorese were also constructed with the creation of 'heroes cemeteries', the largest one being the Seroja (Lotus) Heroes' Cemetery in Balide, Dili, to accommodate the war dead. Based on data from the Indonesian Military History Centre, van Klinken (2005: 121) estimates that there were 3,600 deaths in combat on the Indonesian side in East Timor from 1975 to 1999. Buried in heroes' cemeteries in East Timor were mainly Indonesian soldiers whose remains were not flown back and buried in Indonesia. These attempts to foster a new collective memory, through monuments and Indonesian cemeteries in East Timorese cities, only reminded residents of the recent violent conflict and the contested status of colonial history, and commit what Aditjondro (2000: 179) refers to as 'symbolic violence'.

Being young in the new city

East Timorese youth was an important target audience in the creation of these new memorials and forms of remembrance. In analysing official Indonesian

publications, it is apparent that the administration had hopes that the younger generation would come to accept Indonesian rule. To appeal to and remake the young generation, the government invested in education by constructing hundreds of new schools in the territory (Pemerintah Provinsi 1986: 56). Branches of Indonesian patriotic and nationalist youth groups in East Timor, such as the Pancasila Youth (Pemuda Pancasila)⁵ and the National Committee of Indonesian Youth (Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia, KNPI) were opened in East Timor (Pemerintah Daerah 1996: 243). These organizations sponsored study tours to Indonesia for young East Timorese so they could become familiar with the country (Pinto and Jardine 1997: 89).

East Timorese youth who had dropped out of school, such as Gouveia and da Costa, were not as exposed to Indonesian influence. Interviewee Jose Verdial (interview, 27 October 2017) did acknowledge that the expansion of education was a positive aspect of the occupation:

I was able to go to school with some of my friends and to finish high school, as I know by the stories of the older people that in [Portuguese] colonial times not everyone had a chance to go to school; I could see that, because there were a lot of illiterate women and men, even my mum, her sisters and brother did not have a chance to go to school.

Despite the curriculum and the medium of instruction all being geared towards assimilating young East Timorese, education for the East Timorese 'contributed to their political awareness and fanned their nationalism,' argues van Klinken (2012: 18).

The East Timorese clandestine movement's origins can be traced back to the destruction of the liberated zones, and over time, the rebuilding of resistance in an underground form based in the cities and villages. As growing numbers of East Timorese moved to Dili, an urban-based clandestine movement grew. This relied on the capacity of the city and its inhabitants to hide, protect and shelter activists. Youth formed a strong component of this movement. They acted as couriers and messengers, and obtained supplies in the cities and villages for the armed resistance in the forest. Mobility between the city and the countryside was a cornerstone of this clandestine movement. Despite the repressiveness of life in the city, Dili residents remained connected to their roots in the rural areas by virtue of their relationship with their villages of origin and kinship networks. City-based youths were expected to travel to rural areas as couriers and in other roles and relied on their kinship ties to facilitate their work. Along with the diplomatic front abroad, resistance to Indonesian rule was relatively widespread by the 1990s.

Due to the high degree of secrecy, many aspects of the resistance and its intricate structures inside the territory remain understudied, including the lived experiences of clandestine activists in Dili and their relationship with the spatial environment. The involvement of university lecturers, public servants and nuns and clergy of the Catholic Church in secretly opposing Indonesian rule also led to a complex landscape of resistance. Historian Peter Carey (2003) writes of how the voices of the East Timorese themselves, particularly members of the younger generation, have been absent in much of the scholarship about the Indonesian occupation, though this situation has begun to change with growing efforts at history writing in East Timor and the publication of activist accounts (e.g. Gomes 1995; Rei 2007; Conway 2009; da Silva 2011; Hearman 2019).

Displacement and voluntary migration into Dili created new opportunities for East Timorese to interact closely with those from other regions of East Timor. Many East Timorese decided to migrate to larger cities like Dili and Baucau, as well as abroad, to escape the violence of the hinterland, and to seek a more stable life or try to find their missing loved ones, thus continuing the cycle of displacement. The link with the villages of origin was maintained, however, as a result of kinship networks that are transferred to the city and relationship to 'houses of origin' (*uma lulik*).

It was to Dili from Baucau that Antonio Gouveia's mother took her three sons in the late 1970s. In Dili, the family lived in Vila Verde, a suburb that became a hub of pro-independence supporters. Gouveia reached grade six in primary school before starting to work in a mechanic's workshop. Although da Costa and Fraga arrived in Dili some five years apart, their reasons for relocating can also be traced to the effects of the occupation. In 1984, da Costa's father, Bie Ono, was killed by the Indonesian Army as a suspected Fretilin sympathizer. Da Costa recounted his move to Dili thus:

After the death of my father, I became restless and I got into a lot of trouble at school, sometimes I got into fighting with my school friends and I had very strong sense of anger towards the children whose father worked for the Indonesians. At the same time, I learnt how to survive, when after school I sold flavoured ice cubes. It was in 1987 [that] I ran away to Dili; it was difficult because I was only 11 years old. In 1988, I started working for a Chinese family helping to look after their shop as well as working in the warehouse. Over time I got to know other young people in the area, in Bidau Tahularan, and the sentiment against the Indonesians was very strong amongst the young people.

His new friends asked him to take malaria tablets and cigarettes from the warehouse to be given to the guerrillas. Da Costa's involvement was initially very much tied to the suburb in which he lived in Dili and the activist youths there. At some stage in the 1980s, from Viqueque, Sixto Guterres and his mother joined his soldier father who was based in Dili, and completed his schooling there. The youths' arrival in Dili exposed them to an urban setting and to new opportunities to contribute to the resistance effort.

Youths were involved in a range of clandestine activities. They became involved by creating new cells of resistance as well as infiltrating institutions such as the Catholic Scouts (*escuteiros*), and Indonesian youth organizations such as OSIS (Organisasi Siswa Intra-Sekolah, or Intra-High School Students' Organization) (CAVR 2013: 505). Each cell consisted of a small number of people often connected by family and kinship ties and based in a particular suburb, with a liaison person who dealt with other cells. Higher population density, resulting from inward migration, contributed to the city's chaotic layout once one left the main roads. This layout enabled clandestine activists to traverse the city's back alleys unnoticed, and to carry out tasks such as couriering letters, cassettes and photographs between the armed resistance and Dili. Money was collected from trusted sources in the city to be sent to Falintil guerrillas (Pinto and Jardine 1997: 101)

Dili's unplanned growth and complicated network of alleys and laneways also enabled the secreting of guerrilla leaders, such as Xanana Gusmão, in safe houses (Pinto and Jardine 1997; Rei 2007). The operation of safe houses in Dili also attested to the close connection between the city and rural areas. Clandestine activists brought guerrillas into Dili in secret, relying on well-connected, powerful and, at times, wealthy allies who had the desired resources and facilities to support such work (Pinto and Jardine 1997: 159). They also hid fellow clandestine activists who were sought by the authorities in safe houses.

The existence of 'islands' – institutions and communities that were relatively remote from the reach of the Indonesian administration – provided an alternative space, mentally and physically, in which to organize and to foster different ideas to those of the occupiers. Institutions that were relatively free from Indonesian control included the Catholic Church and certain schools in Dili which were used as organizing centres, such as the Externato de São José High School. During the occupation, the relationship between the Catholic Church in East Timor and in Indonesia was left deliberately vague by the Vatican, and East Timorese Monsignor Carlos Ximenes Belo, as apostolic administrator, reported to the papal nuncio in Jakarta, rather than to the Indonesian Church (Deakin

Figure 1.4 A street in Colmera, Dili, 1990. Photo by Gerhard Joren/LightRocket via Getty Images.

2017: 114). The São José School was still permitted to use the Portuguese language, and all teachers there were East Timorese except for those teaching Indonesian language and history. These island institutions within the city were physical spaces that protected youth activists and their charges, such as Falintil guerrilla leaders visiting the city. Some of these islands, such as Dili's Motael Church and Monsignor Carlos Ximenes Belo (the bishop)'s residence, were enlisted as safe havens that the Indonesian military would hesitate to breach.

Opening up new forms of struggle

Dili was opened to foreign visitors in 1989 to promote the legitimacy of Indonesian rule and to earn revenue from tourism. This coincided with the founding, in September of that year, of an East Timorese non-partisan, umbrella organization to coordinate the campaign to overthrow Indonesian rule: the National Council for Maubere Resistance (CNRM) (Pinto and Jardine 1997: 122). The opening up provided opportunities for new contact between East Timorese activists and visitors, which led to open street protests and more brazen activities such as bringing foreign visitors from Dili to meet guerrillas.

On 12 October 1989, a demonstration in favour of independence was held during Pope John Paul II's visit on the outskirts of Dili, in Tibar. On 17 January 1990, dozens of youths went to the Turismo Hotel in Lecidere to convey their aspirations for independence to the American diplomat John Monjo. Their protest and subsequent beatings by police were witnessed and documented by Australian tourists at the hotel. The road upon which the hotel was located was strategic for protesters, as the ICRC, the bishop's residence and several tourist hotels were all located on that road. Australian activist Robert Domm, who carried out the first ever extended interview with Gusmão in September 1990, related how his stay in Dili and subsequent trip to the mountains were organized and carried out with the involvement of possibly dozens of clandestine activists (Domm 1990: 16). To coordinate the clandestine youth groups that had sprung up, youth activists including Constancio Pinto, Donaciano Gomes and José Manuel established the CNRM Executive Committee of the Clandestine Front at a secret meeting at the São José School in July 1990 (Pinto and Jardine 1997: 126; da Silva 2011: 264). In other words, with Dili's opening up, urban space was being reconfigured, and new challenges emerged for the authorities as to how they would police and secure the city.

By the time they were in their teens, the five young men interviewed had dabbled in clandestine work in Dili and in regional areas. In the suburb of Vila Verde, Gouveia and his family were part of a network receiving and passing on goods and messages, as well as hiding and couriering people, on behalf of the Falintil forces. He traced his participation in these activities to his mother's own clandestine work: 'I was only helping my mother in the beginning', he explained. From there, Gouveia became interested in the activities of the older youths in the suburb, who were harassing and bullying Indonesian youth and 'pro-integration' East Timorese. He began to follow these youth activists to meetings at the São José School and to participate in their activities, such as the 4 September 1990 demonstration in Lecidere marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Dili Catholic Archdiocese, and at the Paulus VI High School where a riot broke out over denigrating remarks made against East Timorese students by an Indonesian teacher.

Due to his participation at protests, the military started to identify Gouveia. He escaped to Baucau to stay with his relatives for a year. During his stay in Baucau, he met Falintil commander David Alex. Gouveia recounted, 'We met David Alex twice. He gave us advice, he said, you all should go back to Dili, don't stay here, go there resume your work and share information with other youths.' From his encounter with the commander, Gouveia and his group of nine other

activists began collecting shoes, clothing, rice, coffee and medicine to send to the guerrillas. 'We started from there, from [meeting David Alex], started from that connection we had,' explained Gouveia.

When Gouveia returned to Dili, he found he was still being watched, and the Indonesian Army was stepping up repression to prepare for the arrival of a Portuguese parliamentary delegation, an event enthusiastically awaited by the East Timorese. Given the situation, Gouveia chose to shelter in the Motael Church with about thirty other youths. On 28 October 1991, one of these youths, Sebastião Gomes, was shot and killed by Indonesian soldiers and militias. An East Timorese intelligence officer working for the Indonesians, Afonso, was also killed. The killing of Gomes had breached an unspoken rule that church grounds were out of bounds to security forces.

The 1991 Dili Massacre

The opening up of Dili led to urban space becoming much more explicitly an arena of struggle. No event illustrates this as much as the Dili Massacre of 12 November 1991, a major turning point in East Timorese history. Youths had become emboldened by the opening up policy. They wanted to communicate their struggles to visitors, such as the Portuguese parliamentary delegation that then cancelled their visit when Indonesia refused to allow journalist Jill Joliffe to accompany the delegation. The youths chose another event instead. A Mass was held at the Motael Church two weeks after Gomes' death, and those who attended then departed for the Santa Cruz Cemetery to lay flowers at his grave. The morning procession, which transformed into a protest march of thousands featuring slogans and banners against Indonesian rule, wound its way through the Dili streets gathering more people as it went along. As the marchers arrived at the cemetery, the Indonesian Army asserted their control of a space that was associated with the daily life and rituals of mourning by the East Timorese by shooting into the crowd and killing an estimated 271 people.

That morning, then, the security forces pushed back against attempts by the East Timorese to use the city's streets as theirs, and reasserted Indonesian control of the city through the massacre. Interviewee Jose Verdial lived near the cemetery in Mascarenhas, from where he conducted his clandestine work. He did not attend the protest because he was studying for his exams, but as his house was near the cemetery, he and his friends secretly approached the cemetery after they heard gunshots and saw people running in their direction. In hiding, they

witnessed the shooting by Indonesian forces of New Zealand student and activist Kamal Bamadhaj, the only foreigner killed in the massacre that day. They helped load his body into a Red Cross ambulance but refused to get into the vehicle despite the pleadings of the driver for their assistance. Police roadblocks prevented the ambulance from getting Bamadhaj to hospital in time.

The Indonesian military stepped up its efforts to break the East Timorese opposition, even as the shootings brought international attention to its actions in East Timor. Youths continued to be targeted in the hospitals, prisons and police and army installations after the massacre. It was alleged that the army killed survivors of the massacre by injecting them with or forcing them to ingest poisonous chemicals in the city's hospitals. Youths detained were subjected to electrocution, beatings, immersion in water and sewage tanks, sensory deprivation in dark cells, and physical mutilation, such as being cut with razors and having fingernails and toenails extracted, and skin burnt with lit cigarettes (Rei 2006).

Aged fifteen, interviewee Jose da Costa had escaped the massacre by running away into the maze of alleyways around the cemetery as soon as the shooting started, but he was captured about three days later during the police's round-up operations. At the Comoro Police Headquarters, he was severely beaten and tortured, and his face mutilated with a razor blade. His case attracted the attention of the ICRC and he was released after two weeks.

While Indonesia held a commission of inquiry into the massacre and replaced high ranking officers in Dili, the pressure against the clandestine movement continued. In December 1991, the education department and the military moved to close the Externato de São José High School (*Tempo* 1991). By early 1992, thirty-seven people, mainly youths in their late teens and early twenties, awaited trial in East Timor for organizing the Santa Cruz protest, and twenty-two East Timorese were to be tried in Indonesia for protesting the shootings (TAPOL 1992a: 1, 11 and TAPOL 1992b: 12). In 1992, Nicolau Fraga left Baucau for Dili to avoid being captured by the army for his clandestine activities. In the same year, following his arrest for couriering cassettes containing messages from Falintil leaders, Gouveia was detained in a cell in Dili's Balide Prison for two months before being transferred to Baucau Prison.

The arrest of Xanana Gusmão and the dismantling of his support networks in November 1992 also took its toll. From February 1991, Gusmão had used several safe houses in the city to attend meetings and make arrangements regarding the conduct of the resistance (Centro Nacional Chega! 2019). One of these was a house in Lahane, a southern suburb of Dili, belonging to East Timorese police

officer Augusto Pereira (Special Broadcasting Service 2011). Pereira was the husband of Aliança de Araújo, the sister of the Fretilin founder Abílio de Araújo. He had used his credentials as a police officer to circumvent army roadblocks to bring Gusmão to Dili from rural Ainaro. Their cover was blown, however, and on 20 November 1992, the Indonesian Army arrested Gusmão in an underground bunker in Pereira's home. Although the general practice of using safe houses resumed, Gusmão's capture was a setback.

By the mid-1990s, persecution of pro-independence youths increased. In 1994, Gouveia was arrested again while accompanying foreign journalists Jill Joliffe and Irene Slegt to Baucau to meet the Falintil commander Nino Konis Santana. Kopassus officers threatened to kill him if they caught him again. Da Costa recalled that, in 1993–4, independence supporters like him carried weapons and took turns keeping nightly watch around their houses as the army deployed *ninja* – black clad men – to attack them. The experiences of torture and imprisonment were also shared by other youths who joined Gouveia and da Costa on their boat voyage to Australia (Daly 1995: 13). One of them, Jacob da Silva, had served a two-year prison sentence in Indonesia in connection with the Motael Church Incident in October 1991. The youths' seizure of the streets and suburbs of Dili as venues for protests following the opening up policy required, in turn, a reassertion of the authority of the Indonesian security forces.

Conclusion

After the Indonesian invasion, Dili became an important meeting and organizing point for youths from all over East Timor who were interested in making their mark on the national liberation struggle. The demographic changes in and spatial transformation of Dili under Indonesian rule helped form and sustain youth clandestine cells. The Indonesian administration allowed old and new spatial features to coexist in the city, thereby never completely eliminating memories embedded in the city's buildings and streets. Clashing with these memories, however, were the rise of new settlements, institutions, detention sites and memorials which led the inhabitants of Dili to question and resist the occupation. The five activists who recounted in this chapter their experiences of living in Dili in the 1980s and 1990s show that being in the city led them to becoming exposed to new politics, most commonly through relatives and friends who were involved in campaigning for independence. East Timor's opening up to the outside world in 1989 enabled the possibility of new witnessing of the

struggles of the East Timorese, and emboldened youths to lay claim to the city in ways they had not done before, such as by conducting street demonstrations and open protests. Through what Crane (2015: 407) terms their ‘temporary spatial appropriations’, East Timorese youths produced what she refers to as ‘a conjunctural space, one in which it became possible to envision a different future’.

Acknowledgements

Research for this chapter was funded by the Australian Research Council (project number SR200201031) and the Northern Territory History Grant. The author gratefully acknowledges editors David Baillargeon and Jeremy E. Taylor, the anonymous referees and the copy editors in the course of the preparation of this chapter, as well as Jude Conway for her map of Dili.

Interviews

Antonio Gouveia, 26 October 2017

Jose da Costa, 16 February 2015

Jose Verdial, 27 October 2017

Nicolau Fraga, 4 November 2017

Sixto Guterres, 20 October 2019

Notes

- 1 Since 2002, Dili has served as the capital of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, a country of 1.2 million people. It is both a city and a district. The district of Dili consists of six administrative posts (*postos*) including the island of Atauro in the Savu Sea to the north, and occupies an area of about 225 square kilometres. The 2015 census showed the city’s population in the six *postos* to be 277,279 (*Dili em Números* 2018: 21). Dili is bordered by the district of Liquiça to the west, Manatuto to the east and Aileu to the south.
- 2 Oecusse is an administrative district of East Timor in the western half of the island of Timor, surrounded on all sides by Indonesian territory. The western half of the island of Timor was controlled by the Dutch (and is today controlled by Indonesia).
- 3 The asylum seeker group consisted mainly of men, with only two women out of the eighteen prepared to sail across the ocean.

- 4 Previous governors Arnaldo dos Reis and Guilherme Gonçalves had been appointed directly by President Suharto.
- 5 The *Pancasila* are the five principles contained in Indonesia's state ideology.

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