# "Wake Up and Smell the Coffee"

## *Cultural (Re)Awakenings in Independent Timor-Leste*

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*Este artigo examina o contexto da produção cultural no Timor-Leste contemporâneo. Começando com uma análise da relação íntima entre a literatura anti-colonial timorense e as suas circunstâncias materiais, esboça a amplitude que essa relação continua a ter na produção literária pós-colonial. Propõe que escritores contemporâneos timorenses reflectem a preocupação que a identidade cultural local, activamente reprimida durante o colonialismo, continua a ser ameaçada por forças externas. Instantes de conflicto no Timor-Leste independente não se relacionam apenas com o descontentamento face à incapacidade das elites internas e externas de melhorar as vidas da maioria, mas também constituem graves obstáculos à actividade cultural; além disso, personalidades anti-institucionais liderando tais conflictos tornam-se mais facilmente heróis para os que desconhecem as vozes literárias que criticam a evolução da nação pós-colonial. Contudo, o artigo conclui sublinhando iniciativas governamentais recentes, assim como as estratégias utilizadas por escritores contemporâneos para ultrapassar a invisbilidade à qual a produção cultural timorense tem vindo a ser remetida.*

This study's title was inspired by the words of the East Timorese poet, Abé Barreto, who throughout our conversation in a Dili restaurant in 2007 repeatedly used the phrase "wake up and smell the coffee." It struck me both because of the particular emphasis he gave to it and because of its resonance in Timor-Leste, one of whose major cash-crops is, in fact, coffee.[1] Directing these words at his compatriots, Abé was asking them to become aware of an important part of Timor-Leste's natural, cultural, and economic landscape,


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essential components of a national heritage that they otherwise risked losing. The fear for Abé and other East Timorese writers of his generation is that if the East Timorese are not sufficiently aware of their cultural heritage, and particularly of what is being produced in terms of contemporary indigenous culture, then it is all the more likely that external cultural trends will be imported for lack of a readily identifiable national culture. Consequently, taking Abé's use of this phrase as well as the context from which our discussion arose, this article will offer a brief examination of the place of culture in contemporary Timor-Leste, and how "foreignness" and the forces of globalization have been perceived by East Timorese society since the restoration of independence in 2002.

It will begin by considering how perceptions of culture itself may have changed from colonial to postcolonial Timor-Leste, and suggest that those changes have forced contemporary cultural practitioners to address a particularly demanding challenge: how to reflect and find inspiration in an oral tradition that is an integral component of specific material acts within Timor-Leste and regarded as central to an East Timorese cultural identity, whilst simultaneously producing cultural artefacts that are distinct objects, capable of becoming visible to others and of being exported beyond the nation's borders? I argue that this led to a process where the targets of resistance in oral traditions shifted to different objects in the development of a literary tradition. The situated nature of oral traditions has also been overcome through their palimpsestic existence on the written page. In other words, some of the formal and thematic characteristics of East Timorese oral traditions are now inscribed into cultural products whose functionality is not dependent on the situated performative enactment of ritual acts that are the essence of those oral traditions; the poem inspired by oral traditions can be read anywhere and at any time (especially in the age of the internet). However, I also point to the fact that the recourse to the written word as a form of anti-colonial resistance occurs significantly later in Timor-Leste than in other colonial contexts, including within the space of the Portuguese colonial empire, and suggest that to some extent postcolonial East Timorese literary production continues to perform some of the core functions it had during the colonial period: to proclaim the existence of a national cultural identity, and to identify forms of foreign domination that threaten that identity.

That threat is partly posed by the ways in which East Timorese culture and social practices can become invisible to the large numbers of outsiders arriving in Timor-Leste since 1999, which in turn leads to resentment amongst those they are supposedly there to help. As we shall see through an analysis of the figure of Major Alfredo Reinado, the instability that results from such resentment can be exploited and accentuated by local actors, creating a challenging environment in which East Timorese writers and other

cultural practitioners have to work. As the concluding part of this article will show, this challenge is nevertheless being met both at an institutional level and by individuals finding alternative ways to disseminate their work, and doing so partly in response to concerns regarding the very survival of a national cultural identity.

However, the sense of urgency transmitted by Abé in his interview with me arises from the specific nature of East Timorese cultural production, which was undertaken under the colonial rule of the Portuguese until 1975, and then of the Indonesians until 1999. For much of that time East Timorese culture was communicated through oral traditions. These are evoked by Fernando Sylvan (1917–1933) in his short story, "A Voz do Liurai de Ossu," as keepers of the essence of *Maubere* (East Timorese) identity:

> Desde sempre, as florestas mauberes têm sido templos sagrados e lugares de segredos. E, pelo menos há quinhentos anos, pessoas estranhas de várias nações entram e atravessam esses sítios sem serem capazes de entendê-los. Quer espreitando, quer escutando, o que fica por ver e por ouvir é sempre mais do que o necessário para já não se compreender a vida interior e os propósitos dos mauberes. É que é preciso ver mais para lá e, também, ouvir mais para lá. E avaliar, sobretudo avaliar, a luz das vozes. (95)

The core of the nation's culture and identity—the "vida interior e os propósitos dos mauberes"—are communicated orally through "a luz das vozes," but these are inaudible or incomprehensible to outsiders. Orality—"palavras . . . ditas" (97)—becomes a means to resist, a strategy underlined in the unsigned preface to the collection of East Timorese poems, *Enterrem meu coração no Ramelau* (1982). Explaining how "os *lianain*—oradores e cultores da língua—contavam às gerações as histórias dos feitos dos antepassados" (8), those feats are portrayed as part of an unbroken tradition of East Timorese resistance, although what is being resisted may change over the course of time:

> Hoje, no turbilhão da guerra, chegam ecos de poemas de combate, de desafio às máquinas da morte dos indonésios a par de poemas plangentes de dor e sofrimento onde se formulam em jeito de prece o fim da dor e do sofrimento outrora infligidos pelas forças da natureza tal como dão prova . . . versos atribuídos pela tradição oral aos primeiros habitantes de Aileu. (7)[2]

In the struggle against the Indonesian occupiers East Timorese oral traditions undergo a double process of adaptation, with their tone of defiance being directed against different targets and, perhaps more importantly, inspiring a written cultural tradition that can be transported beyond a specific site. Oral traditions had been linked to ritual, ceremonial or social acts, such as weddings, funerals, blood pacts or arbitration between an offender and his

victims. The rise of a written expression of East Timorese culture, however, implied the possibility of a disconnection from the original performative and situated nature of its oral counterpart.[3] The *lianain,* whose words are uttered on specific occasions and locations, are now complemented by new cultivators of the word whose creations become messages of defiance signalling to the outside world that the East Timorese continue to resist attempts to eradicate them.

Yet the use of the written word as a form of East Timorese cultural resistance comes late in the period of Portuguese colonialism. Despite their presence in the territory dating back to the early 1500s it was only in the twentieth century that the Portuguese made any significant efforts to provide educational opportunities to the indigenous population of what they regarded as a small and remote colony. Even after World War II when Portugal attempted to reassert its role as the colonial power in a Timor-Leste that had been left shattered by Japan's occupation of the territory (1941–45), its efforts resulted in minimal improvements to their colonial subjects' educational levels. Ineffectual as these efforts were, leaders of the future independence movement were nevertheless to be found amongst the small number of East Timorese granted an education by the Portuguese, including some who would use the written word as a form of resistance.

The nature of much of Portugal's colonial rule is summed up by the narrator in Ponte Pedrinha's 1998 novel, *Andanças de um timorense:* "Às vezes o português . . . oferecia paz ao Timor dizendo-lhe que podia viver como quisesse na floresta" (8). This approach to colonialism where the colonizer is content to leave the forest to the colonized even leads Andrea Molnar to question "whether it is accurate to talk about a Portuguese colonial period or whether it would be better to refer to a Portuguese contact period" (25). Recalling Fernando Sylvan's invocation of the forest, in Pedrinha's novel it is a site where East Timorese culture is left largely undisturbed by the Portuguese, until they begin to try and assert their colonizing role in the twentieth century. Along with the introduction by the colonial authorities through the Catholic Church of a greater educational endeavor, it is at this stage that the Portuguese initiate forced labour, head taxes, and the reorganization of indigenous social structures. No longer content with forcing the natives to conform to their status as a colonized people simply when they came into towns where a simulacrum of European civilization had been put in place, it is also the point at which the Portuguese can be said to make more concerted inroads into the East Timorese "floresta." Now the Portuguese attempted to shape the forests according to their own will, ignoring "a luz das vozes" and providing the few East Timorese who had been taught how to read and write with something to write against. But they also furnished them with something to write *for*: the future nation of Timor-Leste.

The forest, however, plays a double role. Characterized as "templos sagrados" by Fernando Sylvan, they are physical entities that can safeguard both East Timorese people *and* East Timorese cultural identity. The work of poets of this period represents a foray from the East Timorese forest and follows a strategy of cultural resistance outlined by Amílcar Cabral, an influential figure for leading members of FRETILIN (*Frente Revolucionária para Timor-Leste Independente*), the principal East Timorese political party behind the struggle for independence.[4] In his 1970 speech at Syracuse University, Cabral stated that "if imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of culture" (4), and that "with a strong indigenous cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of its perpetuation" (1). When the Indonesian occupiers make far more wide-ranging attempts than their Portuguese predecessors to eradicate native cultures, not only do the forests of Timor-Leste become the sites where an indigenous cultural life can be maintained, they also offer refuge to those fighting against them. This is underlined in Sylvan's "Velhas florestas de agora," from the collection *Cantogrito Maubere*:

> As florestas serviam
> desde séculos e séculos
> como templo sagrado
> de rezar liberdade.
> E ainda servem agora
> a heróis guerrilheiros
> como templo sagrado
> de rezar liberdade!

Forests are thus the centres of both cultural and armed resistance to foreign domination, and as long as they survive there is the promise that national liberation may be achieved. They figure as physical spaces escaping the territorial appropriation of the foreign occupiers, *and* they are connotative of a national culture that is at once connected to its landscape and living within the East Timorese themselves.

With Timor-Leste's independence secured in 2002, East Timorese forests as physical spaces are seemingly no longer under the threat of illegal foreign appropriation; the East Timorese forest does not need to be a place of refuge for either guerrilla fighters or for an indigenous culture resisting foreign invaders. Since 1999, however, Timor-Leste has seen a different sort of invasion, in some ways seemingly repeating the behaviors of the Portuguese and Indonesians. For contemporary East Timorese writers such as Abé Barreto this appears to require the continued recourse to the figure of the forest as a site of refuge and resistance, and in criticizing forms of foreign domination

and signalling the continued survival of a distinct cultural identity. East Timorese literary production thus continues to perform to a certain extent the same functions it did under colonial rule.

Today it is impossible to escape the presence of foreign influences in Timor-Leste, especially in the capital, Dili. There are thousands of "internationals" working for various branches of the United Nations, hundreds of NGOs, various consultancy companies or private businesses, increasing numbers of tourists (although still relatively few), not to mention the members of the United Nations Police (UNPol) or, until very recently, the International Stabilization Force (the latter made up mainly by the Australian Defense Force). Whilst many East Timorese welcome the efforts made by the international presence, particularly the NGOs, there are also those who resent what they see as a foreign invasion intent on exploiting the resources of Timor-Leste and failing to bring permanent stability to the nation. As Don Greenlees and Robert Garran explain in relation to the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), local resentment against the international presence arose soon after the 1999 referendum, when the territory was effectively being governed by foreigners: "The arrival of UNTAET was a mixed blessing. It brought jobs, money and an influx of investment in businesses servicing a large foreign community. But poverty had worsened, and with it frustration. . . . Many East Timorese questioned whether they had exchanged one foreign power for another" (308). What needs to be understood here is that the source of the frustration identified by Greenlees and Garran lies in the continual reminder to the East Timorese that their destinies appear to lie in the hands of foreigners, and that the wealth that comes with such power is largely denied them. Moreover, with that wealth come the consumer trappings that it can buy and which are desired by many East Timorese, especially the young, and although most (if not all) such items are foreign, they are nevertheless coveted objects. In other words, "foreignness" may be rejected in terms of "foreigners" themselves or some of their attitudes, but it is welcomed in terms of items of consumerism.

The foreign presence in post-1999 Timor-Leste has not only made glaringly apparent the economic chasm separating those who are there to help from those who are the object of that help, it has also been accompanied by cultural ignorance on the part of outsiders. As Greenlees and Garran point out, the "wealth and relaxed social mores of the peacekeepers and international workers fuelled some anti-foreign sentiment in the staunchly Catholic local community" (309). This was particularly prevalent in the early period of the UN administration of Timor-Leste, and eventually led to the recognition that relevant specialists were needed to plug the cultural knowledge gap. And yet, as Geoffrey Gunn intimates, it is not always clear to what ends that understanding is employed. International institutions such as the World Bank

initially "treated the territory in its working documents as a kind of social *terra nullus* where all institutions would have to be rebuilt along the lines of an international model" (Gunn, "The State of East Timor Studies" 95). Later, however, "the World Bank began to look to anthropologists and sociologists to explain East Timor and/or, as often as not, to socialise the Bank's preferred developing country model upon the Timorese" (96). Thus, knowledge of East Timorese realities is not garnered in order to provide state institutions and structures in harmony with the local culture, but rather to mold the local to fit with the global.

In his critique of discourses of development as they come into play in the East Timorese context, Chris Shepherd highlights how "the establishment of standards [is] represented according to a Western metric" (102) which measures the distance that separates local conditions from the "desired endpoint" (103), of which the "developed" North is the paradigmatic figure. Barbara Harlow also points to the responsibility of "Western" academic institutions in engendering this attitude, remarking in *Resistance Literature* how "the presuppositions and premises of the academic enterprise and the activities which it enjoins . . . are used to sustain an internationalization of the issues of development according to western-specific models or patterns" (14). One of the consequences of the resulting models of development and the criteria employed in the East Timorese context is that suspicions are especially aroused in relation to the exploration of oil and natural gas in the Timor Sea. The Australian government's longstanding failure to commit to international arbitration to settle the dispute over the maritime boundaries between the two countries had led to the feeling among many that the Australian presence in Timor-Leste is focused on securing Australia's economic interests rather than those of the East Timorese. The basis for such feelings was evident in the protracted negotiations between the Australians and the East Timorese, where "the Australian government's tactics even involved threatening to block development that would provide vital revenue for the mammoth task of post-war reconstruction" if their demands were not met (Cleary xxx).

Alongside these attitudes (or symptomatic of them) is the invisibility of East Timorese culture in terms of literary production. Whereas international institutions such as the World Bank have engaged academics and researchers to gather knowledge of the material and social circumstances of Timor-Leste, "written forms of literature remains an area of study that has been mostly overlooked" (Lipscomb 168). As can be gleaned from Leigh-Ashley Lipscomb's experiences in Timor-Leste, where she "encountered people, particularly working within the international community, who . . . told [her] that Timorese poetry 'did not exist' " (169), it is not simply a case of deliberately ignoring something of which there is an awareness. The work of contemporary

East Timorese poets, such as Abé Barreto and Celso Oliveira, as well as their predecessors of the 1970s and 80s, clearly contradict their "non-existence," so why would Lipscomb be told that Timorese poetry does not exist? In the case of East Timorese anti-colonial writers their "non-existence" may be linked to current perceptions of their type of literature, whose specific historical context and objectives clearly place it within its time and, apparently, out of ours. According to Artur Marcos, the particular context that East Timorese writers of earlier decades found themselves in "obriga ao condicionamento de trabalhos . . . que transmitam intencional e assumidamente alguma mensagem política de aplicação imediata" (160). That very immediacy is what makes this type of literature "invisible" or anachronistic to many contemporary readers and critics (most notably those involved in the field of postcolonial studies) even in the case of regions whose literature has received greater attention than Timor-Leste. Patrick Chabal, for example, considers that in the African context "most anti-colonial writing has seldom been anything other than sloganising and propaganda. If it has its place in the history of the nationalist struggle, it contributed little to the construction of an African literature" (22).

Certainly, East Timorese liberation poetry performs the "sloganizing" and "propaganda" purposes Chabal sees as having little to offer in the case of African literature. Francisco Borja da Costa's cry of "SIM com FRETILIN/para a LIBERTAÇÃO TOTAL!" in "O Grito do Soldado Maubere" (*Enterrem meu coração no Ramelau* 30), or Xanana Gusmão's appeal in "Maubere," "Povo MAUBERE,/Enfrenta-te na longa marcha libertadora,/Liberta-te!" (*Timor Leste* 42), appear to exemplify what Chabal considers of little value for any postcolonial literary tradition that does not wish to remain rooted in a nationalist struggle belonging to the colonial past. If, as Amílcar Cabral stated in 1970, "culture plunges its roots into the physical reality of the environmental humus in which it develops" (3), then the East Timorese anti-colonial poetry of that period draws inevitably on an environment saturated with the demands of a liberation struggle that would endure until 1999. Should this period be viewed, then, as a hiatus, after which time we will witness the construction of an East Timorese literature no longer obligated to perform the political function it was given during the anti-colonial struggle?

To do so would, in my view, replicate a more generalized dismissive tendency that encompasses more than cultural creativity, bringing an analytical prism to bear whose default settings make it all the more probable that it will fail to see what is there. This is a concern raised by Chris Shepherd in relation to current external development programs in Timor-Leste: "Development bureaucrats routinely make East Timor visible in terms of its absences so that there is a real impression of inventing the nation from "nothing," as it were. What remains invisible, in contrast, is real understanding and appreciation of East Timorese history and culture in its plenitude and diversity" (107–108).

There is perhaps an absence in East Timorese literary production under colonial rule of an aesthetic formed around universal themes that do not have to be understood in relation to a specific material context, and thus going against the grain of the "demand on the part of critics and readers, against historical necessity, and . . . [their] appeal to universality, posterity and the human condition" (Harlow 17). The frequent inclusion of names, dates and locations that speak of a particular East Timorese history demand a degree of knowledge from the reader that can militate against its ready transportability beyond the nation's borders; since it does not conform to a Westernized aesthetic, East Timorese anti-colonial poetry does not really exist *as literature.* Again, this recalls Sylvan's sacred forests, places where "pessoas estranhas de várias nações entram e atravessam . . . sem serem capazes de entendê-los" (95).

Much post-independence East Timorese literature continues to run the risk of being inaccessible to "pessoas estranhas" because it still makes reference to specific dates, locations and East Timorese personalities past and present, seeming to demand from the reader some familiarity with Timor-Leste's material realities. The opening verses of Celso Oliveira's poem "4 de Setembro de 2002," from the collection *Timor-Leste: Chegou a Liberdade,* provide an illustrative example of this: "Na noite de 4 de Setembro de 2002,/ Eu passei pela estrada de Taibessi, Santa Cruz, Vila Verde, Farol e Pante Kelapa./Encontrei a cidade de Díli na escuridão" (1–3). Through the evocation of place names, the lyric voice describes a journey from the outskirts of Díli into the capital's center, whilst the date indicates the post-independence period, which began on the 20th of May 2002. However, the 4th of September also marks the third anniversary of the official announcement of the results of the 1999 U.N.-sponsored popular consultation in which 78.5% of East Timorese voted for independence. It was in the wake of that announcement that a renewed wave of violence by Indonesian-sponsored militias left much of Díli in ruins, devastating the locations mentioned in Oliveira's poem. These markers of a very specific East Timorese context may not be immediately recognized by an external readership unfamiliar with the details of Timor-Leste's history, perhaps indicating that some contemporary East Timorese literary production is still intimately bound to its site of creation or, in Celso Oliveira's case, of inspiration, since in recent years he has been living outside the country of his birth.

Even when directly addressing an external audience, the tone of some contemporary writing may be considered alienating or anachronistic. Abé Barreto's short poems in Tétum, "Homan ami-nia Futuru" (Weaving Our Future) and "Proklamasaun Independénsia" (Proclamation of Independence), are illustrative of this. The first appears to call for the departure of a specific foreign presence in Timor-Leste in order for the East Timorese to be allowed

to delineate the shape of their nation. The nation is symbolized through a myth of the creation of the island of Timor, which was formed when a crocodile searching for the origin of the sun's rays turned to stone when it became exhausted:

> Hasa'e bandeira Luzofonia nian iha rai ida-ne'e katak,
> ami hakarak defini
> ami-nia rai Lafaek nia fronteira tasi, rai no lalehan
>
> Imi dehan ami ema bulak?
> Imi dehan ami ema beik?
>
> Husik, husik ami desidi rasik ami-nia destinu!
> Husik, husik ami homan rasik ami-nia futuru
> (Janeiru 2009)
>
> [Take down *Lusofonia*'s flag from this place,
> We want to define
> Our crocodile nation's borders—sea, land and sky
>
> You say we are mad people?
> You say we are stupid people?
>
> Leave, leave us to decide our own destiny!
> Leave, leave us to weave our own future!
> (January 2009)]

Written seven years after Timor-Leste's independence, the poem's call for the departure of a Portuguese presence in a territory they had left in 1975 appears to replicate the language of the anti-colonial poetry of earlier decades, making it in some ways redundant and unappealing to a wider audience. The same may be true of "Proklamasaun Independénsia":

> Ba mundu tomak ita hakilar
> Ba mundu tomak ita haklalak
> Ba mundu tomak ita tebe-rai:
>
> *"Rai ne'e ami-nian, la'ós imi-nian!"*
> (Dili, 8–9 Dezembru, 2010)
>
> [To the whole world we cry
> To the whole world we acclaim
> To the whole word we affirm:
>
> *"This land is ours, not yours!"*
> (Dili, 8–9 December, 2010)]

Again, the dating of the poem is suggestive of a memorialization of the Indonesian invasion, which occurred on 7 December 1975, and of the first proclamation of East Timorese independence, which took place only days earlier, on 28 November. However, both poems, whilst they may be read as recalling a colonial past, are also interventions into contemporary East Timorese realities. Their demands for Timor-Leste to be left to trace its own destiny and asserting the right of the East Timorese to their own land, are not aimed at the ghosts of departed colonizers, but rather at the real threats posed by neocolonialism. In this sense, Abé Barreto's demand that the flag of *Lusofonia* be taken down does not necessarily correspond to a straightforward rejection of the Portuguese language, even though the choice of the former colonizer's language as the official language of independent Timor-Leste continues to be seen as controversial. Instead it forms part of a more generalized desire that the East Timorese should not be forced to adopt foreign structures against their own will, especially since they have benefited little in economic terms from international involvement since 2002. It is in this context that the apparent hostility of Abé Barreto's poems needs to be understood; they voice the fear that all the sacrifices endured by the East Timorese under the Indonesian occupation and recalled in Celso Oliveira's poetry risk being made futile by allowing others to continue to determine their future. Many East Timorese conclude that independence has only created wealth and opportunities for foreign individuals and companies, and a tiny indigenous political elite, and that living standards have changed little from what the ordinary East Timorese experienced under colonialism. These are the tensions that some of the poetry of Abé Barreto and Celso Oliveira reflect, continuing a tradition set in motion by poets of earlier decades whose task was to immerse their work in the everyday lives and preoccupations of the East Timorese.

As the many unemployed among the younger generations see the countless expensive four-wheel vehicles driven by internationals and members of parliament pass them by every day, their growing resentment at the failure of Timor-Leste's government to provide them with visible signs of an improving economic situation has on occasions led to the very circumstances that Celso Oliveira had warned against in poems such as "O tempo de recompensar." After having recalled the many sacrifices made and lives lost during the Indonesian occupation, the lyric voice refers to the presence of corruption, nepotism, and injustice in postcolonial Timor-Leste; it ends by declaring, "Se continuarmos assim, não seremos livres e independentes./Se continuarmos assim, a Indonésia rir-se-á." In April and May of 2006 Oliveira's fears became a reality as simmering tensions resulted in an outbreak of violence that left several dead and many thousands fleeing their homes. The spark that set off these events were the protests led by around six hundred members of the East Timorese armed forces, subsequently known as "the petitioners," who

felt they were the object of discrimination because they were from the west of Timor-Leste; their superiors, many of whom were from the east, were seen as denying them the same rights as their eastern colleagues. Into this dangerous mix, which was quickly and misleadingly interpreted as ethnic conflict, Major Alfredo Reinado emerged as a leading figure among the rebellious members of the military.

Reinado and his men were accused of killing members of the East Timorese Armed Forces in an ambush. Subsequently caught and imprisoned in July 2006, he escaped from jail a few weeks later with around fifty other inmates, fleeing to the mountains in the southern region of Same and evading capture until his death in 2008. He was shot dead in February of that year in circumstances that still give rise to considerable controversy. Reports claimed that he was killed as he attempted to assassinate the East Timorese president, José Ramos-Horta, simultaneous with an assassination attempt on the prime-minister, Xanana Gusmão, led by Lieutenant Gastão Salsinha. Prior to his death, and as he evaded capture, Reinado represented a significant threat to the stability of Timor-Leste as he and his armed followers issued endless communications to the awaiting media in which he derided East Timor's political leadership and called for an end to the presence of foreign security forces in the country. To some amongst the younger generation of East Timorese he became a cult figure: someone ready to stand up for their rights against both an internal political elite seen as more interested in their personal self-enrichment than in the welfare of their people, and against an international presence living off the misery of the East Timorese. In Irena Cristalis's words, "Aflredo was to become an icon, the man who in word and in deed represented the feelings of the disenfranchised—the young, the poor, the veterans. But he was also the matchstick that would light the fire" (301).

His sense of self-importance seemed to grow in line with the number of attempts various figures in the East Timorese government made—including the President himself—to initiate a process of dialogue that would see Reinado hand himself in to justice. The fact that some of those attempts took place during electoral campaigns raised some suspicions that a number of those involved were also seeking Reinado's help in securing votes for them in the area he and his men controlled. The scramble for political power in postcolonial Timor-Leste has sometimes appeared to lead some to forget the needs of the people they aim to represent, as Celso Oliveira alludes to in "O povo de Timor-Leste" from the 2009 collection *Timor Leste: A Música e a Pátria*:

> Os políticos . . .
> Hoje em dia, os políticos, não deviam usar o povo como objecto da sua [política.

Hoje em dia, o que mais interessa, é a qualidade do povo, não a quantidade.
Mas os políticos timorenses do século XXI optam
Pela quantidade em vez da qualidade. (24–28)

His apparent capacity to increase the number of potential voters for his backers led many to interpret Reinado's continuing evasion from capture as evidence of political manipulation. His reported claim that he was the reincarnation of D. Boaventura, an emblematic figure from East Timor's past who led an unsuccessful uprising against the Portuguese colonial authorities in 1911–1912, is indicative of the importance he believed he possessed in Timor-Leste's political landscape. Whether we consider his claims as delusional or not, the fact remains that Reinado became an increasingly popular role model for disaffected East Timorese youth who see little prospect of improvement in their lives, and who yearn for the consumer goods they see available all around them. "They are," as Steven Sengstock suggests, "the volatile, disenfranchised mass of East Timorese society who feel they can find neither voice nor representation in either the new Government of Xanana Gusmão or Mari Alkatiri's Fretilin opposition" (Sengstock, "Reinado to live on").

It is within this context of instability and of the experience of internal violence (which includes outbreaks after the parliamentary elections of June 2007) that cultural practitioners—and specifically writers—have had to act. At the time of my interview with him, Abé Barreto had held a weekly writers' meeting in a Dili restaurant until October of 2006, even during the violent upheaval that began in April of that year. However, the continuing lack of security, which made it particularly risky to be out after dark, meant that these meetings had to be abandoned. During the meetings, as well as discussing each others' work, participants considered the role of literature and of cultural production in general in the development of Timor-Leste. They concluded that East Timorese culture as a whole was vital to safeguarding what was seen as a unique cultural identity inherited from East Timorese oral traditions and from the liberation poets of the 1970s and 80s. Indeed, in Abé Barreto's opinion, East Timorese cultural practitioners have an important role to play in creating what he terms "a filter" to prevent an uncritical acceptance of the values transmitted through the forces of globalization. This was one of the points where he felt the East Timorese needed to "wake up and smell the coffee," as otherwise they risk looking about them for their own culture when it is already too late, having been replaced by imported cultural trends. Moreover, ignorance of the critical debates taking place within contemporary East Timorese literary and general cultural production, which simultaneously represent and attempt to safeguard an indigenous culture, makes it easier to see those like Reinado as defenders of an East Timorese cultural identity under threat. Reinado's life and death become representative

of an active defiance of internal and external elites determined to exploit the ordinary citizens of Timor-Leste and, in the process, robbing them of their native values, whether material (in terms of resources) or cultural. As Irena Cristalis remarks:

> It was not difficult to see why so many Timorese youths were in awe of him. He was a bold daredevil, loud, witty and cocky, and he did not trust the leaders. . . . He became a living legend. His image appeared on T-shirts, as a computer screensaver and as graffiti on walls; songs dedicated to him appeared on YouTube. He had become an icon: "Timor's Che Guevara," as some called him. (309–310)

Unlike Che Guevara, however, Alfredo Reinado did not present his followers with a critically reflexive ideological program, limiting himself instead to a discourse of generalized opposition that could be interpreted to suit the individual tastes of a range of disgruntled members of the East Timorese population. He became a figure whose easy consumption was facilitated by his media exposure, with national and foreign newspapers, radio and television channels (not to mention a myriad of internet sites) paying him the attention that seems unattainable to those of his compatriots involved in cultural production.

Indeed, looking around Timor-Leste for evidence of contemporary East Timorese culture, it is hard to find at first glance examples that are not produced primarily for external consumption, such as the East Timorese *tais* and *panos,* traditional woven fabrics sought after by international workers and the slowly increasing number of tourists to take home as tokens of their time in Timor-Leste. In terms of the production and dissemination of literature, opportunities for East Timorese writers to publish their work within postcolonial Timor-Leste are restricted, with almost no local dedicated publishing houses and little domestic financial support. Celso Oliveira's first collection of poems, *Timor-Leste: Lun Turu,* for example, was published in 2002 in Dili, supported by the Dili Portuguese Cultural Center of the Instituto Camões, but none of his subsequent collections have been published there. Other East Timorese writers, living in Timor-Leste or abroad, have looked elsewhere to see their work in print, whether in Portugal, Australia, or other countries seen as possessing greater infrastructural and financial resources underpinning literary production. Even abroad opportunities are nevertheless limited by the vagaries of international interest in Timor-Leste, which appears to ignore (if not deny) the East Timorese literary imagination, giving preference to memoirs of the Indonesian occupation and the resistance to it, such as Naldo Rei's 2007 *Resistance: A Childhood Fighting for East Timor,* published in Australia. The notable exception to this is Luís Cardoso, who has attained a well-deserved profile as an outstanding novelist, with four

of his five novels published originally in Portugal (where he has lived since 1974) by Dom Quixote.

Even such an acclaimed writer, however, has not been immune to publishing constraints within certain parts of the world. With his work translated into several languages, to date only his 1997 debut novel, *Crónica de uma travessia: A época do ai-dik-funam,* has been translated into English—but as *non*-fiction (in 2000 by Granta as *The Crossing: A Story of East Timor*). Notwithstanding its autobiographical content, the classification of Cardoso's *Crónica* in its English-language edition represents a denial of the imaginative capacity of its East Timorese author to fictionalize a narrative based on real events and individuals. Given that his subsequent works, for reasons we will subsequently consider, have not been translated into English, one is inclined to conclude that marketing considerations led to *The Crossing* becoming non-fiction in the Anglophone world. Even though *The Crossing* deals with much more than this, a risk could be taken in publishing a first-person memoir of the traumatic effects of the Indonesian occupation (that had come to an end one year earlier, in 1999) as experienced by its author and his compatriots, in what readers are encouraged to interpret as a *true,* heart-rending account by the text's non-fictional credentials.

The same, however, is not the case of Cardoso's later works, which have yet to be considered as exportable into the English-language world as translated texts. Any autobiographical correspondences that might have been more readily marketed as the personal testimonies of a survivor of Indonesian colonial oppression are hidden within rich fictional tapestries that refuse to present simple dichotomies between indigenous victims and external aggressors. Moreover, the foreign presence with which these later novels are principally concerned is Portuguese (in *Olhos de coruja, olhos de gato bravo* from 2002, *A última morte do Coronel Santiago* from 2003, and *O ano em que Pigafetta completou a circumnavegação* published by Sextante Editora in 2012), with the added Japanese presence in *Requiem para o navegador solitário* (2006). I would hazard that these historical settings are viewed as added hindrances to profitability within the English-language literary marketplace, in which there is a presumed ignorance of (and lack of interest in . . .) the forms of Portuguese colonialism, and with Japan's invasion of Timor seen as little more than a minor footnote in the history of the Second World War (although it holds more resonance within Australia).

Within Timor-Leste attempts are nevertheless being made to "wake up and smell the coffee" by revitalizing the cultural landscape and bringing East Timorese cultural production to national and international attention. In November 2009 the East Timorese government's Resolution 24/2009 approved a National Cultural Policy which, from the outset, declares that Timor-Leste is in the process of "construir instituições culturais sólidas e de um sentido de

identidade nacional" (República Democrática de Timor-Leste 3786). Its preamble, however, also underlines the neglect to which East Timorese culture has been consigned:

> Não tendo sido uma área fundamental de investimento dos anteriores governos Português e Indonésio, a área da cultura foi grandemente afectada com os acontecimentos de 1999, e com o facto de o esforço de reconstrução realizado entre 1999 e 2006 ter sido essencialmente direccionado para questões relacionadas com a reestruturação institucional e a educação primária. (3786)

Following colonial attempts to crush East Timorese cultural identity, the immediate post-independence period has been devoted to what had been considered more urgent priorities, leaving local writers and artists largely to their own devices. Things may be changing, however, with many of the initiatives set out in the National Cultural Policy already underway (such as a National Library, National Museum, the National Academy for the Arts and the Creative Industries, and Regional Cultural Centers), all of them devoted to the promotion of East Timorese cultural production nationally and internationally.

Writers such as Abé Barreto and Celso Oliveira were not, however, waiting for the East Timorese state to begin implementing these welcome initiatives. Without the similar backing of a major publishing house deservedly given to Luís Cardoso, Abé and Celso Oliveira have employed various strategies in order to make their work available to the public. Indeed, Abé Barreto has to date not published his poems in book form, relying instead on a significant presence on the internet, as well as engaging with those involved in other forms of cultural production. He has three dedicated blogs for his poetry and poetic writing in Tetum, Bahasa Indonesia, and English respectively, where he also publishes essays and other work related to literature and culture in general. In turn, his poems then appear on a variety of other internet sites and blogs where they are read and commented on. Additionally, Abé has worked in Timor-Leste with East Timorese visual artists, producing poems to accompany their paintings, whilst also establishing fruitful relationships with local musicians. Meanwhile, Celso Oliveira has also begun publishing poetry and prose in both Portuguese and Tetum on his own blog although, unlike Abé Barreto, he continues to publish in book form where possible. Recently this has meant turning to the online publishing service, Blurb, indicative of the lack of opportunities (or commissioning editors' interest) to publish with established publishing houses. Their efforts, as well as recent moves at governmental level, are testimony to the presence of an East Timorese literature that forms part of a wider national cultural landscape. It is not only urgent that the East Timorese wake up and smell the cultural coffee, but that those outside Timor-Leste also seek out its aroma, supporting a literary tradition that is not always to be found on bookshelves.

## Notes

1. See Grenfell for current trends and principal actors in East Timorese coffee production and export.

2. For a discussion on traditions of East Timorese resistance see Gunn's "The Five-Hundred-Year Timorese *Funu*."

3. See Duarte for an exploration of Timorese blood pact rituals.

4. Silva presents a useful account of Amílcar Cabral's influence on the theoretical outlook of the early FRETILIN leadership.



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