



**Three centuries of violence  
and struggle in East Timor  
(1726-2008), Frédéric  
DURAND**

*Friday 14 October 2011*

[Stable URL: http://www.massviolence.org/Article?id\\_article=567](http://www.massviolence.org/Article?id_article=567)

[PDF version: http://www.massviolence.org/PdfVersion?id\\_article=567](http://www.massviolence.org/PdfVersion?id_article=567)

## **Three centuries of violence and struggle in East Timor (1726-2008)**

Frédéric Durand

### **Introduction**

Incidents of mass violence have on many occasions made East Timor a focus of attention. Those that received the greatest media coverage were perpetrated during the Indonesian occupation from 1975 to 1999, which saw the death of 20-25% of a population that totalled 700,000 in 1975. During that period, the capacity of the East Timorese, in half an island the size of Belgium, to resist an archipelago with a population two hundred times greater stunned the international community.

But earlier periods were also marred by violence, such as the struggle against Portuguese colonisation in the 19th century and the Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945. Since its independence in late May 2002, the country has continued to face serious violence, especially during the 2006-2008 crisis, prompting the return of an international peacekeeping force. These events must be put into perspective, as a means of understanding the complexity of the motivations and issues at stake.

Doing so will require us to raise two fundamental questions, regarding the 1975-1999 period in particular. First, how was it that a numerically much smaller people, in a relatively small area and with much less sophisticated weapons, could withstand for almost 25 years an Indonesian army equipped with modern and destructive combat equipment such as napalm? Second, can Indonesia's mass violence be characterised as crimes against humanity or attempted genocide?

## **I. Minor episodes of violence before the early 18th century**

### *I.1. Initial contacts encouraged by trade*

The date of the first contacts between the Timorese and the Portuguese is not known precisely, aside from the fact that it was a few years after the conquest of the Sultanate of Malacca on the Malay Peninsula in 1511. At that time, the Portuguese had started moving into the trade of sandalwood, controlled by the Chinese since the mid-13th century (Eccles, 2004). Trading contacts were limited and non-violent. Even after the 1550s, when Dominicans priests started evangelising the inhabitants of the Sunda Islands, Timor remained a marginal destination, with the Portuguese preferring the nearby island of Solor (Oliveira, 2004). In 1613, the Dutch seized the port of Kupang, on the western side of the island, where a Portuguese settlement was located. By that time, the Portuguese community totalled only 89 whites and 450 mestizos (Durand, 2006-a: 87). This reflects the limited nature of their one-century presence on an island that had a population of several hundred thousand at that time. In 1642, after converting a number of local monarchs to Catholicism, the Portuguese embarked on their first real military operation in the interior. Their own forces numbered only 90 soldiers, but they obtained the support of many Timorese warriors. The same process, which entailed using the forces of local kingdoms against neighbouring realms, would later be used systematically during the colonial wars of the 19th century. In 1642, Timorese forces allowed the Portuguese to conquer the kingdom of Waiwiku-Wehale. This was not, as is sometimes written, an empire. But Waiwiku-Wehale did have a spiritual authority acknowledged by dozens of other kingdoms (Therik, 2004, Durand, 2009). This victory enhanced Portugal's prestige beyond its borders, and fostered the spread of Catholicism (Thomaz, 2008: 396).

The Dutch, who were tightening their grip on Southeast Asia, sought to dislodge the Portuguese from Timor. In 1651, their forces again seized the town of Kupang on the western side of the island, forcing Portuguese Dominican monks to establish their main base in what is today known as the Oecusse District. In 1661, with a view to stabilising the situation, the Portuguese signed a treaty with the Dutch. The VOC recognised Portugal's sovereignty over most of the island of Timor, in return for its acceptance of the Dutch presence in Kupang (Durand, 2002: 50).

### *1.2. The rise of the Topasses in the second half of the 17th century*

The 17th century saw the strengthening of the Topasses. The name referred to mestizos of Portuguese and Timorese ancestry, also known as the black Portuguese. There were two large Topasses families: the Hornay family, descending from a Dutch deserter, and the da Costa family, of Portuguese origin (Boxer, 1947). Between 1673 and 1693, António de Hornay, a Topasse, controlled the Sunda Islands. With the rank of Capitão-mor, he has been described as virtually the uncrowned king of Timor. A few years later, in 1695, Domingos da Costa, another Topasse, deposed the first envoy of the Portuguese viceroy of the Indies, António Pimentel de Mesquita. He was considered the king of Timor from 1693 to 1722, alternately allying himself with or opposing the Portuguese.

William Dampier, an English explorer who stopped on the island in 1699, noted that the natives acknowledge the King of Portugal as their sovereign and that they allowed the Portuguese colony to build a fort, which they call Lifau, and the Dutch to have a counter called Kupang. But they would never allow either to intervene in the government of their country. According to Dampier, the people of Lifau spoke Portuguese and were Catholic. They prided themselves on their religion and their Portuguese descent, and would have been very angry if anyone dared to tell them they were not Portuguese. Yet, while there, he never saw more than three whites, two of whom were priests. (Dampier, 1981)

This analysis illustrates both the pride of the East Timorese in having established links with Portugal and their rejection of all forms of imposed interference, which continues to the present day.

In fact, it was only in 1702, after two centuries of contacts, that Portugal dispatched its first governor, António Coelho Guerreiro, to Timor. He set up two systems that were to have a lasting effect on relations between the Portuguese and the Timorese, one promoting trust and the other sparking conflict, namely the granting of military ranks and the levying of the *finta* (Gunn, 1999). The assignment of Portuguese military ranks such as colonel ensured the support of many chiefs. However, while initial relations were built on symbolic alliances, trade and commerce, the introduction of the *finta* system was not welcomed by the Timorese leaders. The *finta* was a tribute in kind that allied kingdoms were obliged to pay the Portuguese governor. The new constraint sparked numerous wars. António Coelho Guerreiro had only been in Lifau for three years when he was forced to flee in the face of repeated attacks by the Topasses. This goes to show just how fragile Portugal's position remained. However, the recurrent attacks did not stop Portugal from sending governors.

## **II. Violence from the 18th to the mid-19th centuries**

### *II.1. The Battle of Cailaco in 1727*

Mass violence began largely in the 18th century, when the Portuguese tried to tighten their grip, and the Timorese kingdoms joined forces in opposition. The first major war began under the command of Topasse leader Francisco de Hornay. In 1726, 15 kingdoms from Oecusse to Ermera united against the Portuguese. Meanwhile, the governor managed to obtain the support of most of the kingdoms of the very eastern part of

the island. Thus, the two sides covered a major part of the territory of today's Republic of Timor-Leste. The Battle of Cailaco lasted six weeks, from 23 October to 8 December 1726. It mobilised 5,500 men loyal to Portugal, and probably at least as many on the opposing side. Some fighting was of exceptional violence, as evidenced by drawings of attacks and destroyed villages on a map made at the time (Durand-a, 2006: 133-138). The start of the wet season in early December put an end to the conflict, without a real winner. The Battle of Cailaco nevertheless testified to the power of action and mobilisation of the Portuguese. In 1733, more than 40 kingdoms agreed to pay the *finta*, and recognised the Portuguese crown.

## *II.2. The Battle of Penfui in 1749 and European setbacks*

Relations with the Europeans remained ambivalent. The Topasses welcomed the opening of a Catholic seminary by Portuguese Dominicans in Oecusse. But they sought to get rid of the Dutch. In 1749, Topasse mestizos met in the plain of Penfui, east of Kupang, with a force estimated at 50,000 men. Facing them, the VOC had only 23 European soldiers, a few hundred former slaves and warriors from around Kupang or neighbouring islands. Despite the imbalance, the Dutch won the battle. At least 2,000 Topasses and their allies were killed in the fighting.

Strengthened by the psychological advantage of this victory, the VOC launched a series of military expeditions in the 1750s (Gunn, 1999: 95). At the same time, the Dutch negotiated new agreements, and in 1756 signed the Treaty of Paravicini, which extended their influence to 15 kingdoms on the island's southwest. In 1759, Dutch commander von Plüskow attempted to extend the Dutch conquest by destroying a Topasse stronghold in Animata, before attacking their fort in Noemuti, where he took 400 prisoners and captured 14 cannons. This feat prompted seven more western chiefs, formerly Topasse allies, to sign a treaty with the VOC. Having the upper hand, von Plüskow proposed the establishment of a tripartite treaty between Portugal, the VOC and the Topasses. But he was killed in 1761, by Francisco da Costa and António Hornay, descendants of the two former rival Topasse families, who had decided to join forces. Subsequently, apart from taking Atapupu, in the middle of the northern coast in 1818, the Dutch scaled down their interference in internal Timorese affairs until the mid-19th century. Meanwhile, the Topasses continued their attacks on the Portuguese settlement in the current Oecusse, managing to kill the governor, Dionísio Gonçalves Rebelo Galvão, in 1766. The Timorese blockade became so threatening that his replacement as governor, António Teles de Menezes, decided to transfer the colony to the east. On 11 August 1769, the population loyal to the Portuguese (1,200 people) departed in boats to settle in the city of Dili, leaving the region of Oecusse to the Topasses. II.3. Slavery until the late 19th century

Precise figures are lacking to quantify the participation of the Portuguese in the slave trade in East Timor. Indeed, the practice was officially abolished in 1858, at which time we begin to have reliable statistics (Castro, 1867). Traditional forms of slavery in Timor have been documented, but they were often akin to systems of dependency or temporary captivity. These slaves were mainly prisoners of war or persons convicted by the local courts, particularly for witchcraft. In traditional societies, most of these dependent people were relatively well treated and became part of the family. They could buy their freedom, or even be ennobled when emancipated by a member of the local aristocracy. Moreover, their master could not ship them off the island.

In the 18th century, under the European influence, slavery became harsher. For instance, rules were changed to enable masters to ship their slaves off the island, reversing the previous prohibition of that practice, although shipments of slaves to Batavia or Macao were apparently limited to a few hundred people a year. Despite its abolition in 1858, forms of slavery were observed until the 1890s, before disappearing in the early 20th century (Gunn, 1999: 134).

### III. Violence and military campaigns from the 1860s to 1912

#### III.1. *The second half of the 19th century was a turning point*

Governor Affonso de Castro, stationed in East Timor from 1859 to 1863, played a major role in the changes ushered in as of the mid-19th century. He was behind the political and administrative division of the territory into 11 military districts, which encroached on local powers and foreshadowed contemporary partitions. Facing a critical financial situation with the depletion of sandalwood resources, Affonso de Castro also took decisions that were not welcomed by the Timorese. He increased the amount of the *finta*, and introduced forced labour. A supporter of the controversial system of forced cultivation introduced by the Dutch in Java, Affonso de Castro forced the Timorese to plant coffee and to give 20% of their harvest to the Portuguese authorities. Those who could not plant coffee were required to hand over 10% of their rice crop. It was only at this time that the Portuguese presence can be described as colonisation, in comparison with previous practices based on alliances or the payment of symbolic tributes. These requirements triggered a new round of insurrections in the kingdoms of Timor. Seeking to ignore these skirmishes, and aware of the fragility of Portuguese settlement, de Castro set himself up as an advocate of respect for local traditions and limited intervention (Roque, 2010).

The revolts continued after the departure of Affonso de Castro, culminating in the assassination of Governor Alfredo de Lacerda e Maia in 1887. However, the Portuguese were starting to import modern weapons, giving them a clear advantage over people armed with only bows and arrows, spears, hunting rifles and old cannons. Severe repression ensued. At the same time, this period was marked by a willingness to modernise the region to a degree: creation of the first library in Lahane (1879), construction of a lighthouse in Dili (1881), installation of street lighting in Dili using oil from Laclubar (1884) and the opening of the first public schools. But the Portuguese influence was pretty much limited to Dili and the assimilated minority. A census of Catholics in 1882 listed 23,000 worshippers, or about 8% of the population, with the rest remaining true to their animist rituals (Durand, 2004: 52).

#### III.2. *More than 20 military campaigns under Governor Celestino da Silva (1894-1908)*

After 1702, most of Timor's Portuguese governors spent barely two or three years in office – sometimes their tenure did not exceed a few months. José Celestino da Silva, who took office in 1894, showed exceptional longevity, occupying his post for 14 years until 1908. A former member of a squad in which he had served King Dom Carlos I of Portugal, Celestino da Silva enjoyed the support of the monarch, despite criticism prompted by his actions, both economically and militarily. He was the first governor to have regular access to modern weapons: machine guns, grenades and even the support of a naval gunboat. This enabled him to conduct more than 20 military campaigns (Pélissier, 1996). Again, the desire for independence of many Timorese kingdoms manifested itself regularly and forcefully, some local kings preferring to die than to surrender. The Portuguese victories were only made possible by the ambivalence of some Timorese chiefs or *liurais*, who opted to join forces with Portugal, either because they feared retaliation, or to raid their neighbours during military operations. In general, the governor had only 200 Portuguese soldiers and 1,500 *moradores* (Timorese soldiers recruited in Dili). Without the support of local kings, who provided combined forces exceeding 10,000 men, the Portuguese would not have been able to overcome these rebellions.

The best known of Celestino da Silva's campaigns were those against the kingdom of Manufahi. Located on the southern coast, a hundred kilometres from Dili, Manufahi had a population of over 42,000. In 1895, the king refused to pay the *finta* or to provide men for forced labour. While the governor was putting together a force to compel him to surrender, the king seized the offensive with several allies, managing to destroy a Portuguese column of several hundred soldiers and to capture their weapons. After 50 days of fighting, the two sides, both weakened, had to part with no real winner. Five years later, governor Celestino

da Silva put together unprecedented forces: 100 officers and NCOs, 1,500 moradores, 12,300 East Timorese warriors and 650 bearers. The Timorese accounted for 99% of the forces available to the governor. Divided into three columns, they moved south in late September 1900, fighting with difficulty against the hostile kingdoms. The Portuguese only achieved victory thanks to their modern weaponry. Celestino da Silva admitted being impressed by the resilience of the Timorese. After two months of fighting, the governor realised that victory was out of reach. So as not to lose face, he promised to pardon those who surrendered. He returned to Europe in 1908, after the death of his patron, King Dom Carlos I, without having been able to bring the Manufahi to heel.

Governor Celestino da Silva was also behind a plan to transform the *finta* into a poll tax (1906), the introduction of which, in the 1910s, had serious consequences. Da Silva's main objectives were to subdue the local kingdoms and to increase revenues by taxing trade and encouraging the cultivation of coffee. His doctrine consisted of two main strategies. The first was to maintain alliances with the Timorese kingdoms, while at the same time dividing to conquer. The second was to set up a military and legal administration based on traditional rights, but under an umbrella of Portuguese authority and law. To achieve these objectives, Celestino da Silva built many forts linked by a network of tracks and connected by telephone. He was also behind more positive changes (education, drinking water and a modern hospital in Dili in 1906), although they were the result of forced labour.

### *III.3. The Great War of 1911-1912*

Governor Filomeno da Câmara, who served from 1911 to 1913 and from 1914 to 1917, finally vanquished the Manufahi, after huge efforts. After the departure of Celestino da Silva, relations between the Timorese and the Portuguese had continued to deteriorate. In 1910, the abolition of the monarchy in Portugal and the advent of the Republic had undermined the symbolic link that had previously existed between the *liurais* and the king of Portugal. In more concrete terms, the *finta*'s transformation into a poll tax and the increased use of forced labour for public works and coffee plantations had put much more pressure on the population. At the end of 1911, the new ruler of the Manufahi, Dom Boaventura, joined forces with the kings of Camenasse and Raimean (Pélissier, 1996). Timorese incursions forced the Portuguese to evacuate Same, Hatolia, Maubisse and Ermera. Governor Filomeno da Câmara took fright, arming civilians in Dili and calling urgently for reinforcements from Macao, Goa and Mozambique. *Pátria*, a gunboat, and two vessels loaded with troops arrived in February 1912. Filomeno da Câmara then launched offensives in the west and south. After many battles, it was only in late March 1912 that the Portuguese managed to overcome the kingdoms of Fato Berliu, Turiscain and Bibissuço. In the west, in Atabaé and Cailaco, some local kings declared that they would prefer to die rather than submit. On many occasions, the governor expressed his admiration for the mobility and pugnacity of the Timorese, their skill in the art of guerrilla warfare, and their ingenuity in using the military equipment they captured.

Heavy fighting continued in many areas: Ambeno, Maubisse, Deribate, Leimão and Atsabe. But the arrival of two steamers with troops from Mozambique, in April and July 1912, tipped the scales in favour of the Portuguese. Through the use of artillery, machine guns and grenades, and with the gunboat *Pátria* shelling coastal areas, the governor's troops managed to take Aituto and Riaco, a mountain where some Timorese forces had taken refuge. There remained one last fortified area, Leo Laco, where Dom Boaventura had retreated with more than 12,000 men. After a two-week siege, the king of Manufahi decided to try to force his way out on 10 August 1912, after getting word of the arrival of new troops from Mozambique. He breached the Portuguese lines and escaped with a few thousand men. The next day, a second wave of besieged soldiers fled in turn. The others perished or were forced to surrender on 11 August. Sporadic attacks continued until October 1912 until May 1913, even in the enclave of Oecusse, despite the fact that the scales of military force were so clearly tipped in favour of the Portuguese.

The fighting in 1911-12 left 15,000 to 25,000 dead among the Timorese population, which at that time

accounted for more than 5% of the total population (Durand, 2009: 73). After centuries of fighting, the Timorese kingdoms had been seriously weakened, and this demonstration of force engendered a degree of resignation in respect of the colonial presence. At the time, ties between East Timor and the Dutch East Indies were very loose. Accordingly, the Indonesian nationalist movements that emerged in Java and west of the island in the years 1920-1930 had no impact in East Timor.

## **IV. Troubles at the end of the colonial period: 1942-1975**

### *IV.1. The Japanese occupation (1942-1945)*

On 17 December 1941, ten days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 1,100 Australian and Dutch soldiers landed in East Timor, despite Portugal's neutrality in the conflict. They wanted to prevent Timor from serving as a base for an invasion of Australia. At the time, East Timor was deemed pacified, and only 150 Portuguese soldiers were stationed there. The Japanese bombed Dili for the first time on 8 February 1942. They then invaded the city on 20 February, with up to 20,000 troops (Borda d'Água, 2007). The Allied soldiers had retreated into the mountains. From there, they organised sabotage missions. The Australians could only resist Japanese forces 20 times as great thanks to the help of the Timorese. The Timorese gave them information and allowed them to hide in areas where they could not have survived without assistance. The Allies started a bombing campaign in May 1942, targeting strategic objectives in Dili: the telegraph station, the power station, the customs warehouses and the hospital. The main victims were local people. In September 1942, the Japanese army set up black columns (*columnas negras*). Largely comprising people from the western part of Timor under Dutch rule, these columns of militiamen sowed violence and destruction. Here again, the East Timorese were the main victims. In November 1942, the Japanese placed the bulk of the remaining Portuguese community (600 people) in camps. In December 1942, the Australians decided to evacuate their troops, which were coming under increasing pressure. They boarded the bulk of their men between January and February 1943, as well as 540 Portuguese and mestizos, but left the Timorese defenceless. The Japanese reprisals against people suspected of having helped Western soldiers were particularly harsh. The Japanese occupation continued under American and Australian bombing, while famine-related requisitions of food and the forced labour of men and women had a serious impact on the population. The damage was considerable, with 90% of buildings destroyed. The casualties were also very severe. In 1946, the Australians set up a commission to examine war crimes committed by the Japanese army. But investigators only looked into deaths in the Allied ranks, and not among the Timorese population (Gunn, 1999: 237), despite the fact that losses among the belligerents were much lower. The Australians lost 40 men, Portugal 75 and Japan 1,500. By contrast, estimates of casualties among the local population indicate that between 45,000 and 70,000 East Timorese were killed during this period, 10-15% of the pre-war population, estimated at 450,000. James Dunn, a former Australian consul in Dili (1962-1964), has expressed the view that East Timor was one of the great catastrophes of World War II in terms of relative loss of life (Dunn, 1983).

On the western side of the island, between 1945 and 1949, Indonesian nationalists, including President Sukarno, faced with the Netherlands' refusal to recognise their 17 August 1945 declaration of independence, had opted for the principle of maintaining colonial boundaries. They accordingly pledged never to claim East Timor (Defert, 1992: 39). IV.2. The 1959 Viqueque uprising and the 1966 attack on Oecusse At the end of 1958, 14 Indonesians fled their country and sought political asylum in Dili. They claimed to be members of Permesta, a regionalist movement fighting against Sukarno's centralising government. The Portuguese governor allowed them to settle in the eastern part of the colony. In March 1959, rumours circulated about the involvement of the Indonesian consul in Dili in fomenting troubles. In 1959, an uprising broke out in the southeast of the island, lasting from 7 to 20 June. The death toll is estimated at between 500 and 1,000 (Gunn, 1999: 260). It also led to the arrest of 65 suspects among the

Timorese. Those who were considered leaders were exiled to Angola.

The motives and the role in these events of the Indonesian leaders of the time remain unclear. Some have interpreted the uprising as an early attempt to destabilise East Timor. Others see in it the beginnings of the first post-war nationalist movement. However, it is clear that it had a big impact on the political awareness of the East Timorese. Seven years later, in August 1966, when General Suharto took power in Jakarta, the burning of several villages and a mortar attack on the Oecusse District by the Indonesian army showed that Indonesia's new leader considered using force to seize the territory very early on. At that time, swift reaction by the Portuguese army discouraged the Indonesian military to take their attack further. Aside from these two events, the situation in East Timor remained relatively calm during the post-war period. Some young people were exiled in Africa for declarations deemed subversive against the colonial regime, including a future president, José Ramos-Horta. Others were introduced to Marxism in the course of their studies in Portugal, but there were no violent protests or colonial wars, as there were in Angola and Mozambique.

#### *IV.3. The start of peaceful decolonisation: 1974-1975*

In April 1974, the Carnation Revolution ended the regime of Marcelo Caetano, the successor of the dictator Salazar. This movement also prompted a measure of political awakening in East Timor, where the echo of the struggles in the Portuguese-speaking African colonies had fostered the emergence of national consciousness among the literate minority. The Timorese took advantage of this to form political parties, previously banned (Ramos-Horta, 1987: 29). Three parties were formed in May 1974, the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT), the Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT, which would become later in the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, FRETILIN) and the Timorese Popular Democratic Association (APODETI). The first two came out in favour of independence, although the UDT envisaged a period transition under Portuguese supervision. APODETI, which observers painted as a small minority, declared itself in favour of integration with Indonesia (Hill, 1978; Jolliffe, 1978; Nicol, 1978).

Upon his appointment in November 1974, the new governor of East Timor, Mário Lemos Pires, was able to measure the commitment of the population to Portugal, and at the same time the existence of a strong East Timorese identity (Lemos Pires, 1994). Despite differing standpoints within the leadership in Lisbon, Portugal began a process of decolonisation, which was confirmed at the Macao conference in May 1975. Two months later, Portugal promulgated a decree on the decolonisation of East Timor, foreshadowing the election of a constituent assembly in October 1976.

In preparation for the vote, the UDT and FRETILIN, East Timor's two biggest political parties, formed a coalition in January 1975. The Indonesian military deemed this liable to compromise their plans, and took action on several fronts (Defert, 1992: 76). They held talks with the Portuguese, in London in March 1975, in Hong Kong in May 1975, in Jakarta in August 1975 and in Rome in November 1975. The Indonesians tried to persuade Portugal to transfer sovereignty over East Timor to Jakarta, or at least to prevent Lisbon from seeking UN intervention. Meanwhile, General Suharto sought the support of US president Gerald Ford during a visit to the United States in July 1975. He obtained it easily, by arguing that FRETILIN was a communist party that would destabilise the region. The Americans had lost the war in Vietnam in April 1975, and feared the spread of communism in Asia. IV.4. The 1975 civil war

The Indonesian intelligence services also undertook to break up the UDT-FRETILIN coalition. In May 1975, they told the leaders of the UDT that they would never accept the formation of an independent government including FRETILIN members. This resulted in the UDT unilaterally terminating the coalition. In early June 1975, Portugal did not respond to a brief foray by the Indonesian military into the Oecusse District. In late July 1975, the Indonesian intelligence services told the leaders of the UDT that an armed invasion would be launched in the absence of decisive action on their part. The UDT concluded that they



had no other option than to organise a coup. On 11 August 1975, UDT leaders seized weapons from the police, with no reaction from the Portuguese administration (Defert, 1992: 77). The governor could easily have responded, as the UDT coup participants numbered less than 200, whereas the government had more than 1,700 troops. In the absence of clear instructions from Lisbon, he opted to leave Dili and to settle on the island of Ataúro. By contrast, FRETILIN was quick to rally a majority of the East Timorese. Most Timorese soldiers deserted with their weapons to form the Armed Forces for the Liberation of East Timor (FALINTIL). On 27 August, FRETILIN took Dili. By mid-September, it controlled most of East Timor.

These disorders caused fighting and excesses on both sides, including summary executions of prisoners. They cost between 1,500 and 3,000 lives, while approximately 10,000 refugees flocked, along with the UDT leaders, to the western part of Timor, where they were taken hostage by the Indonesian military.

The Indonesian army could have used this brief civil war as an excuse to justify its invasion, but General Suharto hesitated. Indonesia had over-estimated its leverage, namely the capture of 26 Portuguese officers and civilians. The Indonesian military had allowed them to cross the border in August 1975, before putting them in camps. But the Portuguese government refused to allow the Indonesian military to enter East Timor in exchange for their release. Meanwhile, between September and early December 1975, the International Committee of the Red Cross and many Western journalists were able to testify to the record of the East Timorese leaders in their management of economic and social affairs.

## **V. Twenty-four years of Indonesian occupation (1975-1999)**

### *V.1. The December 1975 invasion*

The official military invasion of 7 December 1975 was preceded by numerous attacks. Starting in September 1975, Indonesia launched a succession of military offensives on border towns, including Balibo, where five Western journalists died on 16 October. On 24 November, FRETILIN called in vain on the UN to send a peacekeeping force. On 27 November, the city of Atabae fell. Faced with the inevitability of a massive Indonesian offensive, FRETILIN unilaterally decided to declare the independence of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on 28 November 1975. Its leaders hoped to provoke a reaction from the international community (Defert, 1992: 89). Only a handful of countries recognised the new republic, including China, Cuba, Vietnam and the former Portuguese colonies, but neither the UN nor any Western power was to follow suit. On 30 November 1975, representatives of the UDT and APODETI, virtual prisoners in West Timor, were forced to sign the so-called Balibo declaration requesting the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia.

On 7 December 1975, 20 warships and 13 aircraft attacked the city of Dili. Ten thousand Indonesian soldiers were involved in the offensive. On 8 December, two corvettes left Ataúro, evacuating the last Portuguese. This demonstrates that, contrary to what has often been written, the Indonesian military did not invade East Timor after Portugal's departure, although the corvettes apparently did not seek to oppose the invasion.

Resistance proved to be greater than expected by the Indonesian army command, and the East Timorese of 1975 put the same determination into fighting the invaders as their ancestors had done against Portuguese colonial manoeuvres. Fighting continued in Baucau on 10 December, then a fortnight later in Liquiça, Suai, Aileu and Manatuto. According to Martinho da Costa Lopes, the apostolic administrator of Dili, at least 2,000 people were killed in the early days of the invasion, including Australian journalist Roger East (Lennox, 2000).

## V.2. Military campaigns and internment camps in the late 1970s

On 12 December 1975, in response to these attacks, the General Assembly of the UN strongly deplored the military intervention of the armed forces of Indonesia in Portuguese Timor (Resolution N°3485 (XXX)). It also called on the government of Indonesia to desist from further violation of the territorial integrity of Portuguese Timor and to withdraw without delay its armed forces from the territory in order to enable the people of the territory freely to exercise their right to self-determination and independence. This call was reiterated and adopted unanimously by the Security Council on 22 December 1975 (Resolution N°384). However, no intervention force was sent. Vittorio Guicciardi, a special envoy of the UN Secretary General, went to East Timor in January 1976, but returned two days later, stating that the occupying army had not allowed him to meet representatives of FRETILIN. Deceived by its own propaganda and blinded by visceral anti-communism, the Indonesian army thought it could gain control of the country in less than a fortnight. But by late December 1975, in view of the extent of resistance, it had to lift the number of troops to 25,000, or one soldier for 28 inhabitants. FALINTIL could count on 30,000 people very familiar with a country where bad roads and the start of the rainy season slowed the enemy's progress. The behaviour of the Indonesians also provoked massive rejection, even from those who could have been favourable to the invasion. By the end of 1976, most of the population had fled into the mountains. The Indonesian army controlled only the main roads and had been forced to increase its presence to 40,000 men. In August 1977, it attacked FALINTIL's headquarters in the mountains, forcing the resistance movement to abandon centralised management of its activities and to call on its 450,000 East Timorese followers to return to the plains. The following month, the occupying army decided the internment of civilians and to strike a decisive blow by launching a military campaign of encirclement and annihilation (Budiardjo and Liong, 1984; Taylor, 1991). The campaign consisted of an attack on the border area and the north coast, aimed at forcing FALINTIL to retreat to the east and the south coast. From September 1978 to March 1979, Indonesian army guns pounded away at the two great bastions of resistance, Natarbora plain and Matabéan mountain. By the end of 1979, after the death or capture of key leaders, not to mention the loss of 80% of its soldiers and 90% of its equipment, the resistance movement appeared to be crushed. All that remained were small groups scattered across the country, Xanana Gusmão being one of the last remaining leaders to have avoided capture by the army of occupation (Niner, 2000).

In December 1978, the Indonesian military admitted to having interned 372,900 Timorese people (60% of the population) in 150 camps. Confined, and with very little land to cultivate, the prisoners experienced a famine that the International Committee of the Red Cross said was as bad as Biafra and potentially as dramatic as Cambodia (Defert, 1992: 121). The situation did not improve in subsequent years. Three other famines occurred, in 1981-1982, 1984 and 1987.

But it was perhaps the tactic known as the fence of legs, conducted from May to September 1981, that constituted the Indonesian army's most critical strategic error. In an attempt to round up the last remaining resistance groups, all men aged 15 to 55 were sent to either side of the territory to form human shields on the front lines, preceding the Indonesian troops. This inhumane treatment confirmed to the Timorese that no mercy was to be expected from the occupying forces. A great deal of violence against women, ranging from harassment to rape, was also confirmed by many witnesses (Conway, 2010; KPP-HAM-TimTim, 2000; Turner, 1992). Accordingly, despite the imbalance between forces and the absence of reaction from international institutions, and faced with military campaigns, the camp policy and a system of day-to-day oppression, Xanana Gusmão had little difficulty in convincing most Timorese of the need to continue their struggle.

## V.3. The reshaping of the armed struggle in the 1980s

In the early 1980s, the Timorese forces were too small to wage a frontal war. Instead, they took the form of a mobile guerrilla. Two main areas of action were established: in the centre, in the quadrangle formed by

the cities of Ermera, Liquiça, Aileu and Dili, surprise operations were carried out, such as the attack on the Indonesian broadcasting service in Dili in January 1980. But the mainstay of the resistance forces was located in the eastern part of the country, where most of military offensives were conducted (Budiardjo and Liong, 1984; Defert, 1992). It was in this context that the resistance held its first national conference in March 1981 (Mattoso, 2005: 90). It endorsed the new strategy and formalised the system of clandestine organisations in the camps and towns: the clandestine resistance networks (NUREP). This meeting also resulted in the formation of the first East Timorese platform: the Revolutionary Council of National Resistance (CRRN), which became the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM) in 1988, then the National Council for Timorese Resistance (CNRT) in 1998. Faced with the failure of its large military offensives, the Indonesian army asked Colonel Purwanto to negotiate with the resistance in March 1983. The positions were irreconcilable. The Indonesian military wanted to negotiate the surrender of the guerrillas. The FRETILIN delegation, led by Xanana Gusmão, was only willing to accept the principle of a transitional Indonesian government, with a UN peacekeeping force, until a genuine referendum on self-determination could be held. But the negotiations allowed the declaration of a double-edged temporary ceasefire. On the international front, the Indonesian government could argue that the problem was in the process of being resolved. But it also allowed the resistance, still relatively weak, to re-establish contacts between dispersed groups and to rethink its organisation.

The Indonesian army unilaterally broke the ceasefire in August 1983, with the launch of an operation aimed at mopping up the remnants of the rebel forces. Highly mobile by that stage, the armed resistance, comprising 6,200 fighters divided into ten units, was able to avoid clashes. It even managed to reverse the situation by attacking several Indonesian convoys, enabling it to rearm and prompting the army chiefs of staff in Jakarta to abandon large-scale operations for two years. Pushing its advantage, the resistance carried out multiple attacks in late 1985. In the space of ten months, FALINTIL carried out 50 attacks. In response, the Indonesian military launched an operation aimed at definitively suppressing the resistance. Forty thousand troops were ordered to capture Xanana Gusmão. Despite massive air support, attacks on the Matabéan and Kablaki mountains failed to result in his capture. Meanwhile, FALINTIL, using information provided by Timorese people infiltrated into the occupying army, had several successes, including the liberation of the town of Viqueque for a few days in October 1986. At that time, while the international community saw East Timor as a lost cause, Gusmão was offering the country's youth a simple choice: a homeland or death (Gusmão, 1994: 178). The great strength of the resistance army was never to use violence against civilians, even against the Indonesian transmigrants, who started arriving in the territory in 1980, and who numbered roughly 85,000, or 9% of the population, by the end of the period of Indonesian occupation (Durand, 2002: 102). In December 1987, General Murdani, one of the initiators of the invasion, acknowledged to reporters that it would take years to defeat such a well-established guerrilla movement.

#### **V.4. The openness of 1989 and change in the resistance movement**

In 1989, the resistance was not in a position to achieve a military defeat, and a handful of support groups aside most of the players in the international community continued to close their eyes to the situation (Carey and Bentley, 1995; Gunn, 1997 and 2006). Mário Carrascalão, who had accepted the post of governor under the Indonesian occupation, denounced poor living conditions in the Indonesian parliament. He also highlighted the contradiction in banning foreigners from travelling to East Timor when the territory had been occupied for 14 years and the army was claiming that the situation had been normalised. The all-out closure was all the more difficult to maintain that Pope John Paul II was set to visit Indonesia at the end of the year. Preventing him from visiting what Jakarta claimed as its most Catholic province would have been to acknowledge the magnitude of the East Timorese resistance. General Suharto therefore accepted a partial opening of half of the country's districts. This change offered new means of action for the population and especially young people. In October 1989, despite massive police presence, protesters unfurled nationalist banners in front of the international press during the papal visit to Dili, leading to the arrest of about 40 young people. Three months later, in January 1990, further protests were dealt with

harshly during the visit to Dili by John Monjo, US ambassador to Indonesia, initiating a systematic practice marring all visits by foreign delegations, at the risk of demonstrators' lives. But most East Timorese people were holding out for the arrival of a Portuguese parliamentary delegation, scheduled from 4 to 16 November 1991. Back in 1989, Xanana Gusmão had ordered people to restrict military operations to avoid being compromised. Aware of the difficulty in keeping control of the situation, the Indonesian military tightened its conditions to the point where they became unacceptable, prompting Portugal to suspend the delegation's visit.

## **V.5. The 1991 Santa Cruz massacre and the reawakening of the international community**

On November 12, 1991, several thousand East Timorese gathered for the funeral of a young separatist killed during the visit of Pieter Kooijmans, Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights on the question of torture. Three thousand five hundred protesters marched through the streets of Dili, waving flags, en route to the Santa Cruz cemetery. Thinking that it could act with impunity, the Indonesian army fired on the crowd, unaware that journalist Max Stahl was filming the scene. Images broadcast on Western TV provoked protests from countries including Canada and the Netherlands, and prompting the United States to freeze military assistance. Under international pressure, and after initially having denied the significance of the event, General Suharto was forced to set up a commission of inquiry, which worked under the control of the army. It reported an official death toll of about 50, whereas Human Rights advocacy organisations had published a list naming 271 dead, 382 wounded and 250 missing (Durand, 2002: 184). The Santa Cruz incident sparked a new wave of international support. In March 1992, the Lusitania Expresso ferry left Portugal with a former president of the Portuguese Republic and journalists from 20 countries on board (Durand, 2006: 428). However, faced with the threat of Indonesian navy fire, the vessel had to stop at the edge of East Timorese territorial waters.

The capture of Xanana Gusmão in a hiding spot in Dili on 20 November 1992 constituted another major event that year, given that the Indonesian military had been hunting him for over 10 years. Subjected to torture, he was forced publicly to call on his comrades to give up the fight. A military court sentenced him to life in prison, before commuting his sentence to 20 years. Xanana Gusmão had to start a hunger strike to compel the Indonesian authorities to transfer him from a jail for common-law criminals to an institution for political prisoners. Ironically, Xanana Gusmão's arrest gave a new lease of life to East Timorese nationalism. Inspired by their imprisoned leader, young East Timorese studying in Indonesia manifested their desire for independence on many occasions. Many were imprisoned and tortured for protesting publicly or for their involvement in clandestine activities, such as Fernando de Araújo, aka Lasama, the general secretary of the RENETIL student network (Resistência Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor-Leste). It should be noted also that despite the very strict rules imposed by the regime of General Suharto, several Indonesian intellectuals dared to denounce their country's occupation and oppression of East Timor in the early 1990s (Aditjondro, 1994; Mubyarto et al., 1990).

## **V.6. The turning point of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize and the Asian crisis of 1998**

In the mid-1990s, more than 20 years after the military invasion, the awakening of the international community was not mirrored by the leaders of the major international institutions or the global political powers. Even the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded in October 1996 to Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, Bishop of Dili, and José Ramos-Horta, East Timor's representative at the UN, did not prompt any reaction from the UN Security Council or force Indonesia to end its illegal occupation.

It was ultimately the Asian crisis that would trigger a profound change in the situation, starting in 1997. In

May 1998, ten months after the start of this crisis, the Indonesian economy, weakened by corruption and nepotism, showed the extent of its fragility, when it was revealed that two-thirds of Indonesians were living below the poverty line. After being fired upon by the military, Indonesian students occupied the parliament in Jakarta, forcing General Suharto to resign after 33 years in power. His vice president, Jusuf Habibie, succeeded him on 20 May 1998. On 9 June, the new president proposed a special status for East Timor. Six days later, 15,000 East Timorese students took to the streets of Dili to demand a genuine referendum on self-determination and the release of Xanana Gusmão. During the following month, 65,000 Indonesians, mostly transmigrants, fled the country.

## **VI. The August 1999 referendum and achievement of independence**

### *VI.1. 1998-1999: the bad faith of the Indonesian authorities*

In 1998, Indonesia resumed talks with Portugal. However, as in 1975, the occupying army sought to divide the East Timorese and to intimidate pro-independence fighters in order to impose its will. In August 1998, Indonesian military leaders assembled the Timorese militias they had formed, calling on them to protect integration. These anti-independence militias had won logistics and financial support that had seen their ranks swell from 1,200 to about 9,000 men in 1999 (Durand, 2002: 116). In November 1998, faced with rising violence, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed his concern. Portugal suspended the talks. However, the ball was rolling. In January 1999, the Indonesian president said he would ask the National Assembly (MPR) to approve independence if his proposed autonomy (i.e. integration with Indonesia) was rejected. On 5 May 1999, the UN, Portugal and Indonesia signed a tripartite agreement bearing on the organisation of a popular consultation in which the population could vote on the proposal for autonomy within the unitary Republic of Indonesia. The term referendum had been avoided to allow Indonesia to save face, but the stakes were high, as rejection of autonomy status would automatically entail the separation of East Timor from Indonesia.

In May-June 1999, the UN team in charge of preparing the referendum (United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor, UNMISET), led by Ian Martin, was witness to intimidation and assassinations perpetrated by pro-Indonesian militia. In July 1999, 90,000 people, or 10% of the population, had to take refuge in the mountains to escape the attacks. Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, called for a UN peacekeeping force to be sent. Her call met with the refusal of General Wiranto, commander of the Indonesian armed forces, who was not about to let the UN run the process. Ian Martin said in turn that observers had little doubt that the Indonesian armed forces were responsible for forming and arming the pro-integration militia groups (Martin, 2001).

Despite threats and attacks, more than 98% of East Timorese voters went to the polls on 30 August 1999. The extent of the turnout made the outcome of the vote predictable. As of 1 September, before the results had been announced, militias backed by army units began the systematic destruction of public buildings. On 4 September 1999, the UN announced that 78.5% of the population had voted for independence. The announcement of this overwhelming vote triggered a spike in violence. The militias and the army continued to destroy buildings, as well as the archives that could have proven their abuse. Three hundred thousand people, a third of the population, were also forcibly displaced to West Timor, while summary executions prompted hundreds of thousands of East Timorese to flee to the mountains (Durand, 2002: 124).

The attacks against civilians and the Church were so violent that US president Bill Clinton declared on 10 September 1999 that the proven complicity of the Indonesian army [was] unacceptable. Two days later, president Yusuf Habibie agreed to the deployment of an international peacekeeping force, INTERFET, under Australian command, which landed in Dili on 20 September. It had secured the entire country by

early October 1999.

### *VI.2. The human toll of 25 years of occupation*

Timor-Leste is one of the greatest human tragedies of the second half of the 20th century. Despite the various commissions of inquiry, we will probably never have definitive data, because so much evidence has been destroyed. The numbers are nevertheless extremely high. According to Indonesian sources, the occupation resulted in at least 150,000 deaths, of which 80,000 victims during military operations and 70,000 dead during the famines of the 1970s (Durand, 2002: 88). Abílio Osorio Soares (1992-1999), appointed governor by the Indonesian administration, went so far in 1994 as to put the death toll from the invasion at 200,000. In October 2005, the report of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) estimated the possible number of victims at 183,000 (CAVR, 2010). Many independent sources suggest that the occupation may have resulted in 250,000 deaths between 1975 and 1999 (Taylor, 1991; Defert, 1992). In any event, the number is substantial. Considering that the total population of East Timor stood at about 700,000 in 1975, one can take it that between 20% and 30% of the 1975 population perished (Defert, 1992: 147-150; Durand, 2002: 86-97).

The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation between Indonesia and Timor-Leste puts the number of deaths during the preparation of the 1999 referendum alone at more than 1,400 (CTF, 2005). The occupation of East Timor also had dramatic consequences for many young Indonesians enrolled in a war waged by the dictatorship of General Suharto. According to internal evaluations of the Indonesian army, corroborated by FALINTIL, 17,000 Indonesian soldiers perished (Defert, 1992: 101). In addition to this very large casualty list, immense trauma was caused by the conflict and the period of occupation, especially since Indonesia has refused to acknowledge the extent of its responsibility and that the risk of retaliation has left East Timorese leaders preferring to show pragmatism by withdrawing its call for the establishment of an international tribunal along the lines of those established for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

### *VI.3. The occupation of East Timor: crime against humanity or attempted genocide ?*

Faced with such figures, one may wonder whether the occupation of East Timor and its consequences can be described as a crime against humanity, or even attempted genocide. The first point was examined as early as 1999 by an Indonesian commission looking into human-rights violations in East Timor (KPP-HAM-Tim-Tim). Its report, issued in January 2000, left little doubt as to the need to explore this question in greater depth: However in the intensive investigation over 4 months, the Commission considered that what had happened was far more than gross violations of basic human rights. First, the fact was found of definite policies issued both by those in charge of security in East Timor and the local government which made possible the continuation of the criminal acts. [&] Two, in the time frame which was the area of investigation by the Investigative Commission, criminal acts on a wide, massive, intensive and collective scale were seen. [&] The form of the acts in 1999] fulfils conditions for the category of criminal acts against humanity. (KPP-HAM-Tim-Tim, 2000, official translation)

More structurally, can it be argued that there was an attempted genocide, as implied for instance in the title of the book by Gabriel Defert (1992)? The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide became effective on 12 January 1951, and has been ratified by 140 countries, more than 70% of UN member states. Article II of the Convention defines genocide as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) killing members of the group; (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [or] (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. In view of these criteria, there can be little doubt that the acts and means of occupation of East Timor by Indonesian troops from 1975 to September 1999 bear all

the characteristics of genocide. That said, it remains to be seen whether there was intentionality, i.e. whether the crimes in East Timor resulted from criminal negligence or a genuine desire to destroy all or part of a group of people.

It is difficult to answer this question categorically. However, a number of aggravating factors argue against ruling out intentionality. Aside from the military campaigns that hit civilians and resistance fighters indiscriminately, restrictions on food aid (when it had been established that populations confined in camps were experiencing severe famines), particularly intense family planning (imposed partly without the knowledge of the people affected) and, in September 1999, the forced displacement of people, including many children, suggest that some factions of the Indonesian military did indeed intend to destroy at least part of the East Timorese people between 1975 and 1999.

Only the creation of an international tribunal would allow a ruling to be made on this matter. The UN was in a position to set one up between October 1999 and May 2002, but failed to do so, leaving it up to the new state of Timor-Leste to make the request. While many human-rights advocacy groups criticise president José Ramos-Horta for having abandoned the idea in 2009, one can also understand Timor-Leste's decision. One can also ask why the UN itself failed to initiate the process before May 2002. The answer is probably to be found in the inherent contradiction of the UN, which is supposed to defend the right of indigenous people to self-determination, while in reality being a club of sovereign states. Furthermore, the UN itself would probably not have emerged unscathed from the trial process, as it allowed an illegal occupation to go on for 25 years, whereas it could have deployed a peacekeeping force as early as December 1975, pursuant to Security Council Resolution N°384 calling on the Indonesian government to withdraw without delay all its forces from the territory.

## **VII. The crises of independence: 2002-2008**

### *VII.1. The first post-independence crises: 2002-2005*

Since independence in May 2002, the country has experienced several periods of unrest. While the 2006-2008 crisis received the most international coverage, it was not the first that the country had gone through. In November and December 2002, anti-government protests resulted in the destruction of administrative buildings, the looting of several shops and the residences of people close to the prime minister, accused of favouritism. In April and May 2005, recurrent demonstrations took place in the capital, in protest against the government's desire to reduce the influence of religion in teaching (Cabasset-Semedo and Durand, 2009). This brought to light divisions between the population and the state. Particular tensions emerged between the two Timorese diasporas, one embracing the English-speaking world (the UN, Australia and the United States) and the other the Portuguese-speaking world (Portugal, Brazil and Lusophone Africa). Other divisions also emerged between the old guard of the resistance, living in the mountains and the eastern regions, and those who had struggled against the occupier, particularly in the cities and in the western part of the country. An example of such divisions can be seen in the fact that former resistance fighters were generally taken into the army, while those that served in the police during the Indonesian occupation tended to enter the police force, fostering distrust between these two institutions. The very secular positions of some historical FRETILIN activists made for choppy relations with a population that is 96% Catholic. Similarly, the initial ban on access to the administration for non-Portuguese speaking excluded much of the youth educated during the Indonesian period.

As such, the UN certainly shares a good deal of responsibility for the political excesses of the transition. In particular, it failed to prepare East Timor's leaders for the magnitude of the task ahead, especially in terms of management. Thus, budget execution averaged roughly 95% during the transition period from 1999 to

2002, when the UN administration was doing the job, but without giving sufficient training to the East Timorese. After the departure of the UN experts, the figure fell to 75% in 2004-2005 and 62% in 2005-2006 (Durand, 2008: 121). The 2006 crisis can as such be ascribed in part to the growing inability of the Timor-Leste administration to keep a lid on public expenditure. Not only has the government failed to cover a third of its budget, but the promises of assistance or pensions to the poor and veterans have been slow to materialise, fuelling discontent.

### *VII.2. The 2006-2008 crisis*

Another aspect of the problem is a lack of knowledge of the Timorese reality by experts during the period of transition. In 2001, belatedly grasping the need to establish a national constitution before independence, the UN opted for the easy way out by proposing a draft constitution modelled largely on Portugal's (Babo Soares et al., 2003; Gunn and Huang, 2006: 111). Based on the principle of a strong legislative branch, the constitution gives a largely symbolic role to the president, which is not consistent with the traditions of conflict resolution in East Timor. This feature had serious consequences in 2006.

The crisis was triggered in January 2006 by a petition of 600 soldiers (out of a total force of 1,600), led by Lieutenant Gastão Salsinha. The men claimed discrimination because of their roots in the western part of the country. Indeed, a long-standing distinction continues between populations in western Timor-Leste (Kaladi/Loromonu) and those hailing from the eastern part of the country (Firaku/Lorosae), although it is neither ethnic nor linguistic (Durand, 2002 & 2006-b: 140, Gunn, 2010: 86), and neither clearly defined nor clearly delineated in geographic terms. It was mainly forged during the colonial period between people from the west, close to Dili, who were considered more assimilated, and those hailing from the east, who were deemed more rustic. It was reinforced during the Indonesian occupation from 1975 to 1999, when most of the armed resistance (linked to FRETILIN) was based in the east. The phenomenon was central to the petitioners' claims.

President Xanana Gusmão, to whom the petition of the 600 soldiers who considered themselves the victims of discrimination was presented, could not handle the issue, because the national constitution did not empower him to do so. While the problem was relatively simple, he was obliged to pass the petition on to the government, which did not take the issue seriously enough, ordering the soldiers to return to their barracks pending an internal investigation. The petitioners refused, and deserted with their weapons, winning the support of some of the military police rallied around Major Alfredo Reinado, a hero of the resistance who quickly became an emblematic figure in the protest movement. These desertions led to serious troubles that caused the deaths of 37 people and displaced 150,000 others. The situation quickly degenerated, and President Gusmão ultimately requested the return of a multinational force, while the rebels took to the mountains. Poor management of the crisis led to the resignation of the interior minister and the prime minister (Kingsbury and Leach, 2007: 10).

Having become aware of the problem, Xanana Gusmão opted to run for the post of prime minister in the 2007 elections, leaving José Ramos-Horta to assume the presidency. But this did not resolve the 2006 crisis, largely because the elections had removed FRETILIN from power, triggering violent protests by its members that lasted several weeks. The crisis only ended with a dual assassination attempt against José Ramos-Horta and Xanana Gusmão on 11 February 2008. The president, although seriously wounded, recovered, while the main rebel leader, Alfredo Reinado, was killed in the attack. The subsequent amnesty process allowed the return of 100,000 people interned in camps. The last remaining camps were closed in 2009.

## **Elements of a conclusion**



The crises that took place between 2002 and 2008 have been used by some as a pretext for presenting Timor-Leste as an immature or non-viable country. This argument, which was used to justify the invasion in 1975, is questionable, to say the least. The crises must also be analysed in the light of the lessons of history, including the shift in the country's identity, in conjunction with the trauma of occupation. In fact, the fierce desire for independence of the Timorese kingdoms, which manifested itself with the very first contacts with the Portuguese and endured through the struggle against Indonesian occupation, is now facing new constraints. The country must fit into the international community and adapt to its institutional structure. In addition, different groups, both ethno-linguistic and political, must accept a logic of reconciliation and compromise made difficult by the legacy of antagonism dating back to the years of struggle, particularly between resistance fighters and militia. Taking the problems created by France's four-year occupation during World War II, both internally and in its relations with Germany, and extrapolating the effects of this occupation as if it had lasted not four but 24 years, gives one a better measure of the challenges facing Timor-Leste today. A challenge compounded by the fact that so many of the crimes and acts of violence committed in the country will go unpunished.

**Frédéric Durand** is a geographer, teaching at Toulouse-Le Mirail University and specialising in environmental, historical and political issues in Southeast Asia.

### **Bibliography**

ADITJONDRO, George J., 1994, *In the Shadow of Mount Ramelau, the Impact of the Occupation of East Timor*, Amsterdam: Indoc.

BABO SOARES, Dionisio da Costa, Michael MALEY, James J. FOX, Anthony J. REGAN, 2003, *Elections and Constitution making in East Timor*, Canberra: SSGM-The ANU.

BORDA D'ÁGUA, Flávio, 2007, *Le Timor Oriental face à la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1941-1945)*, Lisbon: Instituto diplomático.

BOXER, Charles Ralph, 1947, *The Topasses of Timor*, Koninklijke Vereeniging Indisch Instituut, n°LXXIII Afdeling Volkenkunde n°24.

BUDIARDJO, Carmel, *Liem Soei LIONG*, 1984, *The War Against East Timor*, London: Zed Books Ltd.

CABASSET-SEMEDO, Christine, Frédéric DURAND (eds.), 2009, *East-Timor, How to Build a New Country in Southeast Asia in the 21st Century*, Bangkok-Paris: IRASEC-CASE.

[http://www.irasec.com/components/com\\_irasec/media/upload/OP09-East-Timor\\_Cabasset-Durand.pdf](http://www.irasec.com/components/com_irasec/media/upload/OP09-East-Timor_Cabasset-Durand.pdf)

CAREY, Peter, G. Carter BENTLEY (eds), 1995, *East Timor at the Crossroads: The Forging of a Nation*, New York: Social Science Council.

CASTRO, Affonso de, 1867, *As Possessões Portuguezas na Oceania*, Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional.

CAVR (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor), 2010, *Chega! Laporan Komisi Penerimaan, Kebenaran dan Rekonsiliasi Timor-Leste*, Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2010.

CONWAY, Jude (ed.), 2010, *Step by Step: Women of East Timor*, Stories of Resistance and Survival, Darwin: Charles Darwin University Press.

CTF, 2005, *Final Report of the Commission of Truth and Friendship (CTF) Indonesia-Timor-Leste*, xxi-303 p.

DAMPIER, William, 1981, *A Voyage to New Holland, the English Voyage of Discovery to the South Seas in 1699*, Gloucester: Allan Soutton.

DEFERT, Gabriel, 1992, *Timor-Est, le génocide oublié, droit d un peuple et raisons d États*, Paris: L Harmattan.

DUNN, James, 1983, *Timor: A People Betrayed*, Milton Queensland: The Jacaranda Press.

DURAND, Frédéric, 2011, *Timor-Leste, premier État du troisième millénaire*, Paris: Belin-La Documentation Française.

DURAND, Frédéric, 2009, *42 000 ans d histoire de Timor-Est*, Toulouse: Editions Arkuiris.

DURAND, Frédéric, 2008, *Timor-Leste en quête de repères, perspectives économique-politiques et intégration régionale 1999-2050*, Toulouse-Bangkok: Arkuiris-IRASEC.

DURAND, Frédéric, 2006-a, *Timor 1250-2005, 750 ans de cartographie et de voyages*, Toulouse-Bangkok: Arkuiris-IRASEC.

DURAND, Frédéric, 2006-b, *East Timor, a Country at the Crossroads of Asia and the Pacific, a Geohistorical Atlas*, Preface by José Ramos Horta, IRASEC-Silkworm-Books, Bangkok/Chiang-Mai.

DURAND, Frédéric, 2004, *Catholicisme et protestantisme dans l île de Timor 1556-2003, construction d une identité chrétienne et engagement politique contemporain*, Toulouse-Bangkok: Arkuiris-IRASEC.

DURAND, Frédéric, 2002, *Timor Lorosa e, Pays au carrefour de l Asie et du Pacifique, un atlas géo-historique*, Marne-la-Vallée/Bangkok: Presses universitaires de Marne-la-Vallée/IRASEC.

ECCLES, Lance, 2004, Early Chinese Accounts of Timor , *Studies in Languages and Culture of East Timor*, vol. 6, pp. 178-187.

GUNN, Geoffrey C., 2010, *Historical Dictionary of East Timor*, Lanham-Toronto-Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

GUNN, Geoffrey C., 2006, *Complicity in Genocide*, Report to the East Timor Truth Commission on International Actors, Macau: Tipografia Macau Hung Heng Ltd.

GUNN, Geoffrey C., Reyko HUANG, 2006, *New Nation: United Nations Peace-Building in East Timor*, Macau: Tipografia Macau Hung Heng Ltd.

GUNN, Geoffrey C., 1999, *Timor Loro Sae: 500 Years*, Macau: Livros do Oriente.

GUNN, Geoffrey C., 1997, *East Timor and the United Nations, the Case for Intervention*, Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press.

GUSMÃO, Xanana, 1994, *Timor Leste, um Povo, uma Pátria*, Lisbon: Edições Colibri.

- HILL, Helen Mary, 1978, *Fretilin: the Origins, Ideologies and Strategies of a Nationalist Movement in East Timor*, M.A. Clayton-Australia: Monash University.
- JOLLIFFE, Jill, 1978, *East Timor, Nationalism & Colonialism*, Queensland: University of Queensland Press.
- KINGSBURY, Damien, Michael LEACH (eds.), 2007, *East Timor beyond Independence*, Clayton-Australia: Monash Asia Institute.
- KPP-HAM-TimTim, 2000, *Ringkasan Eksekutif Laporan Penyelidikan Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia di Timor Timur*, Jakarta, 31 January.
- LEMOS PIRES, Mário, 1994, *Decolonização de Timor, Missão Impossível ?*, 3e edição, Lisbon: Publicações Dom Quixote.
- LENNOX, Rowena, 2000, *Fighting Spirit of East Timor, the life of Martinho da Costa Lopes*, Sydney: Pluto Press.
- MARTIN, Ian, 2001, *Self-Determination in East Timor, The United Nations, the Ballot, and International Intervention*, Boulder-London: International Peace Academy Occasional Paper Series, Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- MATTOSO, José, 2005, *A dignidade, Konis Santana e a Resistência Timorese*, Lisbon: Temas e Debates.
- MUBYARTO, Loekman SOETRISNO, HUDIYANTO, Edhie DJATMIKO, Ita SETIAWATI, Agnes MAWARNI (eds.), 1990, *East Timor, the Impact of Integration, an Indonesian Socio-Anthropological Study*, Australia IRIP Inc.
- NICOL, Bill, 1978, *Timor, the Stillborn Nation*, Melbourne: Visa Book.
- NINER, Sarah (ed.), 2000, *To Resist Is to Win! The Autobiography of Xanana Gusmão*, Melbourne: Aurora Books/David Lovell Publishing.
- OLIVEIRA, Luna de, 2004, *Timor na História de Portugal, edição facsimilada da edição de 1949*, Lisbon: Fundação Oriente.
- PELLISSIER, René, 1996, *Timor en guerre, le crocodile et les Portugais (1847-1913)*, Orgeval: Pélissier éditeur.
- RAMOS-HORTA, José, 1987, *Funu, the Unfinished Saga of East-Timor*, Trenton: The Red Sea Press, Inc.
- ROQUE, Ricardo, 2010, *Headhunting and Colonialism. Anthropology and the Circulation of Human Skulls in the Portuguese Empire, 1870-1930*, Basingstoke: Palgrave-MacMillan.
- TAYLOR, John G., 1991, *Indonesia's Forgotten War. The Hidden History of East Timor*, London: Zed Books.
- THERIK, Tom, 2004, *Wehale, the Female Land. Traditions of a Timorese Ritual Centre*, Canberra: Pandanus Books.

THOMAZ, Luís Filipe, 2008, *País dos Belos, achegas para a compreensão de Timor-Leste*, Macau: Instituto Português do Oriente-Fundação Oriente.

TURNER, Michele, 1992, *Telling East Timor, Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*, Sydney: New South Wales University Press.