CHAPTER 4

The Politics of History in Timor-Leste

Michael Leach

National history remains an important concern of East Timorese public life. While surveys demonstrate high levels of popular pride in East Timorese history (Leach 2012), the very centrality of the Resistance to East Timorese nationalism has resulted in considerable political conflict over the symbolic ownership of that history: over who is included, excluded, or recognised in the central narrative of *funu* (struggle; see Ramos-Horta 1987), and, also, how younger people can feel part of the national story. Major episodes of civil unrest since independence (the 2002 riots, the 2005 Catholic Church protests over voluntary religious education, the 2006 political-military crisis, tensions with veterans' groups) have normally contained a strong element of demand for recognition of contributions to the achievement of independence. This has been a prominent theme in post-independence electoral contests as well. As was evident in the 2012 elections, participation in the resistance to the Indonesian occupation remains a powerful source of political legitimacy, and debates over inclusion or exclusion of certain actors from the narrative of national liberation have been tools in electoral campaigning and public discourse (Powles 2012).

Since independence, formerly suppressed political tensions within the modern nationalist movement have also posed notable difficulties for writing the national history curriculum for schools. Following the replacement of the former Indonesian history curriculum, interim curricula have typically covered history up to 1974 more thoroughly than the critical and difficult years that followed. The legacies of divisions within East Timorese society and political elites from the 1974–75 civil war era, the 1999 referendum, and the political-

military crisis of 2006 have posed difficulties for drafting a national history curriculum, with some areas still considered politically difficult or ‘too hot to handle’ (Leach 2007, 2010).

There are, however, some recent signs of *rapprochement* in these post-independence ‘history wars’, and a moderation of political conflict since the 2012 elections. This chapter briefly examines some of these divisions since independence, and the way these can be seen in part as symbolic struggles for recognition (Honneth 1995). It examines how history is deployed in national politics, recent developments in the drafting of national history curricula in schools, and the ongoing process of filling in the gaps of resistance history. It then focuses on the way these tensions have been reconfigured in recent years.

The history wars: fault lines and constituencies

As with other postcolonial nations, previously suppressed political divisions within the independence movement emerged in the wake of national liberation. With deep divisions within its small political elite dating to the late colonial era, a range of interconnected ‘history wars’ have created ongoing challenges for writing a history curriculum since independence, with different internal divisions stemming from events of 1974–75, 1999, and 2006 (Leach 2007, 2009). For some East Timorese, writing the national history is still too controversial a task, with tensions over the divisive civil war period, divisions within the independence movement, and the collaboration of segments of an occupied civilian population still close at hand. As numerous commentators have noted, reconciliation between the parties in the short-lived but bitter civil war in 1975—FRETILIN (*Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente*; Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) and UDT (*União Democrática Timorense*; Timorese Democratic Union)—is incomplete, despite the formation of the more inclusive united front *Conselho Nacional da Resistência Maubere* (National Council of the Maubere Resistance) in 1986 (transformed into the CNRT (*Conselho Nacional de Resistência Timorense*; National Council of Timorese Resistance) in 1998) and the efforts of the *Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor Leste* (CAVR; Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation) to facilitate this process. As one East Timorese teacher noted in 2005:

Where to start? It will be necessary to be diplomatic with Portugal and Indonesia. When it comes to the civil war in 1975, the parties still exist. And some of the Balibo parties—UDT, Apodeti, Kota, Trabalhista—I don’t know why you’d give them an opportunity as they brought East Timor to a terrible time. But this is part of democracy, so fine. It will be a controversial issue, very sensitive. So when you start talking history, you come to a sensitive issue (see Leach 2006: 233).

There is also the long-running process of reconciliation between the majority of independence supporters, and the pro-integration minority, arising from the dramatic and violent separation from Indonesia in 1999. While this generates less public heat, owing to the priority of good relations with Indonesia, there are bitter and unresolved legacies of the 1999 referendum just below the surface of East Timorese society, with a largely unaddressed history of violence—including crimes against humanity committed during the Indonesian occupation. Though these issues enjoy little elite support, they rear up as marginal voices, normally from victims' groups protesting the lack of justice for crimes committed during the occupation (Kent 2012).

Other fault lines appeared after the nation's independence during the period of the first constitutional government from 2002–06. Backgrounded by unmet material expectations, a range of political, cultural and intergenerational tensions emerged, including political divisions between the government and president in the freshly minted semi-presidential system. There were also growing fissures between a largely secular government and the powerful Catholic Church. These wider fault lines were catalysed by tensions between the security forces allied to different elite political factions, and exploded in the political-military crisis of 2006. Though the crisis was triggered by claims inside the military that those from 'eastern' districts had contributed more to the resistance, and from junior 'western' officers claiming discrimination in promotions, a wide range social tensions contributed to the 2006 crisis.

Some of these fault lines were strongly related to the history of the Timorese Resistance. Primary among these issues were intra-elite conflicts between FRETILIN and non-FRETILIN members of the former 'united front' of the CNRT (Leach 2006: 233), and, notably, ongoing tensions between FRETILIN and former CNRT figures over the symbolic 'ownership' of the Resistance, its powerful narrative of national liberation, and the fruits of post-independence political power. In the early years of independence, some Timorese felt that FRETILIN's self-styling as the inheritor of the independence struggle was too narrow and excluded too many. On the other hand, other political actors felt that the importance of FRETILIN resistance in the late 1970s and early 1980s has been neglected in favour of a more unifying and politically palatable emphasis on the subsequent CNRT 'united front' years. Some of these tensions between FRETILIN and the reconstituted political party CNRT (*Congresso Nacional para a Reconstrução de Timor*; National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction) can be traced to internal conflict within FALINTIL (*Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste*; Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor) itself during the late Resistance era (Niner 2009).

Notably, despite the so-called 'east-west' regional conflict that flared violently in 2006 and left 150,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Dili, there were no examples of 'separatist' discourses at any point of the crisis. Even at the peak of these short-lived but intense conflicts, none of the protagonists sought to deny a common historical bond, nor the view that all East Timorese should form a single nation—even if, as Kammen (2003) has observed, the nationalist/traitor trope is frequently employed in a range of social conflicts. As such, the crisis and other precursor conflicts are perhaps best viewed, using Axel Honneth's (1995) term, as 'struggles for recognition': they seek to secure acknowledgement of contributions to the valued common project of East Timorese nationalism; or, at times, to secure recognition of other identities that remain important to these actors, including local and 'traditional' forms of identity.

Broadly speaking, a recognition approach examines the way distorted or inadequate forms of recognition may become important sources of motivation for political mobilisation and resistance (Honneth 1995: 138–39). Perceived 'disrespect' to a group's sense of self, to its traditions and values, or a perceived 'misrecognition' of its contribution to shared and valued social goals, such as national independence, may create the conditions for political conflict (Honneth 1995: 121–43). A 'recognition' dynamic was evident in other political divisions since independence, such as those between 'diaspora' and 'local' independence movement figures, with widely reported popular resentment against exiled political leaders 'taking over' post-independence politics, having been in the diaspora during the Indonesian occupation.

The return of a largely secular leadership also saw tensions with the Catholic Church, which had played a key role in the Resistance. Others noted a growing gap between elite and popular values. For Trindade and Castro (2007: 14), for example, a widely held view across Timor-Leste was that 'the nation-state seems to benefit only the political elites ... which in turn come mainly from the eastern region that claimed to have fought more in the resistance and from the returned Timorese diaspora'. In sum, the 2006 crisis highlighted the way the nation-building process had been greatly complicated by 'recognition' style struggles over the relative contributions of various political actors to the achievement of East Timorese independence, or the apparent misrecognition by the new state of key popular values. Some aspects of intergenerational tensions have also assumed the character of 'recognition' struggles. These included the obvious issue of language policy, especially in the early post-2002 years, but also wider conflicts over the political and cultural dominance of older nationalists in post-independence political settlements. These tensions extended to the comparative neglect of the youth-dominated civilian resistance in the national

memorial landscape, compared with the greater public valorisation of armed combatants of FALINTIL and senior FRETILIN and CNRT 'national heroes' (Babo-Soares 2003; Leach 2009).

Against the backdrop of these fault lines, a range of constituencies have been making recognition-style claims against the East Timorese state. At various times, these constituencies have included veterans and military petitioners; IDPs during the crisis of 2006–07; the former clandestine resistance; youth; traditionalists favouring a greater role for customary law; the Catholic Church; victims groups; and others.¹ It is worth noting that when taken together, FALINTIL veterans, youth, traditionalists (including *liurai*—traditional rulers), and victims of violence from 1974–99 potentially represent a substantial percentage of the population, which has at times expressed dissent at their perceived exclusion from forms of institutional and symbolic recognition by the state. In addition, key veterans groups such as the Committee for the Popular Defence of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (CPD-RDTL) and Sagrada Familia have explicitly denied recognition of the 2002 constitution, questioning the wider political settlement as a whole.

The politics of demanding recognition of contributions to the Resistance, or acknowledgement of suffering during the occupation, has been the basis of many political claims on the state. Indeed, it might be argued that there is not only a politics of recognition, but also a political economy of recognition. In 2013, there were some 37,000 registered veterans, receiving annual pensions worth US\$67 million, along with one-off payments worth US\$62 million (*La'o Hamutuk* 2013). Veterans are also frequently recipients of contracts under infrastructure and referendum funds; emergency projects to veterans totalled US\$78 million in 2010–12—a figure set to increase by 4 per cent annually (*La'o Hamutuk* 2013). These programs represented a substantial feature of the 2013 budget at 5.8 per cent, exceeding both security sector and health expenditure.² While veterans payments enjoy a high level of popular legitimacy, in part because they are considered due recognition, some types of payments to veterans have drawn criticism.³ It is also true that other groups perceived to be less deserving than veterans have also benefited from large infrastructure contracts. Timor-Leste has witnessed more malicious attempts to mimic recognition claims, from criminal gangs and conflict entrepreneurs leveraging threats of unrest and conflict as a means of rent-seeking (Scambray 2009; ICG 2013).

1 See for example, Traube (2007) on the notion of 'unpaid wages', and popular claims for compensation for sacrifices made during the independence struggle.

2 These figures do not include the civilian clandestine list, former military petitioners, and a range of other important new pensions, including payments to the elderly and single mothers.

3 *La'o Hamutuk* (2013) noted that some of the largest payments distributed in June 2012 before the parliamentary elections were directed to 'these warriors, genuine heroes of our independence, (who) deserve attention from the state, but we worry when this rectification is used to pay for party political promises'.

Finally, these patterns of recognition and misrecognition have also been evident in state-sanctioned forms of 'official' history, including the cultural heritage and memorial landscape (Leach 2009). For example, the critical contributions of the youth-dominated clandestine resistance have taken a long time to be recognised in both the history curriculum and the memorial landscape of the independent state. While 12 November is a national public holiday, and there is a system to award medals to veterans of the clandestine resistance, it was only in 2012 that a monument was built to remember the victims of the Santa Cruz massacre—an event widely regarded as a turning point in the campaign for independence. Publicly, the extent of the *juventude's* (youth) contribution tends to be neglected in post-independence politics, with military veterans' issues and histories strongly dominant. In a parallel feature, as Fernandes (2011: 125) notes, the civilian clandestine resistance has been relatively neglected by historians.⁴ As he argues, the history of the clandestine front movements and their 'vital yet often unacknowledged role' in the independence struggle is yet to be fully documented. It is also true that women's contribution to the Resistance remain an area of enquiry to be more fully explored, despite some notable pioneering contributions (Amal 2006; Conway 2010), and the more recent, as yet unreleased, work of the *Secretariado da Comissão de Pesquisa e Elaboração da História da Luta da Mulher Timor* (Secretariat for the Commission for Research and Development of the History of the Timorese Women's Struggle). Women's contribution to the Resistance is also notably absent in official commemoration and memorial landscapes.

Recent developments

Debates over history have taken on a new flavour in recent years. With Xanana Gusmão reviving the name of the former united front for independence (CNRT) as a political party in 2007, leadership credentials in the military wing of the resistance proved a strong theme in both the 2007 and 2012 election campaigns, highlighting the political legitimacy still associated with these attributes. In 2012, Gusmão campaigned again as *Lider Maximo* (top leader) of the Resistance, with a high-profile media campaign, including photos of himself in uniform, which gave full exposure to his role as leader of the resistance era. Likewise, the 2012 presidential election campaign heavily featured references to the past in Taur Matan Ruak's campaign slogan 'Together with you in the past, our blood intertwined towards our independence. Together again with you today, we toil towards a better future' (Powles 2012). The labelling of a

4 Exceptions include *Chega!* (CAVR 2006, Chapter 5: Resistance Structure and Strategy); Fernandes (2011); Babo-Soares (2003); and Nicholson (2001).

small pro-CNRT breakaway group from the main opposition party FRETILIN as '*FRETILIN Resistencia*' highlighted the way these ideas were deployed as an electoral strategy to delegitimise the major opposition party.

Since 2012, however, there have been clear signs of public *rapprochement* between the two key figures of Prime Minister Gusmão and the opposition FRETILIN leader and former Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri. Following the coalition-building among non-FRETILIN forces from 2007, the profound nature of CNRT's 2012 victory seems to have reduced political conflict between the elites, with a new political settlement or consensus politics emerging. This has reflected Gusmão's successful and long-term strategy of using political victories as a basis for coalition and unity-building, though these developments have also been driven in part by FRETILIN's continuing support among voters from the eastern districts. The influence of President Taur Matan Ruak is also seen to be a factor in the new working truce between the two leaders.

This new style of politics was evident in FRETILIN's unprecedented support for annual budget votes in parliament, and in the appointment of Alkatiri as the head of a major project to develop the exclave of Oecusse as a special economic zone (*Suara Timor Lorosa'e* 2013). It was also reflected in Gusmão's overtures to the 2014 FRETILIN conference, at which he acknowledged its key role in the Resistance. Conversely, Alkatiri publicly acknowledged Gusmão as a former FRETILIN leader himself, and was vocal in encouraging him not to retire early. His party also conspicuously dropped the label '*de facto* government' it had used after the 2007 election, when the CNRT had won fewer seats than FRETILIN. The two leaders were frequently seen travelling together, showing an external unity to the world. In the wake of departing international peacekeeping forces, these developments were critical, and led to wider interpretations within the political elite. Most notably, Minister of State and President of the Council of Ministers, Agio Pereira (2014) wrote of these developments as a 'new politics of national consensus' to overcome failed state syndrome, seeing them as an example to other developing post-conflict countries of 'transforming belligerent democracy into consensus democracy'. On FRETILIN's part, it made references to a new 'pact with the regime' (Lusa News Agency 2014), which it sees as a 'necessary consensus for state-building'.

The remarkable culmination of this trend occurred in early 2015 with the formation of a new government, dominated by CNRT ministers, but led by FRETILIN's Rui Araújo as Prime Minister. With Gusmão stepping down from the prime minister's office to become the Minister for Planning and Development, the new power-sharing executive, involving the two major parties, also represented a major intergenerational shift in the political leadership (Leach 2015). The move toward a semi-formalised government of national unity was important as this generational handover (signalled in 2013, then delayed at the CNRT party

congress in 2014) was always likely to be a watch point for political stability. There were clear signs that the 'history wars' were cooling as Gusmão prepared to depart the centre of the political stage, with Alkariti already installed as the head of a new body charged with promoting development in the exclave of Oecusse. These developments answered some of the questions about what to do with the *katuas*—the senior leadership of the 1975 era, including José Ramos-Horta—beyond their departure from formal political life. The rumour mill had entertained various speculations as to how their historic role would be preserved, ranging from proposals of a Lee Kwan Yew-style 'senior ministry', to a more probable, and perhaps inevitable, role as an informal 'council of elders'.

This new moderation of political conflict also saw the state seek to tackle anti-system actors including the CPD-RDTL, with significant developments across 2013 and 2014. Throughout 2013, increased activity and political conflict was evident from disaffected veterans groups, including an extended CPD-RDTL confrontation with police in Manufahi. Late in 2013, calls by a former FALINTIL commander Paulino 'Mauk Morak' Gama, for a 'revolution against poverty and early elections'⁵ brought older divisions within the former FALINTIL military resistance to the fore. This raised heated debates in the country, to the extent that a special forum of political leaders had to be convened, with the president himself offering to mediate.⁶ This conflict has deeper origins in Gusmão's reformation of the FALINTIL resistance in the 1980s, taking it from the armed wing of the pro-independence party FRETILIN to a non-partisan military force representing all nationalists. This move toward a policy of *apartidismo* (non-partisanship) ultimately led to the creation of the CNRT—a broad nationalist front representing all East Timorese nationalists, with no ideological goals other than national liberation, and with FALINTIL as its military.⁷ At the time of the initial split in 1984, Mauk Moruk was among a small group of disaffected FALINTIL officers who rejected the strategy and attempted an internal coup against Gusmão's leadership.

This episode amply demonstrated the ongoing power of history in East Timorese political life. Moruk is now associated with *Sagrada Familia*—a former clandestine group during the occupation—who, like CPD-RDTL, remains outside the mainstream of post-independence politics. Many in Dili expressed relief that all major parties, including FRETILIN, supported Prime Minister Gusmão in the special forum, which Moruk did not attend. Moruk and his veteran-dominated group, the *Konseilu Revolusionariu Maubere* (KRM; Maubere

5 *Timor Post* 21/10/2013.

6 *Suara Timor Lorosa'e* 11/11/2013.

7 See Niner (2009: 105–06) for historical background to these events.

Revolutionary Council), later called for protests on 28 November 2013—the 38th anniversary of Timor-Leste’s unilateral declaration of independence in 1975, but these actions ultimately did not proceed.

In March 2014, the parliament moved to proscribe CPD-RDTL and KRM, after members wearing uniforms had conducted military exercises in the Baucau district. Following a reported shoot-out between KRM and police, Moruk and CPD-RDTL leader Aitahan Matak were detained in Dili, and Moruk’s brother and Sagrada Familia leader Cornelio ‘L7’ Gama were placed under house arrest. Moruk surrendered to police but warned that ‘all of Dili would burn’ at his command. This threat was followed by Moruk visiting the attorney-general with a military escort, and reported attempts to register as a legal organisation. Local security NGO Fundasaun Mahein (2014) subsequently expressed concerns that despite the government’s new resolve, veterans groups operating outside the law may bring the government to the bargaining table over registration. While new forms of elite unity were evident in the face of ongoing sources of historical division, as other commentators have noted, beneath the new confidence of a more united elite lie ongoing tensions, with parallels to those that lay behind the 2006 crisis (Powles and Sousa Santos 2013):

The standoff between Gusmao and Mauk Moruk reflects a potentially dangerous schism between two groups: on the one hand, Gusmao, the former clandestine groups allied to him and the national police; and on the other hand, the Gama brothers, Sagrada Familia, and the national military whose Chief, General Lere Anan, publicly stated his support and membership of Sagrada Familia during the resistance struggle.

While Moruk’s challenge was met with a firm and unified response from the elite, to the relief of many in the country, there were also fears that popular disaffection with the slow progress of development may yet assist these groups’ message, and in mobilising potential supporters. As Mattheos Messakh (cited in Gonçalves 2014) argues, the wider question is whether disaffected veterans groups are capable of becoming a lightning rod for those who feel left out of progress and economic patronage:

It is likely that Mauk Moruk’s strategy is to captivate young people who feel increasingly marginalized and who can be easily taken advantage of ... to fill a void left by the prohibition of martial arts groups created during the clandestine resistance and involved in the violence of 2006.

By mid-2014, tensions surrounding disaffected veterans groups appeared to calm considerably, only to flare up again in January 2015 in a standoff between the PNTL (*Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste*; National Police of Timor-Leste) and the KRM in Laga. Though the government’s resolve remained firm, and the KRM’s popular support base was uncertain, these developments also showed

that so long as participation in the military resistance remains a keystone of political legitimacy, historical divisions and associated claims for recognition would continue to prompt powerful reactions. While the present government can win these symbolic battles on the same ground of veteran credentials, future governments will need to establish alternative criteria for legitimacy.

Thinking about post-conflict history

It should first be noted that difficulties in writing the national history in Timor-Leste are common to post-conflict societies. As in Bosnia and Kosovo, Timor-Leste is not alone in having to replace the history component of otherwise retained textbooks, following national independence (Höpken 2001: 3). Similarly, several post-conflict societies have delayed history education in favour of a less controversial and general focus on human rights education and civics curricula (Cole and Barsalou 2006: 12). This pattern, evident in Rwanda and Bosnia, has been apparent in Timor-Leste, with civic education curricula development far in advance of history curriculum development through the early years of independence (see Leach 2007, 2010). Some post-conflict countries have gone further, and chosen to ignore the recent past of violent conflict in newly developed national history textbooks (including Mozambique and Cambodia), or have openly postponed inclusion (Rwanda) (see Höpken 2001: 2).

A key issue in post-conflict societies is how the role of the history curriculum is conceived. As Höpken (2001: 12) notes, peace-building and reconciliation will not necessarily be promoted by curricula primarily designed to promote officially sanctioned versions of national identity and foster loyalty to the state. Equally, teaching students core historical methods of critical inquiry, such as the capacity to evaluate the merits of competing historical claims, may not be compatible with the goals of official histories that seek to inculcate 'national values' and loyalty. This is a critical issue for Timor-Leste, particularly as it seeks to move on from the authoritarian epistemology of the New Order (Indonesian regime 1967–98) approach to national history as a single, authorised, pan-archipelagic narrative. Indeed, understanding historical knowledge as a process of evaluating competing historical claims, and teaching students the processes of gathering evidence to test them, are essential skills of democratic citizenship. As Cole and Barsalou (2006: 1) note teaching these skills of critical inquiry may be a more effective focus in resource-poor environments than developing new history textbooks. Yet this focus can also attract opposition from new ruling elites and policymakers, as 'few post-conflict societies are ready to accept an approach that promotes critical thinking, since it is often perceived as flying

in the face of traditions that respect expertise, seniority, and authority and promote group honour as more important than any forensic truth' (Cole and Barsalou 2006: 10).

In Timor-Leste, the link between history curriculum development and transitional justice is also a critical one. Certainly, the failure to implement the recommendations of the CAVR report strongly parallels the challenges in writing the national history. Thorny and highly politicised debates over justice and reconciliation, along with questions of how to deal with legacies of internal division, and the relationship with Indonesia, are common to both challenges. Both point to a present lack of political will and a working consensus to deal with the complex and divisive issues of historical justice. While the CAVR has produced an essential range of educational materials, as the *Secretariado Tecnico Pos-CAVR* (Post-CAVR Technical Secretariat) itself notes (CAVR 2008: 39), *Chega!* was not written directly for the classroom and still needs to be 're-presented ... appropriately for different levels and subject areas'. This is an important caveat, as the 'socialisation' of CAVR findings can only truly take place at a national level through their reproduction as curricula. At present, CAVR materials are left to the discretion of individual teachers to incorporate into classroom practice. This is regrettable, as representative personal stories—of the sort employed by the CAVR report—are considered to be very helpful methodologies for dealing with complex issues of historical justice in school curricula (Cole and Barsalou 2006: 10).

The role of a history curriculum development in nation-building is also a critical one. Compulsory schooling is, of course, a key site of integration around national values and identities. Gellner even goes so far as to argue that 'the monopoly of legitimate education: is more important than the classic Weberian monopoly of legitimate violence' (Gellner 1983; Tawil and Harley 2004: 9–10). A key issue is how to promote a social cohesion that is respectful of diversity (Tawil and Harley 2004: 4) without exacerbating social tensions. As was abundantly clear in the 2006 crisis, Timor-Leste's past can easily be recruited to the purposes of creating discord; highlighting the urgent need to promote social cohesion.

Finally, compulsory education is also a key site for promoting a postcolonial cultural identity in the wake of colonialism and civil conflict. As Tawil and Harley argue (2004: 20), Mozambique is a good example of a society seeking to assert a post-independence national identity that also accommodates a diverse multilingual, multicultural society. However, as Rønning notes (cited in Tawil and Harley 2004: 20), accommodating multiple languages and local identities may be seen by some nationalists as a form of tribalism that questions the project of national unity. In Timor-Leste, the 'Mother Tongue' Multilingual Education Program has certainly faced criticisms of this type, despite the strong evidence base suggesting its effectiveness in promoting literacy. Key questions in the

process of promoting an inclusive national identity via compulsory education include who is consulted about these issues, how non-elite voices are heard, and the ways conflict is dealt with (Tawil and Harley 2004: 19). Where there are ongoing divisive issues, there may be a clear role for outsiders in the process of curriculum development; indeed, this was the ‘circuit-breaker’ in reforming the national curriculum after the conflict in Rwanda (Cole and Barsalou 2006: 7).

History in progress

Major developments have occurred in the national history curriculum in recent years. The most significant of these is the redevelopment of the year 1–9 primary curricula, with a major effort to ‘indigenise’ a range of curricula for primary schools. This includes a stand-alone history curriculum at primary level for the first time, replacing the previous syllabus (Leach 2007), which saw primary school history covered under the general subject of ‘*Estudo do Meio*’ or ‘Environment’. Units will have a strong early focus on pre-colonial history, to encourage an understanding of Timorese cultures and identity as the products of societies pre-dating the colonial era, before examining the impacts of colonialism (*Reforma Curricula de Ensino Básico*—Curriculum Reform for Ensino Basico project team; interview with author 2014).⁸ East Timorese curriculum developers are the primary writers for the first time, supported by international consultant teams, with the additional involvement of teachers and the teacher training college. Importantly, the *Ministério da Educação* (Ministry of Education) curriculum development team is also working with teachers to develop lesson plans—something that was previously relegated to the school or teacher level (see Leach 2007)—and a mentoring scheme for new teachers. In terms of pedagogical approach, lesson plans include a strong focus on asking questions—a seemingly straightforward approach, but one that challenges previous schooling cultures in a profound way, and may take considerable time to implement. Importantly, the curriculum seeks to encourage the development of critical reasoning skills and basic research techniques, including oral history projects at 4th and 5th grades; encountering the idea of stereotypes; understanding different perspectives on historical issues; and introducing students to different types of historical evidence at 5th and 6th grades. Taken together, these approaches represent a significant departure from the former curriculum. The influence of a very active vice-minister for primary education is widely acknowledged as a key factor in these changes. At the secondary level of years 10–12 the approach is more standard, with curriculum development

⁸ Interview with Curriculum Reform for Ensino Basico project team, Dili, 18 August 2014. At this point, the reformed curriculum covers the first and second cycle only (years 1–6).

teams from Portuguese universities working on the upper history curriculum. The strong base in national culture at primary level, and a more generic 'national and world history' approach at secondary school may prove complementary, although it remains to be seen how more controversial episodes and periods of conflict in East Timorese history will be dealt with in the upper years of schooling.

Other neglected elements of East Timorese history are also starting to receive due attention. The women's history project *Secretariado da Comissão de Pesquisa e Elaboração da História da Luta da Mulher Timor* (Secretariat for the Commission for Research and Development of the History of the Timorese Women's Struggle) is researching the role of East Timorese women in the Resistance. This work is well in progress and the project expects to launch their report in 2015. The history of the clandestine movements is also expanding slowly, though there is considerable work to do in this area. As noted above, in recent years the relative lack of recognition of the clandestine resistance is starting to be addressed by both historians and formal state memorialisation. There is, however, also some controversy attached to the new Santa Cruz monument at Motael, which was installed without consultation with the 12 November committee led by Gregorio Saldanha (da Silva 2012); and there is still no progress on a memorial at Santa Cruz itself, despite a government-announced design competition co-sponsored by the 12 November committee in 2010 (RDTL 2010). Slow but steady progress on the history of the clandestine resistance is also evident in some newer publications, most substantially in Fernandes's *The Independence of East Timor: Multi-Dimensional Perspectives* (2011). It is to be hoped that a new generation of East Timorese historians will build on—and perhaps revise—early attempts made by external historians, and the relatively few East Timorese accounts made following independence (de Araujo 2003; Babo-Soares 2003; Pereira 2009). In terms of documentation, the national archive still requires support to fully catalogue and digitise its materials, and a formal legislative framework to define its responsibilities. The *Arquivo & Museu da Resistência* (Archives & Museum of East Timorese Resistance) in Dili is strongly supported by government, and also performs some of these archival functions. Outside the country, CHART (Clearing House for Archival Records on Timor) is being funded by the East Timorese Government and other donors to preserve and digitise the archives of the Timorese diaspora in Australia⁹.

9 See timorarchives.wordpress.com/chart/.

Conclusion

International experience suggests that certain pre-conditions must be met before compulsory history education can be seen as a resource to foster reconciliation and peace-building. These pre-conditions include a favourable post-conflict environment where violence has ended, a strong commitment to peace-building from political elites, a sense of common national values, and a general social consensus for reconciliation (see Höpken 2001: 5–8). Until recently in Timor-Leste, many of these basic issues were still unsettled, with a highly fractious political elite, divisive legacies of the 2006 crisis, and a small but influential cohort of anti-system groups that routinely questioned the state's monopoly on legitimate force. The 2006 military-political crisis was a clear setback to the peace-building process, as are the still divisive debates over reconciliation, forgiveness and justice.

However, recent developments in political stability raise grounds for greater optimism. In the wake of the *rapprochement* between fractions of the political elite, are conditions favourable for dealing with more controversial issues in the national history in upper levels of schooling? While there are grounds for positive assessments, including a strong political commitment from relevant ministers to producing culturally relevant education, some caveats are clear. First, there is little political will to deal with internationally sensitive issues arising from the Indonesian occupation, the violence of 1999, and the unresolved grievances of victims groups. While much of the tension from 2006 has been worked through, and post-independence relations between the political elite are at a high point, events associated with the 2006 crisis are still sensitive, and attempts at writing their history may prove challenging. Another caveat concerns the extent to which these welcome developments should be understood as transformations within the political elite alone, or whether they are subject to more popular consensus. Behind the elite political *rapprochement*, victims groups still feel marginalised, and an uncomfortable level of popular support can be sensed around some of the disaffected veterans groups' criticisms, particularly when they speak of those who have missed out on the fruits of development or economic patronage.

Equally, with the departure of Xanana Gusmão from the prime minister's office in early 2015, other questions attend the new moderation in political conflict. Will the new consensus continue in a post-Gusmão electoral environment after the 2017 elections? How will the emergence of the post-'75 Generation alter these inter-party dynamics? Can a new generation address divisive social issues with the same sort of historical legitimacy as the *katuas*? Or, indeed, will a new generation more easily transcend these divisions associated with the leaders of the '75 Generation? More broadly, questions remain about the role of the

military. Will the army stay out of politics once senior civilian leaders are no longer former FALINTIL commanders, whose political control ensures the close ear of government (see Feijo in this collection). If recognition-style claims from former veterans groups continue to catalyse some popular economic discontent, the combination of high unemployment and a growing youth population could again reveal a latent potential for significant social unrest. It remains to be seen if claims from victims groups can be addressed with cash transfers and pensions, in the absence of meeting more difficult demands for justice. Time will tell if the 'history wars' are cooling, or simply in abeyance in formal elite politics.

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