

# Welcome to the Hotel Tutuala: Fataluku Accounts of Going Places in an Immobile World

Sandra Pannell

In newly independent East Timor, land tenure and land rights are pressing issues. In a recent volume on Land Claims in East Timor, Daniel Fitzpatrick argues that 'cosmological world views' cannot be ignored in constructing a new system of land administration. While previous regimes may have ignored these 'views', throughout East Timor the issue of cosmological sovereignty is emerging as one of the new domains of struggle and resistance. In the Fataluku-speaking district of Tutuala, in the far eastern reaches of the world's newest nation-state, the assertion of sovereign authority is conveyed and sustained through the 'production of locality'. In this paper, I focus upon the 'place-making' efforts of the Portuguese colonial administration in the early part of the twentieth century to explore Fataluku ideas about movement and being in place. In doing so, I hope to throw some light on the cultural status of the many derelict and decaying Portuguese forts and outposts occupying knolls and hill-tops throughout East Timor.

Keywords: East Timor; Place; Sacred; Land Tenure

### Introduction

The landscapes of East Timor could be regarded as 'geographies which struggle' (Said 1993, p. 6). These are landscapes of disfigured places and distorted spaces, of absences and obliterations, which dramatically convey recent histories of foreign occupation and local resistance. Space, in this context, is not simply a stage upon which significant events take place. As the social historian Paul Carter reminds us, a culture declares its presence through 'spatial forms and fantasies' (1987).

In the Fataluku-speaking district of Tutuala, the arrival of foreigners from distant shores variously sets in motion political processes of emplacement or displacement.

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These sovereign encounters between the foreign and the familiar are often articulated in terms of the mobility or inertia of physical objects and intangible beings, generically known as *téi*. The concept of *téi* (or its Tetun synonym, *lulic*) is often glossed in the literature as 'sacred' or 'taboo', and is said to apply to a range of practices, objects and spaces, such as agricultural fertility ceremonies, ceramic plates and remnant forest groves (see Capell 1944; Forbes 1989; Gomes 1972; King 1963, McWilliam 2001, 2003; Traube 1986).<sup>2</sup> As a number of these authors note, the experience of *téi* evokes a set of disparate attitudes, which range from respect to awe, from fear to familiarity.

In Fataluku colonisation accounts, houses 'walk' and boats become boulders, while *téi* are rendered restless in the presence of strangers. People and place are both moved and motionless in these spatial histories of discovery and settlement. In this paper, I focus upon the 'place-making' efforts of the Portuguese colonial administration in the early part of the twentieth century to explore Fataluku ideas about movement and being in place. In doing so, I hope to throw some light on the cultural status of the many derelict and decaying Portuguese forts and outposts occupying knolls and hilltops throughout East Timor.

## The 'House' and the 'Hotel'

At Raromon in 2004, Rafael Guimaraes stands before what remains of the *lé téin* or 'sacred house' of Tutuhala Ratu. Walking around the dilapidated structure, pointing to the rotting carved wooden panels that once were part of the exterior walls, the 'Lord of the Land' (*mua cau, wéli hocawa*) of Tutuala is moved to tell the story of the house. It is a story of arrivals and departures, construction and destruction. Indeed, this is a story which is as much about the un-making of familiar places and the unleashing of unexpected presences as it is about the displacement of people and polities, embedded as it is in the colonial backwaters of the history of the island of Timor.

It begins some time after the mid-1600s, when the people of Lorilata Namilata moved and established the fortified, hilltop<sup>3</sup> settlement (lata)<sup>4</sup> of Tutuhala.<sup>5</sup> This move was preceded by a series of lata-based movements, beginning with the initial departure of the antecedents of this group or ratu from the original encampment at Ili Kérékéré. Tutuhala derives its name from the eponymous cave site on the terrace immediately below the settlement, where a massive stone pillar (tutu = post, hala = single) skewers the landmass, preventing it from 'falling into the sea'. The new site was occupied primarily by the members of Malai Ratu who, upon moving to the new site, became known as Tutu[h]ala Ratu.<sup>6</sup> It was at Tutuhala that the current  $l\acute{e}$   $t\acute{e}in$  or 'sacred house' of this ratu came into being.

While the decision to move to Tutuhala was apparently driven by a water shortage, the decision to stay was affirmed by the sudden appearance of the *aka* from Lorilata Namilata at the new site. Described as a dangerous and unpredictable 'snake', which sometimes takes the form of a dog or a human, the *aka* at Tutuhala inhabited the

post-hole at the centre of a raised, stone platform located within the walled settlement complex.<sup>7</sup> Both the *aka* and the built edifice of rock and wood it occupied are referred to as *téi*, a term commonly glossed as 'sacred' by informants and anthropologists alike.<sup>8</sup>

Some centuries later, in the early 1920s, the Portuguese began work on a district administrator's post (*posto*)<sup>9</sup> at the easternmost point of the island of Timor (see Figure 1).<sup>10</sup> Named 'Nova Sagres', after the historic Portuguese town of Sagres on Cape St Vincent,<sup>11</sup> the *posto* was located on a steep-sided knoll, the highest point of elevation in the area before the landscape fell away to the sea in a series of uplifted limestone terraces.<sup>12</sup> To the north and north east, the site offered spectacular views of the Moluccan islands of Kisar, Leti, Moa and beyond, in what was then the Netherlands East Indies. To the south, the *posto* commanded distant views of the forested interior, as well as an unimpeded vista of the nearby swidden gardens of the local inhabitants.<sup>13</sup> For the Portuguese, the site was both scenic and strategic.

The strategic, scenic and sacred came together in a structural conjuncture (cf. Sahlins 1985) of fate and force on that eventful day in the early twentieth century when the Portuguese proceeded to build their *posto* on top of the *téi* at Tutuhala. <sup>14</sup> In selecting this site, the highest accessible point in the landscape, the Portuguese gave spatial form to their own rituals of statehood, as well as their own colonial experiences (and fantasies) about rebellious and marauding natives. <sup>15</sup> In this respect, the construction of the *posto* marked the culmination of sporadic government military campaigns in the region dating from 1889. <sup>16</sup> However, it was really only in the twentieth century that Portugal extended its influence from the coastal areas of the island into the interior in an attempt to assume more direct control over its neglected outpost in the pursuit of trade and tax. <sup>17</sup> As James Fox points out, 'for most of the colonial period, control was a matter of pretence and veneer' (2000, p. 12).



Figure 1 Contemporary Map of East Timor.

The construction of the *posto* not only resulted in the forced removal of the original inhabitants of Tutuhala, together with their 'sacred house', to the nearby site of Haro, but it also disturbed the peculiar presence associated with this space. Oblivious to the sentient nature of the construction site, <sup>18</sup> the Portuguese positioning of their edifice of colonial control tapped into local ideas about the ultimate source and location of power. <sup>19</sup> Unbeknown to the Portuguese, their very efforts at placemaking at Tutuhala <sup>20</sup> would eventually be displaced by the locality-producing activities of the *téi*, that is, according to Fataluku accounts of their engagement with these foreigners and the others that followed.

### Fataluku Colonisation Accounts 1: Boats to Boulders

The arrivals of the Portuguese and, later, the Indonesians constitute recent episodes in Fataluku accounts of discovery and settlement. Preceding, possibly by centuries, the coming of the Portuguese from the west, is the appearance of a multi-ethnic flotilla from the east. The arrival of this armada is depicted in a series of ochre boat images at Ili Kérékéré, and at a number of other rock shelters in the area. According to Fataluku narratives, these people were attracted to Ili Kérékéré by the light emitted from a large white beeswax candle, placed by the original occupants in the easternmost area of the gallery. Upon landing at various sites along the coast in the vicinity of Ili Kérékéré, the boats of these new arrivals turned into stone. The occupants were then summoned by the ancestors of Tutuhala Ratu to the site known as Patipatin, and accorded a bounded area of land upon which to settle. For local people, Patipatin, with its distinctive fourteen-holed rock feature, provides tangible evidence of this division and the subsequent emplacement of these fourteen groups or *ratu* in the landscape. The rock-solid proof provided by Patipatin also accords with local ideas about the ancestral immobility of *ratu*-designated lands and boundaries.

As the original landing sites (ia mari tulia), the stone boats of the first arrivals to Tutuala are important markers in the cultural history of the respective ratu descendants. In these histories, the transformation of their boats to boulders marked a new phase of motion and being, as the groups proceeded to journey up the limestone terraces, establishing and abandoning settlements along the way. As they moved and settled within the bounds of their designated areas, the groups were accompanied by the beings that had also travelled with them across the seas. Acting as guardians of the original landing sites and the subsequent walled enclaves established by the newcomers, the beings mediated the unfamiliar experience of arrival and settlement. The protected spaces, which may appear to the casual observer as natural outcrops of limestone or lines of rocky rubble, are physically marked by the same structural elements found at a number of other places in the landscape. However, unlike the stone boats and former settlements of the immigrant ratu, the latter sites are associated with a variety of autochthonous beings. Confined to the local landscape, the indigenous presences, and the elements which mark their presence, are identified as téi, as are the physical markers on the stone boats. In this respect, the landing and settlement sites of the immigrant ratu represent a spatial synthesis of a recurrent Fataluku cultural theme, whereby the foreign is rendered familiar through the presence and experience of téi.<sup>24</sup>

# Téi and the Unexpectedness of the Familiar

Téi are identified as beings that can transmogrify into a number of forms—not only as an aka, a human-like figure with the torso of a snake, but also into the shape of crocodiles, eagles, crows, horses, dogs and multi-headed snakes. As these forms suggest, these self-willed beings are not regarded as people's ancestors nor are they made by ancestral figures. Téi are seen as malevolent and motivated forces in the landscape.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, humans are unable to create new téi places; they can only replace the physical indicators of the téi that are broken, rotten or stolen.

While people talk about téi following them as they moved through the landscape, abandoning one village site and establishing another, téi are also acknowledged as having a simultaneous presence at a number of named localities throughout the region. The téi at the posto, for example, is identified as the same being that followed the ancestors of Tutuhala Ratu as they moved from settlement to settlement prior to occupying the Tutuhala site. And yet people still act as if the téi is present at all of these prior locations. In this respect, téi are not only everywhere but also 'everywhen' (Stanner 1963). It could be said that téi warp the geometry of space, in much the same way that the 'everywhen' of téi flattens the chronology of time

While the everywhen and where of téi might suggest a certain spatial homogeneity, téi are spoken of as possessing individual personalities and characteristics, often articulated in an idiom of statehood. For example, the téi at Titiru is identified as the 'president', while a number of other nearby téi are said to act as its 'deputies' and 'military commanders'. While the identification of this téi as the 'president' captures its paramount rank in the local order of téi, it also links it to other orders, in particular the New Order government of Indonesia and the violence which characterised people's experience of this prior regime. As we shall see, the presidential status of this téi is further connected to the political struggles of the new nation-state of Timor Leste.

One finds the physical indicators of téi at the entrance to past and present settlements, as well as throughout the forests of Tutuala, where they are said to 'guard' an area and the associated ratu members from strangers and sickness.<sup>26</sup> When the appropriate ceremonies are conducted, téi can also be petitioned to kill others or bring about sickness to one's enemies. Entering village sites, and other places marked by téi, without the custodial ratu member(s) and the appropriate introductions and exchange of words with the téi, is considered a dangerous thing to do, and certainly invites all manner of catastrophes.<sup>27</sup>

It is perhaps misguided to think of téi as entities 'set apart', as suggested by the term 'sacred' (sacrâre). Téi require ongoing engagement and a degree of familiarity with their respective custodial ratu in order to avert calamity and bring about some form of tenuous certainty. The more obvious forms of engagement consist of the *ratu* members 'feeding' the *téi* with ritual offerings of rice, eggs, pig meat and palm spirit.<sup>28</sup>

Familiarity with humans and contact with human-made things is said to calm the  $t\acute{e}i$ . When the  $t\acute{e}i$  is hungry or thirsty, it is said to emerge from its hole and it is at this moment that it becomes a real threat to humans. This is particularly evident in those situations where the hole inhabited by the  $t\acute{e}i$  is exposed by the theft of the post or destruction of the built edifice. Fundamentally,  $t\acute{e}i$  are wild at heart and their alleged actions at times blur the boundary between benevolent and malevolent, creating strange affinities between things.

While the purported operation of *téi* may give the impression of displacing human creativity and agency, in the end effective action derives from people's relationship with the familiar yet alien power of the *téi*. As discussed in the following sections, this shared vision of agency, where agency is sought but not necessarily and exclusively claimed by people, is linked to a legacy of recent violence.

For Fataluku people, space and time are, to borrow Appadurai's words, 'socialised and localised' (1996, p. 180) through the experience of *téi*. Thus, for Fataluku speakers in Tutuala, *téi* is regarded as an intrinsic property of locality and the 'structure of feeling' associated with the production of 'neighbourhood' in this context. More than just socialising space and time, the Fataluku notion of *téi* is positioned at the centre of a discourse which explores the often perilous limits of sociality. Implicated in this discursive topography of violence, danger and power, *téi* not only contributes to the unstable conditions of dwelling in place, but it also represents a peculiar or 'uncanny' form of the sacred.

### Fataluku Colonisation Accounts 2: Walking Houses

Unbeknown to the tourists who visit the 'posto' today to admire the views and take photographs of this relic of Portuguese colonialism, nearby is located the grave of perhaps the first Fataluku resistance fighter, Talisomon.<sup>29</sup> Born in the village of Tutuhala and later buried at that site, Talisomon was 'Lord of the Land' at the time the Portuguese first entered the area on horseback from their regional base and fort at Lautem.<sup>30</sup> As the locally appointed *coronel* ('colonel'),<sup>31</sup> Talisomon rallied the people of Tutuhala to take up arms against the Portuguese military forces.

After the initial, bloody fracas, the people and the sacred house of Tutuhala were displaced to Haro. Before the arrival of the Portuguese, Haro is said to have been where the people of Tutuhala kept their large domestic animals. Indeed, Haro is often referred to in Fataluku as 'Tutuhala Pailopo', the 'pig-pen of Tutuhala'. As this suggests, not only is Haro located quite close to the former village of Tutuhala, but its very occupation by humans denotes for local people an inversion of categorical relationships. In the story of their expulsion from Tutuhala, the occupation of Haro signals the moment when people were 'tamed' and, later on, moved around the area like 'animals'.

It was during the period of occupation at Haro that the Portuguese commenced work on the *posto*. According to local accounts, the Portuguese forced the residents of Haro to dismantle sections of the settlement wall for use as building material in the 'white house' (*lé piti*) of the Portuguese occupiers. One account suggests that Talisomon was still alive at the time of the building of the *posto*. According to this account, Talisomon summoned a *korakora*<sup>34</sup> or traditional raiding vessel, and took the first Portuguese *chefé de posto* to the nearby island of Kisar, then part of Dutch East Indies, to view the 'white house' of the Dutch administrator. The story goes that this building then became the model for the *posto* erected in Tutuala.

While the story of Talisomon's purported involvement in the construction of the *posto* up-stages Portuguese violence and desecration by recasting the source of creativity and action, other stories point to the hardships suffered as the local population was forced to amass the building materials for the residence. Lawanchai was in his late teens at the time of the construction of the *posto* and worked for the Portuguese collecting gravel and making lime.<sup>35</sup> According to his first-hand account, not only did local people carry stones from the walls of Haro, but they also carted sand from the beaches located some 500 metres directly below the Tutuhala terrace and moved tonnes of earth from nearby gardens.<sup>36</sup>

With the post of the district administrator complete, people from the sibling-related *ratu* of Tutuhala and Maléki continued to live at Haro until the early 1950s. After the 'Japanese War', the Portuguese returned to Tutuala and, according to local accounts, forcibly moved people from Haro to the area known as Pitileti. Some people suggested that they were moved from Haro because their continuing presence offended the Portuguese's sensibilities—the 'smell from the pig-pen' became too much. Others link the forced movement to the census of the early 1950s and the need of the government to amass the largely dispersed and remote population at more accessible junctures in the landscape. Regardless of the perceived or official reasons, the residents of Haro dismantled their traditional, four-legged houses or *lé ia valu* ('house with four legs'), including the *lé téin* of Tutuhala Ratu, and 'walked' them to the valley below. Together with several other *ratu* they established the unfortified settlement of Pitileti.

By the 1960s, Pitileti was being promoted by the Portuguese government as a regional attraction, and was regularly visited by tourists interested, ironically, in seeing and experiencing a 'traditional' Timorese village. <sup>40</sup> It is probably around this time that the *posto* was transformed, largely in name only, into a *pousada* or government rest-house in order to accommodate this growing interest.

The identification of the 'white house' as a 'hotel' seems to stem from the Indonesian period and the modernisation of the building that took place during the later years of this occupation. After the Indonesian invasion in 1975, and particularly after the period 1975–7, which local people identify as the time when they ran into the forests and hid from the occupying forces in the many caves that exist in the area, the local population returned to their former village enclaves. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Tutuala area was once again promoted as a tourist

destination, where largely Indonesian visitors could view the 'traditional houses' at Pitileti, experience the coral reefs fringing the white sand beach at Valu and admire the 'primitive art' site of Ili Kérékéré. A number of changes were made to the *pousada* during this time, including the installation of Indonesian-style bathrooms and the resurfacing of some of the original polished floors with white ceramic tiles. Concrete picnic 'mushrooms' and grotto-like water features were also added to the grounds. Below the 'hotel', at Pitileti, the four-posted houses of the residents were painted various colours to enhance their visual impact.

In 1983, according to local accounts, the 'traditional' village of Pitileti, along with the villages of Chailoro, Vero and Ioro, was burnt to the ground by Falintil forces (Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste—National Liberation Forces of East Timor) as retribution for the population's non-compliance with an order to vacate their villages and join the resistance fighters in the forests to the south. The only structure to survive this episode was the 'sacred house' of Tutuhala Ratu. The house was dismantled once again and secreted in a garden area at nearby Hiramu. After the destruction of Pitileti, the villagers were ordered by the Indonesian administration to move to the present village site, below the former village site of Tutuhala and, of course, the 'hotel', and establish new, Indonesian-style residences along the paved roadway. What remained of the *lé téin* of Tutuhala was eventually moved to its current location at Raromon.

For members of Tutuhala Ratu, the movement from Pitileti to Tutuala in many ways marks the 'end' of a tradition, rather than a return to a traditional locality. Pitileti is regarded by them as the 'last' settlement or *lata* in a genealogy of named localities that comprise the spatial history of the group (cf. Fox 1997). While Pitileti is not generally regarded as the epitome of a 'traditional settlement' or *lata irinu*, the promotion of the Tutuala area by the Portuguese and Indonesians as a stronghold of 'tradition' fed into local ideas about ontological precedence and what they consider to be the ultimate source of sovereign authority. It is this source which people today identify as being responsible for the displacement of both the Portuguese and the Indonesian foreigners from East Timor and their somewhat sudden departure from the ancestral village of Tutuhala.

## Fantastic Doings and Foreign Displacements

While Talisomon is credited with playing an important role in the initial armed resistance to the Portuguese occupation, it is the *téi* of Tutuhala which is acknowledged as eventually displacing the Portuguese from their outpost. Indeed, in local terms, the very construction of this post unleashed the motivated force that would bring about the expulsion of the Portuguese. The construction of the *posto* effectively impeded communication with the *téi* and people's ability to perform the necessary propitiatory ceremonies at the *téi* platform. Socially and physically unrestrained, the *téi* presence at the 'hotel' is considered to be 'dangerous' and 'uncontrollable', initiating mayhem at its own behest. For example, sickness and death

among members of Tutuhala Ratu<sup>43</sup> is often attributed to the 'wild' *téi* at the hotel.<sup>44</sup> People commonly speak of the hotel as being 'haunted' by the téi, and of hearing strange noises emanating from the structure, particularly at night. They tell stories of the being manifesting itself in the form of grotesque figures to those occupying the hotel. Some of these foreigners are said to have been driven 'mad' by the nightmarish experience of staying at the hotel. As local accounts go, in the end, the téi at Tutuhala proved to have been 'too strong' for the Portuguese occupiers to pacify and it succeeded in driving them from the district.

While the Portuguese are said to have been expelled from Tutuhala by a restless téi, it is the 'president' of all téi at Titiru which is identified as ultimately responsible for the defeat of the Indonesian military and various militia groups in the later part of 1999. A desperate Xanana Gusmao is said to have personally requested assistance from the present Lord of the Land to dispel the foreigners. Upon receiving this request, and with a photograph of the Falintil leader in hand, the Lord of the Land sacrificed a pig at Titiru in September 1999 and requested the téi to emerge from its hole and take action against the Indonesians and others. Out of its hole, the téi started to 'eat' the enemy, while Xanana is said to have been imbued with the thoughts and power of the téi, the two creating an unbeatable front to the Indonesian forces. When the Indonesians left, the Lord of the Land returned to Titiru and sacrificed another pig to 'calm' the téi down and entice it to enter its hole once again, satiated with food and drink and the 'blood and flesh' of the enemy.

Perhaps it is not so surprising that East Timor was 'saved' by the téi at Titiru, particularly given the Fataluku belief that their region and their ancestors are the source of all peoples and lands comprising the island. 45 Nor is it so surprising that the fledgling state of Timor Leste is absorbed into this original centre of cultural sovereignty and moral authority.

## Welcome to the Hotel Tutuala

It is five years since the expulsion of the Indonesian forces, and the 'hotel' today, like so many former Portuguese forts and posts, stands as an empty monument to a bygone era—though perhaps not for very long. In Tutuala, there are moves afoot to attract a new wave of foreigners. There is talk of luring outsiders, in the form of tourists, to the area—not by a large white candle this time, but by the attractions of the 'white house'.

A multi-ratu aggregate of men, some resident in Tutuala, others living in Dili, have banded together to form the 'Hotel Group'. In 2003, the regional government in Lospalos awarded this group an exclusive, two-year management contract for the 'hotel'. Since the commencement of its operations at the beginning of 2004, 'management' of the hotel complex has involved little more than collecting the daily US\$5 accommodation fee from the handful of passing tourists who choose to overnight at the hotel, rather than at the more popular (and free) Valu Beach area. 46 According to members of this group, the money raised by the odd, over-nighting tourist is not sufficient to cover the US\$100 a month land tax they are required to pay to the regional government. Notwithstanding the financial difficulties faced by this group, the exclusive rights to possible monetary benefits stemming from the management contract for the 'hotel' is the source of considerable community disgruntlement. There is talk in Tutuala of tearing down the 'hotel', dividing any spoils among the local population and, in doing so, recognising the communal suffering associated with the construction of the building in Portuguese times. In this post-hotel vision, members of Tutuhala Ratu speak of re-erecting the 'sacred house' of the Lord of the Land on the original Tutuhala site. Much of the talk in Tutuala is about who has rights to an unoccupied building and a run-down site. As this example suggests, in newly independent East Timor, land tenure and land rights are pressing issues.

Under Portuguese law, title to the posto site was legally vested in the Portuguese state, as the sovereign entity during the colonial period. In the early years of the Indonesian occupation, all former Portuguese state property was brought under the control of the Indonesian army (Fitzpatrick 2002, p. 117). This meant that the Indonesian state also took control of the abandoned and crumbling former posts and forts of the Portuguese regime, including the posto at Tutuala. With the declaration of independence, control of all former Portuguese state public property has devolved to the newly formed East Timorese state. For some locales in East Timor, this movement of places and property into and out of the control of various nation-states is nothing more than a legal fiction. 'Control' in these cases amounts to abandonment, with the property in question left to pass into a state of tenured ambiguity and physical disrepair. In other areas, however, such as the Ermera District, there is some recent evidence of groups with traditional interests re-occupying lands lost due to colonial dispossession (see Fitzpatrick 2002, pp. 217-18). While not yet abandoned by the government, the site is physically moving towards this state, with the 'hotel' building itself plagued by white ants and faulty plumbing. However, as I imply in this paper, the state of disrepair of the 'hotel', or the state of East Timor itself for that matter, is not the sole reason why the site remains unoccupied by local people. While it may be the case in other areas in East Timor that the local population believes that these crumbling edifices of Portuguese colonialism are imbued with the spirit or ethereal power of the former occupiers, in Tutuala there is no suggestion by Fataluku people that the Europeans were protected by their own form of téi.

In his recent volume on *Land Claims in East Timor*, Daniel Fitzpatrick reminds us that 'legalistic Western notions of jurisdiction and authority must be applied with great care in customary societies' (2002, p. 32). According to Fitzpatrick, in 'traditional East Timorese life', it is 'the spirits of the land' that established boundaries between groups and which ultimately dictate sacred connections to particular areas. As 'inseparable aspects of land issues' (ibid., p. 33), Fitzpatrick argues that these 'cosmological world views' cannot be ignored in constructing a new system of land administration in East Timor. While previous regimes may have ignored these 'views', throughout East Timor the issue of cosmological sovereignty is

emerging as one of the new domains of struggle and resistance. Out of the ashes of recent history, and liberated from their imposed identities as Indonesian citizens, various ethnic groups are increasingly demanding their own cultural space and moral authority within the fledgling nation-state.

In a landscape racked by both natural and social forces, the assertion of sovereign authority by diverse cultural communities is also a struggle about 'the appropriation of symbols, a struggle over how the past and present shall be understood and labeled, a struggle to identify causes and assess blame, a contentious effort to give partisan meaning to local history' (Scott 1985, p. xvii). In the far-eastern reaches of the island, these assertions are often conveyed and sustained through people's experience of téi. For all their talk of state-sponsored tourism and overseas investment, Fataluku speakers in Tutuala are well aware where power lies. As the freight of history and the weight of fate reveals, foreign forces may come and go, but at the Hotel Tutuala the téi can never leave.

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#### **Notes**

- [1] Linguistically speaking, Fataluku is also known as 'Dagada' (see Fox & Soares 2000).
- [2] As the traveller Margaret King observes (1963, p.155), the term téi, and its Tetun equivalent, lulic/lulik, can also be applied to a range of inanimate objects. For example, the motifs at Ili Kérékéré, with the exception of the boat images, are said to be téi. For the purposes of this paper, I focus upon the Fataluku notion of téi as a spatialised, sentient being or presence.
- [3] As F. J. Ormeling observes, rocky outcrops and hill-tops 'provide a natural refuge for the mountain folk. There the people built their fortified mountain villages; there they lay in wait for the enemy' (1956, p. 35). H. O. Forbes's description of 'the stronghold of the Dato of Sauo' as 'surrounded by a high stone wall surmounted by a cactus hedge, and built on a

- rocky buttress jutting out over a precipitous gorge' (1989, p. 434) could equally apply to a number of former settlement sites in the Tutuala region.
- [4] In a paper examining the conservation value of 'lulic' forests on Timor, Andrew McWilliam glosses the Fataluku expressions lata irin and lata te'i as 'sacred forest' (2001, p. 97). The author's own research with Fataluku speakers suggests that both terms are used to refer to former village sites. Irini or irinu refers to dense stands of old-growth forest, and, when coupled with the term lata, describes an occupation site encircled and enclosed by large trees. For local people, the presence of these stands of mature trees indicates the advanced age of the site.
- [5] Radiocarbon dating of a charcoal sample collected from Lorilata Namilata in 2003 indicates a radiocarbon age of 220+/-30 BP which, calibrated to calendar years, dates the charred material to AD 1660 (Peter Lape pers. comm.).
- [6] As McWilliam (2003), Traube (1986, p. 52) and Jolliffe (1978, p. 17) point out, in the Tetun language *malae* or *malai* means 'foreign'. In Mambai society, for example, the term 'Malaia' denotes 'non-Timorese, Europeans, Chinese, Africans, and so on' (Traube 1986, p. 52). Contrary to this meaning, in Tutuala this Austronesian term is used as a qualifier for Tutuhala Ratu, its members and sites associated with this *ratu* to indicate their autocthonous status. Informants state that the original name for this *ratu* was Ratu Piti, the 'white' *ratu*. In this context, *piti* alludes to the whiteness of the candle that was erected by this *ratu* at Ili Kérékéré to attract foreigners, rather than suggesting that these ancestors were white-skinned or came from elsewhere.
- [7] In her travelogue of East Timor, Margaret King describes 'akka' as a 'small, bright green snake with very pronounced eyes (Cobra Verde)' (1963, p. 151). According to King, the 'snake akka has the power to assume human form at will and, when he sees a woman he desires, he becomes a man and has sexual intercourse with her' (1963, p. 151).
- [8] Fataluku informants readily gloss *téi* with the Indonesian terms *keramat* and *suci* or use the Tetun term, *lulik*. The anthropologist, Andrew McWilliam, glosses both '*tei*' (2003, p.5) and '*luli*' as 'sacred' (2001, p. 91), while Elizabeth Traube states that '*luli*' has the double meaning of 'sacred' and 'prohibited' (1986, p. 142). Schulte Nordholt glosses what could be considered the equivalent the Atoni term '*le'u*' as meaning 'holy', 'sacred' and 'awe-inspiring' (1971, p. 147).
- [9] In the administrative regime established by the Portuguese in Timor, *posto* represented one of the smaller administrative units, though larger than the 'village cluster' (*suco* or *povoação*).
- This approximation of the period of construction of the posto is based upon Fataluku oral [10] histories, a review of the literature for the region and a search of the colonial archives in Portugal. In the latter instance, it seems that the first reference to Tutuala appears in 1919 as part of the first plan to build a road system from Maubara to Tutuala. A map from the period 1926-7 depicts the road still under construction and indicates the existence of a 'posto' at Tutuala (Peter Lape pers. comm.). Prior to the early 1920s, only references to Jaco (also identified as Nusa Besi, Jacki and Jacinto Island) Island and sometimes Loikero (aka Laikera and Lokeo) appear for this part of the island of Timor. For example, A. R. Wallace's (1872) map of the island of Timor, dating from his visit in 1861, identifies only Jaco Island in the far eastern reaches, as does the map of Timor from the French-sponsored Siboga Expedition of 1899 (Weber 1902). In January 1899, the Siboga sailed south down the narrow strait that separates Jaco Island from the main island of Timor. Members of the expedition took two photographs of the local inhabitants harvesting resources from the exposed reefs in the vicinity of Valu Beach on the island of Timor and apparently spoke to them. A description of the 'indigenes' describes them as the people of the 'kampongs' of 'Djemoro' and 'Tuaalla'. According to the 'informations' [sic] obtained from the 'natives', these two villages are located 'up hill' from the beach at Valu (Weber 1902, p. 51). 'Tuwalla' is most likely

- 'Tutuhala', while 'Djemoro' could be 'Chailoro'. In the few pages devoted to the 'indigenes of the eastern point of Timor' there is no mention of or reference to the presence of the Portuguese in this locale in 1899.
- The town of Sagres is where the Portuguese prince, Henry the Navigator, established an observatory and a school of cartography and navigation in 1416.
- Based in Portuguese Timor between 1941 and 1943, Bernard Callinan observed that local towns 'clustered around' the Portuguese 'postos', which generally had 'white walls, red tiled roofs and massive encircling ramparts, [and were] set on a green hill' (1953, p. 37).
- As Fitzpatrick reports, in the late nineteenth century, and particularly after the 1912 Timorese rebellion led by Dom Boaventura (the indigenous ruler of Manufahi or Same), the Portuguese introduced a programme to move East Timorese from 'hunter-gathering and shifting forms of agriculture to permanent gardens and other more sedentary forms of cultivation' (2002, p. 35). In the Tutuala region, physical evidence of former gardens, said to have been abandoned a couple of generations ago, dispersed throughout the more remote areas of the forest, suggest that this programme had some effect in shaping local patterns of cultivation.
- In his visit to Timor in the early 1880s, the Scottish naturalist, H. O. Forbes, remarks upon the 'sacred' or *luli* nature of mountains and their associated peaks (1989, p. 467). In his survey of 'local perceptions of mountains in Indonesia, 1750-2000', Boomgaard (2003) provides a number of examples from around the archipelago which point to the 'sacred' or 'taboo' status of mountain peaks. He concludes that 'the mountain as the abode of ancestral or territorial spirits ... might have been a fairly general Indonesian phenomenon' (2003, p. 307).
- [15] The Portuguese government embarked on military campaigns in the Lautem district in 1889 and, closer to Tutuhala, around Loikero (aka Lokeo) in October 1896 (Almeida 1937). This latter 'search' and 'destroy' operation focused not only upon Loikero 'rebels', but also upon those 'fugitives' hiding out on Jaco Island (Jacinto Isla) (see Figure 1).
- As this suggests, the period from the late 1880s to 1912, in which the Portuguese attempted to impose various 'instruments of pacification—tax laws, contract labour laws', also marked a phase of intense indigenous rebellion against the colonial regime (Jolliffe 1978, p. 35).
- [17] In 1861, the naturalist, A. R. Wallace, visited Dili. He remarked that 'after three hundred years of [Portuguese] occupation there has not been a mile of road made beyond the town [Dili], and there is not a solitary European resident anywhere in the interior' (1872, pp. 144– 5). Similarly, H. O. Forbes, who visited Portuguese Timor in 1882, supports Wallace's observation of no permanent European post in the interior. Indeed, Forbes's (1989) account strongly suggests that the power of local rulers or liurai was still independent and absolute in 1882. Jolliffe states that it was after the 1912 rebellion that the Portuguese colonists 'established an administration throughout the interior' (1978, p. 39).
- Unlike accounts of the iconoclastic activities of missionaries in the Indonesian archipelago (see Corbey 2003), local descriptions suggest that the destruction of the stone and wooden structure marking the presence of the téi was a consequence of the Portuguese military burning the entire settlement of Tutuhala to the ground.
- In a similar vein, Raymond Corbey (2003, p. 122) discusses how the construction of churches on former temple sites by native workers brought about the cosmicisation of these colonial edifices.
- Not only did the Portuguese take control of the site of Tutuhala, but they also appropriated the name of the Fataluku settlement to depict the administrative unit associated with the building of the posto. With the construction of the posto, Tutuhala, like the ratu of the same name, soon became known and depicted on maps as 'Tutuala'. Today, Tutuala is the name of the sub-district (posto) and is also the name of one of the three suco ('villages') within this posto. The suco of Tutuala comprises the hamlets or aldéia of Pitileti, Ioro, Véro and Cailoro.

- [21] On the surface, Fataluku political theory contrasts with the narrative traditions found in many eastern Indonesian (and Austronesian) societies where the advent of a foreigner displaces an original ruler (see van Wouden 1968; Sahlins 1981). Some linguists, however, argue that Fataluku, as a Trans New Guinea Phylum language, is a later arrival in an already established Austronesian landscape. Fataluku appears then to conform to a broader Austronesian political schema of stranger-kings, though with 'intriguing, localised twists' (Traube 1986, p. 53): for instance, the indigenisation of the term 'malai' to denote an autochthonous ruler. Identifying Fataluku people as 'Austronesians in linguistic disguise', Andrew McWilliam (2004) explores this issue of Fataluku cultural fusion in more detail.
- [22] Today, the candle site in Otucau is marked by a raised, circular stone platform and a recently installed (August 2003), 3-metre-tall carved post. Discussions in 2003 with staff in the 'culture' section of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport in Dili revealed that the previous post was stolen in 1983. Personnel in this section had photographed the carved post prior to its theft and were able to track its movements from Tutuala to Denpasar, where it was sold.
- [23] According to the 'Lord of the Land', Tutuhala Ratu 'owns' all of the land in this area. This status is commonly recognised by immigrant *ratu* members. As Lord of the Land, the ancestors of Tutuhala Ratu are said to have allocated rights of use to the newcomer groups.
- [24] In other instances, the presence of *téi* renders the familiar, foreign. For example, while acknowledging a common language and, in the case of some *ratu*, common origins, the lands and people to the immediate south of the Tutuala region are associated with worse forms of sickness, danger and death. Tutuala-based Fataluku speakers erect *téi*-activated bamboo structures called *sarapua* on the edge of forest paths leading to the south to ward off the evils associated with this direction. Similarly, the Fataluku-speaking residents of the nearby *suco* of Méhara are regarded as 'witches' (*acaru*), suspected of causing illness and death among Tutuala residents. According to senior men, during the Second World War suspected witches were reported to the Japanese occupiers as 'spies' and were subsequently killed by the occupying forces or by local people supposedly acting on their behalf.
- [25] The Bunaq notion of 'melus', identified with the spirits of the deceased autochthones and said to be the 'most powerful of all the shades of the earth' (quoted in Traube 1986, p.53), closely approximates the Fataluku attitude towards tëi.
- [26] In a catalogue for an exhibition of photographs taken by her in 1960–1, King observes that 'many more Lulics are concealed in the jungle areas surrounding the settlements and their types are extremely varied' (1990).
- [27] According to Schulte Nordholt, among the Atoni, 'earth spirits' and those associated with a particular territory are 'anonymous forces' which 'have to be appeased and man has to be careful not to provoke their wrath' (1971, p. 146).
- [28] Only the 'Lord of the Land' and the male heads of individual *ratu* can directly petition *téi*. According to informants, 'women can't talk to *téi* [if they did] the *téi* would become hot'.
- [29] Members of Tutuhala Ratu liken the actions of Talisomon to those of the former Falintil resistance fighter and current President of Timor Leste, Xanana Gusmao.
- [30] Fataluku informants view Portuguese occupation as comprising two distinct phases—the initial period of the *monarquia* characterised by military intervention and operations, and the period of *civil administração*, from the end of the Second World War to 1975. The *posto* is said to have been built in the time of the 'monarchy'.
- [31] H. G. Schulte Nordholt remarks upon the incorporation of both Portuguese and Dutch titles, such as 'coronel' (colonel), 'keizer' (emperor) and 'rei' (king), into the 'Political System of the Atoni' (1971, pp. 202–3).
- [32] Fataluku speakers identify Haro as the term for 'pig' in the Lovaia or Makuwa language. Speakers of Lóvaia in Tutuala state that Maku'a is the term for 'language' in the Lóvaia language. In the literature on the languages of this area, Lóvaia is also known as 'Maku'a'. While Capell (1972) and Wurm and Hattori (1981) identify Lóvaia as a Papuan language,

- more recent linguistic research suggests that Lóvaia is an Austronesian language, originally introduced from the nearby Leti archipelago to the east (Hull 1998, p. 5).
- [33] As Jolliffe points out, the 'Colonial Act', introduced by Salazar's Estado Novo (New State) government in 1930, 'stripped away the slender civil rights held by inhabitants of the colonies' (1978, p. 42). Under this Act, most of the native population were classed as 'nãocivilizado' ('not civilised', according to Portuguese standards) and were thus denied citizenship and the right to vote.
- Korakora is a term used throughout Maluku to refer to traditional raiding and war vessels. [34] Interestingly, informants in Tutuala identified the word as a 'Makuwa' language term.
- Lawanchai is acknowledged as the oldest member of the ratu, Marapaki. He has no 'baptist' name. According to Lawanchai, in the census conducted by the Portuguese in 1975, prior to the Indonesian invasion, he was recorded as being 65 years of age.
- In 1947, a member of the Australian War Graves Commission visited Portuguese Timor. [36] Shocked by the brutality of the Portuguese colonists, he reports on the administration's use of forced local labour, 'under the whip', for road repairs and the construction of a new wall for the posto at Viqueque (Francis 1960).
- [37] In an account of the 2/2 and 2/4 Australian Independent Companies in Portuguese Timor between 1941 and 1943, Callinan observed that 'the Portuguese controlled strictly the movement of the natives, and it was a real outlaw who dared to move from his area without written permission from the Portuguese Chefe de Posto' (1953, p. 19).
- Portuguese government censuses were linked to the introduction of a 'head tax' for all [38] Timorese males aged between 18 and 60. As Fitzpatrick observes, 'the purpose of the tax was to force East Timorese families to produce an agricultural surplus for sale so as to raise money to pay its imposts' (2002, p. 146). Aware of the administrative implications of age, people in Tutuala remarked that it was a common practice to underestimate their age to the Portuguese authorities.
- [39] As Traube observes, the 'notion of a legged house connotes both fixity and mobility, repose and action' (1986, p. 69). Referring to Mambai narratives of house formation as the 'walks of houses', Traube, however, points out that it is the house-founder, and not the house, that actually moves.
- [40] The Australian journalist, J Gert Vondra, visited Portuguese Timor in 1968. At this time, a weekly air service operated between Darwin and the international airport at Baucau, transporting a mixture of tourists and returning nationals to the island. On a visit to the eastern part of Timor, Vondra stopped at the village of Ioro, today part of the suco of Tutuala. Vondra was particularly interested in taking photographs of traditional houses and had been informed by the hotel owner in Baucau that Tutuala would have the 'prettiest stilt houses of them all' (1968, p. 78). At Ioro he photographed the casa de chef or 'house of the chief' which was 'painted in bold patterns'. As an indication of the impact of tourism in the area, just under the roof of the chief's house was written in 'big Portuguese letters: Casa de Chef' (ibid., p. 82).
- On the basis of local accounts, it does not appear to be the case that the Indonesian authorities used the pousada as an office or residence for the district administrator or camat. Separate buildings were erected below the level of the 'hotel' to house the office of camat and kepala desa ('village head').
- [42] As Fitzpatrick remarks, the relationship between Fretilin (Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente—Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor), its armed wing, Falintil, and traditional rulers (liurai) is a complicated matter. On the one hand, Fretilin was 'suspicious of liurai feudalism and historical allegiances' to the UDT (Uniao Democratica Timorense) political party (2002, p. 37). On the other hand, many liurai were active in resisting the Indonesian occupation.

- [43] In his discussion of 'iconoclasm and conversion', Raymond Corbey (2003, pp. 118–99) speaks of the 'psychological devastation' of the indigenous population resulting from the missionary destruction of sacred statues and images.
- [44] Based on his time in Portuguese Timor in 1882, Forbes observes that the Timorese 'attribute both sickness and natural death to the influence of some malevolent existence' (1989, p. 438).
- [45] On the island of Timor, Fataluku speakers are not alone in this belief. For example, Traube reports that the Mambai identify themselves as the 'original inhabitants of the land', 'the eldest folk on Timor' and those who 'promote life for humanity as a whole' (1986, pp. 27–51). While Mambai locate themselves at the centre of a 'symbolic geography' (ibid., p. 28) which includes all of Timor, Fataluku people position themselves at the head of an anthropomorphised island.
- [46] This group initially applied for a loan to develop a tourist enterprise at Valu Beach. However, their application to the regional government for development approval at the popular tourist beach was objected to by senior members of the *ratu* traditionally associated with the area. Management of the hotel constitutes the fall-back position of the group.

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