

Reciprocity, recognition and suffering

Political mobilizers in Independent East Timor

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My goal in this article is to discuss some of the values that have been mobilized as a source of political legitimacy in East Timor since the restoration of independence¹. To do so, I used as a principal analytical anchor campaign activities conducted during the first round of the presidential elections in April 2007. They are placed in perspective through comparison with other moments of political dispute. By means of this ethnographic observation of electoral phenomenon including rallies, radio and television programs and journalistic coverage, I seek to identify some of the moral and sociological principles upon which modern political authority is claimed in the country by the different groups of its elites. I highlight the important role of the veterans of the *Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste* (Falintil) [Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor] in this field. This fact, associated to a discussion of public presentations of the various candidates during the campaign, is used as an indicator of the importance that ideas and values such as suffering, recognition and reciprocity occupy in contemporary political culture in Timor. Based on the data, I present a hypothesis about the mechanisms by which the capilarization of modern institutions, such as political parties and the nation-state, has taken place in the country: by means of alliances between the cosmopolitan urban elites and local authorities, mediated by veterans of the resistance.²

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2 This article is one of the first products of the research project entitled “A nação em urnas: projetos civilizatórios em disputa no contexto pós-colonial timorense” [A Nation at the Polls: Civilizational

The text is structured in three parts. First, I present some characteristics of the social and institutional climate in which the presidential elections took place, identifying the protagonists of the disputes observed. I then discuss the campaign, analyzing certain aspects of its *modus operandi* and the symbolic contents mobilized within it. By doing this I also dialog with works that analyze other electoral processes in East Timor (Hohe, 2002; Seixas, 2006; MacWilliam & Bexley, 2008), and with certain aspects of the political disputes that took place in the country in 2005 and 2006. Finally, I close my argument by offering some interpretations of the result of the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2007.

Before continuing, it is important to emphasize from which positions and research conditions I observed the phenomenon described below, which guide, in a certain way, the view that I have of them. The research from which this text is a product was conducted from January - April 2007 by means of field work among the political parties, candidates and institutions responsible for the management of the presidential elections in the country. Although based in Dili, I traveled through nearly the entire country in rides with friends from different political parties, in order to observe the preparation and execution of the campaign. The course of the investigation was influenced by the networks of sociability and relations of trust that I built in my first period of research in East Timor from 2002 to 2003. At that time, I worked as a volunteer in the office of Mari Alkatiri and mostly circulated among party members and sympathizers of *Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente* (Fretilin) [The Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor]. Aware, therefore, of the epistemological implications involved in this situation, I sought to establish a minimal balance to the framework of references by living, in 2007, with a Timor family that supported Ramos Horta, Xanana Gusmão and the Democratic Socialist Party (PSD) and which was, as a consequence, highly critical of FRETILIN.

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1 – Context

The Presidency of the Republic of East Timor in 2007 was disputed by eight candidates:³ Francisco Guterrez Lu Olo (Fretilin); Avelino Coelho (*Partido Socialista Timorense* [East Timorese Socialist Party] - PST); Manuel Tilman (Klibur Timor Oan Aswa'in - KOTA); Xavier do Amaral (*Associação Social Democrata Timorense* [East Timorese Social Democratic Association] – ASDT); Lúcia Lobato (*Partido Social Democrata* [Social Democratic Party] - PSD); José Ramos Horta (an independent candidate); João Carrascalão (*União Democrática Timorense* [East Timorese Democratic Union] - UDT) and Fernando de Araújo Lasama (*Partido Democrático* [Democratic Party] - PD).

The candidacies were not formally linked to parties because the law required that candidates present themselves to the State and to the population through their individual identity. In pragmatic terms, however, party ties was strategically utilized. Fretilin, for example, highlighted Lu Olo's association to the history of the party, while João Carrascalão avoided using the name of the UDT in his campaign.

The presentation of the candidacies and the realization of the campaigns took place in a political climate marked by the residual instability from the political and social crisis of 2006, the many reasons for which were still being discussed. Refugee camps; international military forces led by Australia in the streets; armed deserters of *Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste* (PNTL) [National Police of East Timor] and of *Falintil/Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste* (F-FDTL) in the mountains; organized actions of martial arts groups; crisis in the rice supply; and an absence of local police forces were some of the elements that shaped the context of the electoral disputes, generating a sensation of fear and insecurity in much of the population, different from that found by McWilliam & Bexley (2008) who suggest that the campaign was experienced with enthusiasm by the East Timorese people. One often awoke in Dili, at midnight, to the sound of gunfire and cries of fear, above all from those who lived near the region of Comoro and Bairro Pité. No regions of the city were completely free of political disturbances.

Technically, the elections were conducted by the United Nations, with the support of the Technical Secretariat of the Electoral Administration

3 It is interesting that in 2002, only two people ran for the Presidency: Xavier do Amaral and Xanana Gusmão. The significance of the substantial increase in the number of candidates can indicate something about the fragmentation of political leadership in the country.

(STAE) – the national organ linked to the East Timor Ministry of State Administration – and were inspected by the National Electoral Commission (CNE), an institution independent. The election results were ratified by the Appeals Court. In a situation of fragile institutionality, the political party elites, with the support of various international assessors, disputed a range of issues from the date of the elections to the vote-counting methods (cf. Feijó, 2007). Less than 10 days before the elections, for example, the Parliament, under the demand of Fretilin, discussed the possibility of using the party symbol on the electoral ballots.

2 – Campaign

Officially, campaigning for the first round of the presidential elections took place from March 23 – April 4. But, in reality it began months earlier, when leaders of the various political parties disputed and reorganized their bases in search of support, processes that culminated in so-called *party consolidation events* (*consolidações partidárias*).

Beyond these party consolidations, which like the rallies, can be described as demonstrations of the strength of the candidates and/ or parties in the regions in which they take place (Palmeira & Heredia, 1995), the public presidential campaign in East Timor was officially composed of the following events: the launching of the candidacy (formal and informal), opening of the campaign, rallies, door-to-door propaganda, radio and television programs, distribution of pamphlets, walking rallies, etc. Characteristics common to the morphological and discursive constitutions of some of these phenomenon are discussed below and are considered here as cognitive windows that reveal variables and mechanisms upon which the legitimate modern political authority has been constructed and disputed in the country.

2.1 – Biographies

Most of the campaign materials for the candidates have a common form of presentation to the population: they describe their life histories, divided into at least 4 common moments or categories: 1) formal education; 2) activities in the resistance; 3) professional experience and their; 4) political trajectory in the post independence period.

In the first category, in the campaign literature for Manuel Tilman, for

example, we find:

“I attended elementary and pre-school, at the Catholic School at the Ainaro Mission, from 1955-1956; Studied four years of high school, at the Jesuit School of Soibada from 1956 - 1961 (...) Studied law (..) at the Universidade Clássica in Lisbon, Portugal, from 1971 - 1976.” (Dr. Manuel, 2007? From a Portuguese translation of the original in Tétum).

In relation to the trajectory of the candidates in the resistance, one of Fernando Araújo Lasama’s pamphlets portrayed him in the terms below:

“In 1988, Lasama and some of his colleagues founded RENETIL (The National Resistance of Students of East Timor) (...) as a clandestine political organization, its function was to organize students and intellectuals in Indonesia, East Timor and other countries. From June 1988 - 2000, Lassama served as RENETIL’s secretary general. In this position, Lassama was able to organize and bring together students, intellectuals and youth in many places, such as Dili, Denpasar, Mataram, Surabaya (...) and even in other countries such as Portugal (Independent direction of RENETIL abroad), Australia, England and Ireland.” (Vota ba Lassama, 2007? From a Portuguese translation of the original in Tétum).

In the topic about professional experience, the biography of Xavier do Amaral described him as follows:

“1. Latin teacher at the Dare Seminar, 1964-1966; 2. Catholic Elementary School Teacher in Lahane, 1966-1967; 3. Portuguese teacher at the Dr. Francisco Machado High School, 1968-1972; 4. Public Service worker in the customs office at Dili, 1972 - April 1974; 5. Named 1st class treasurer of the customs office at Dili, 1974-1975.” (Curriculum, 2007)

The campaign folder for Lu Olo characterized his political experience as president of the national parliament with the following narrative:

“Lu Olo as president of the Parliament: I learned to receive the desires of various parties in good will and evaluate them fairly; I learned how to dialog and make decisions according to the will of the majority; I learned to take important decisions for the life of the people; I learned how Government, Parliament, Courts and the Presidency conduct their functions and how they related

according to the RDTL constitution; I learned what is a State and to consolidate its institutions.” (Vota ba LuOlo, 2007? From a Portuguese translation of the original in Tétum).

The candidates’ biographies, based on the four structural categories cited, were presented at most campaign events – launching of candidacies, rallies, in radio and television propaganda etc – whether by reading the biographies themselves, or by distributing the pamphlets, or even by means of paid ads in newspapers in Dili. This biographical script indicates the minimal conditions that socially qualify the subjects to be recognized as apt to exercise the modern political functions in the local political culture, which are: 1) participation in the resistance to the Indonesian occupation; 2) formal education; 3) political experience and, to some degree; 4) significant professional experience.

It was also common for the candidates’ *houses*⁴ of origin be identified in the campaign acts. In the case of Manuel Tilman and Xavier do Amaral, this information was always underlined, given the fact that both descend from *ritual houses* of significant importance in the territory.⁵ Candidates such as Lu Olo, Lassama and Lúcia Lobato, highlighted their autochthon origins, as *true* East Timorese, in opposition to those called *mestiços*, such as Ramos Horta and João Carrascalão, who are children of Portuguese fathers and East Timorese mothers. In this context, the opposition between *mestiços* and *pure East Timorese*, so important during the Portuguese colonization, was also politically explored by the candidates.

2.2 – Rhetorics of Pain and Suffering

Another common trace in the candidates’ campaign performances was the constant reference to suffering (*terus*) and difficulties (*susar*) of the East Timorese, in the past and present. In their respective rhetoric, the sharing of suffering was what created strong bonds among the voters as a particular

4 Among the different populations that inhabit the sociopolitical frontiers of East Timor, the *house* (*uma*, in Tétum) is one of the most important, if not the most important community of belonging and unit of social organization. The *house* is a moral-religious community, objectified as a descent group that stands in relation to others in an hierarchical and segmented order. In most cases, the descendency are inherited patrilinearily. It regulates property rights and access to land, as well as the relations of alliance before which other *houses* are asymmetrically classified among each other as donors (*umane*, in Tétum) or takers of women (*fetosan*). The relationship between the *houses* is also structured by the principle of *diarchy*, in such a way that the members of the *houses* with ritual-religious functions (considered superior) do not perform secular political functions.

5 Manuel Tilman is from the *Biluha* house, in Maubisse, Ainaro.

political community, establishing them as East Timorese. As a result, the candidates sought to identify with the population by evoking their own histories of suffering, especially during the Indonesian occupation. Witnesses and images of martyrdom and deprivation were present in various campaign acts, discursively or through the choice of speakers at a rally, in which former Falintil guerrillas had a captive role. In this context, the former Falintil were tied to the condition of symbols of *terus* [suffering], for which reason candidates disputed and negotiated their support.

The video entitled *Maubere oan sira hamrik ba* [The Maubere Uprising] was one of the principal elements of the Fretilin campaign. Much of the film presented images of suffering of the East Timorese population during Portuguese colonization and the Indonesian occupation. In the first part of the video, some women narrated their long ties with the party, with emphasis on the statement of Ilda Maria da Conceição, widow of Reinaldo Freitas Belo (Kilik Kakai Wai Ge) – an important member of the Falintil linked to Fretilin – and then Vice Minister of Education. Her life story is publically known due to the suffering of her family during the period of Indonesian administration. In the same video, another woman affirms: “I suffered with Fretilin and with Fretilin I will stay. At that time, there was only Fretilin and for this reason I will be Fretilin forever.” (From a Portuguese translation of the original in Tétum).⁶

At the launch of Lu Olo’s campaign, in Ossu, Viqueque, Mari Alkatiri presented the following report, moments before passing the microphone to Lu Olo:

“I also wanted to say that when Fretilin held the encounter, the long meeting to decide if Lu Olo would be candidate, Lu Olo said: ‘I come from a poor family, I lived my whole life with the people, with the *suffering* of the people, I could not prepare myself to be President of the Republic. It would be better to chose another comrade.’ I said ‘No. That is exactly why, because you are a humble person, who stayed with the people, who *suffered* with the people, who really knows the people, for this reason you must be President of the Republic.’”

6 Hohe (2002) identifies similar arguments in the explanations that certain Timorese used to justify their vote for Fretilin in the elections of 2001. For example, some of his interlocutors maintain “once Fretilin, always Fretilin” or “we are neutral. We will vote for Fretilin.” The author suggested that for many, the adhesion to Fretilin seemed to be a question of identification in which there was no rational political choice.

(From a Portuguese translation of the original in Tétum. Emphasis mine).

The folder for the Lassama campaign has the following story:

“When he was twelve, Lassama already knew the *suffering* of the people. In 1975, he witnessed the spilling of blood and the death of 18 people in his family at the hands of Indonesian troops. (...) (Vota ba Lasama, 2007? Emphasis mine)

Lúcia Lobato, in her radio discourse, referred to her potential electors as “the suffered people of East Timor”. In addition, she stated, among other things:

“We hear various comments about the criteria that we must observe to choose the president. Some say that we must choose a president that everyone knows and who has experience, but no one knows how to measure what it is to have experience to govern. (...) We need a president who can feel the *suffering* of the people, who can love the people with all his heart, hear the *difficulties* of the people and stimulate the government to promote development for the poor people. The *suffering of the East Timorese* people needs a woman who can understand the *suffering* and the *difficulties* of their children. The *suffering of the East Timorese* needs a president who can be an example of family; *the suffering of Timor* needs a president who can promote peace and stability and overcome the current crisis. We need a president who has the courage to make decisions for the people.” (From a Portuguese translation of the original in Tétum. Emphasis mine).

“Consolidate justice, develop stability and dry the tears”, was the campaign theme of Xavier do Amaral. In one of the base texts of his campaign, we find the following narrative:

“(...)Choose for yourselves. Trust your vote to one who governs with the head and heart. Don’t trust people who govern with ambition, who only dream of themselves, who are proud, who only unite with themselves, who do not *recognize peoples’ suffering*, who also do not know the contributions of other people. (...) *It is true that I did not suffer as others suffered*, but I also did not cause harm to other East Timorese.”⁷ (From a Portuguese translation of the original in Tétum. Emphasis mine).

7 In the first years of Indonesian occupation, Xavier do Amaral was accused of treason by the Fretilin leaders. Having surrendered to occupying forces, he spent the years of occupation in exile outside of Timorese territory, in Indonesia.

The evocation of suffering appears in the campaigns in association with demands for correct recognition, expressed by the vote. In this context, the candidates sought to objectify their respective trajectories of sacrifice and pain as symbolic capital that instilled them with *dignity*, which qualified them to receive the trust (*fiar*) and the votes of electors, as also occurred in 2001 (Hohe, 2002:75). Nevertheless, more than this, as the statements above illustrate, the candidates intermittently repeat that they *recognize the suffering of the people*.

Analyzing the way that the nationalist discourse was appropriated by the Mambai, Traube (2007) indicates that this is also informed by the cultural code of reciprocity, in which it is expected that suffering, to bring some type of common benefit, must be restored. In her field work among the Mambai from 2000 - 2001, the authoress observed that, in various ways, the suffering tolerated by people during the struggle for independence was connected with the injustices committed against Tat Felis, a missionary considered a martyr. Traube suggests that by emphasizing the suffering of Tat Felis the Mambai expressed their demands for reparation to the political leaders for the suffering supported during the Indonesian occupation, guided by the presumption that those who prospered during the occupation must compensate those who made sacrifices. We thus note that part of the political discourses presented during the presidential campaign constitute a coherent response to these expectations. In addition to exhibiting their trajectory of suffering in the resistance to occupation, to from there qualify themselves to receive the trust of the population, the candidates characterize their potential electors, above all, by their capacity to withstand suffering, for which they should be properly compensated.

The articulation of these two issues (suffering and recognition) is, for some time, a structuring element in the East Timorese national political dynamic. In the elections of 2001, the history of performance and suffering in the resistance was the principal argument explored by various political forces to ascend to the Constituent Assembly (Seixas, 2006:338). In 2005, given the government proposal to make religious teaching an optional discipline, the Catholic Church in East Timor presented itself as the true depository of martyrdom of the population during the Indonesian occupation, which should, therefore, be properly considered. In this context, it sought to weaken the government proposal, suggesting that the group which had the most power

within government, those whose returned from Mozambique under the leadership of Mari Alkatiri, had not suffered with the people, as did the Church during the occupation (cf. Silva, 2007).

The issue of suffering experienced during the Indonesian occupation is also one of the main sources of the sense of opposition between those *de fora* (those returning from diaspora) and those *de dentro* (those within the country who experienced the Indonesian occupation on a daily basis). These categories have been used by the latter as a way of decrease the legitimacy of the homecomers in a wide variety of spheres of social dispute in the country, interpreting that those *de fora* supposedly did not make sacrifices in the years of occupation.

Amid the campaign period, at the commemoration of International Woman's Day on March 8, 2007, a book was launched entitled *Hau fo midar, hau simu moruk*. *Midar no valor iha tempo luta, lafolin iha tempo rekonesementu* (I Gave Tenderness, I Received Bitterness: Docility and Valor in Times of Struggle Have no Price in Times of Recognition). At the event, various women declared their pain for not receiving proper recognition for their work in the resistance movements against Indonesian occupation. Micató, an important figure in East Timorese public life and co-author of this book, said at the time: "Those who did not struggle live well. Those who struggled are not recognized. Its like that in many parts of the world. In Mozambique as well." Mana Bilola, another important person in the local women's movement, concluded the commemoration with the following affirmation: "For our sacrifice (*terus*), we are one." (From a Portuguese translation of the original in Tétum). In this context, East Timor emerges, above all, as a political community of suffering.

It is also known that part of the political crisis of 2006 was unleashed by protests by approximately one third of the contingent of the F-FDTL, formed by men of *Loromonu* origin.⁸ The petitioners – as they became known

8 The terms *Loromonu* (*sunset*) and *Lorosa'e* (*sunrise*) are toponyms that refer to two large regions in which the East Timor territory is imaginarily divided, respectively West and East. These denominations are circumstantially imposed on individual identities, and used as indicators of distinct and opposite *ethos*. Individuals born in the districts that compose the eastern region of the country (Viqueque, Lautem and Baucau) are considered *Lorosa'e/Firakus* and in general are regarded as more extroverted. In contrast, individuals born in the 10 districts that compose the western region of the country, who are imagined to be taciturn, shy, and non-talkative, are known as the *Loromonu/Kaladi*. For a discussion about the process of politicalization of the opposition between *lorosa'e/firaku* and *loromonu/kaladi* see Silva, 2008.

– affirmed that they were victims of discrimination within the organization due to their regional origin. They reported that some of their colleagues and superior commanders – of *Lorosa'e* origin – maintained that the *Loromonu* had not struggled – and suffered – as much as the *Lorosa'e* for the independence, which was a justification for restricting access to career promotions to the *Loromonu*, among other things. During the crisis, Xanana and his supporters used as political mobilizers against the Fretilin the fact that many of its leaders did not share the “years of suffering” with the East Timorese.⁹ For example, in his discourse of March 23, 2006, Xanana suggested that then Minister of Defense, Roque Rodrigues felt uncomfortable in reporting to veterans of the F-FDTL who supposedly were discriminating against other colleagues because he did not participate in the war.

Demands for recognition and denouncements of its denial have been present in an intense manner in Timor's recent political dynamic and are politically used to strengthen some groups and weaken others. The definitions attributed to these terms, such as those conceived by Cardoso de Oliveira (2007) have proved to be extremely fertile for expanding the understanding of the configuration of discourses that structure the political disputes in East Timor. In order to analyze the legal conflicts and political demands in the United States, Canada and Brazil, the author suggests that important dimensions of the clashes in contemporary societies have some roots in a sense of misrecognition, as the reverse of recognition (Taylor, 2004), understood by some social subjects as a type of moral insult. Although indicating that the perception of the moral insult is configured in various ways in each ethnographic case, the author suggests that it is normally constructed through the mobilization of feelings that highlight an attitude of distancing or an absence of deference to identity of an interlocutor, which would condition his or her access to certain rights.

In the context of East Timor, the denouncements of misrecognition are articulated in the public arena by the evocation of the idea that there has not been equal recognition, which considers the various types of engagement and commitment of different social actors during the independence struggle, in the process of reconstruction of the country. Thus, it is suggested that

9 The expression “years of suffering” was used by the colleague Benjamin Corte Real, dean of UNTL to refer to the period of Indonesian occupation.

those who suffered less during the occupation were in some way privileged in detriment to those who were more martyred who should be properly compensated for this. In this context, it should be remembered that in the local legal sensibility, justice is aimed at promoting compensation and the reestablishment of equilibrium between the parties in dispute.

2.3 – *Maromak & Matebians*

The issue of adhesion and of religious practice was often evoked in the electoral campaigns. In general, all of the candidates cultivated the image of “good Christians” to conquer the population’s trust. In the pragmatic ritual of East Timorese politics of the period, the more or less explicit presence of the Christian and Catholic liturgy was widespread. Many campaign events begin and end with a prayer, repeating the standard identified by Seixas (2006) in the elections of 2001.

Ramos Horta was one of the candidates who most exploited religious images in his campaign, beginning with his dress. In his public activities as candidate, he appeared in a shirt with the face of Jesus Christ. His campaign materials include a folder with photos of Horta next to Bishop D. Ximenes Belo and Pope Bento XVI, on which were stamped the phrase: “Vote in Ramos Horta”. At his rally in Aileu, on March 24, 2007, he said goodbye to the crowd stating “be with God.”

Lúcia Lobato, in turn, paid for the celebration of masses to give thanks for her candidacy at the headquarters of the districts and subdistricts when the date for her rally at the locations approached. On March 27, the national representative of UDT, at a rally in Aileu, prayed for *Maromak* (God) to free the population from greater suffering. Lu Olo, in turn, presented himself as a “convicted Catholic” in his campaign literature (*Vota ba Lu Olo, 2007a?*).

A commitment to partnership and good relations with the Catholic Church in East Timor were promises made by all the candidates and the relationship between certain State policies and religious practices was politicized during the electoral period, even before the official campaign. Beginning in mid-February, for example, criticisms emerged in public space in Timor, of the educational cooperation agreements between the East Timorese and Cuban governments. Members of the upper echelons of the Catholic Church accused the government of encouraging the students sent to Cuba to abandon their religious practices, alleging that the East Timorese who lived in

that country to study medicine did not have the opportunity to go to mass, to confess or practice other rituals. This polemic motivated a trip by then Education Minister Rosália Corte-Real, to Cuba. Upon her return, declarations and images of the East Timorese going to churches in Cuba were distributed. This is an exemplary case of how international cooperation practices are politicized by distinct groups of the elite and used as munitions in their power struggles (Silva & Simião, 2007).

Maromak (God) and the *Matebians* (the spirits of the dead) were often invoked in the campaign acts, in a clear superimposition of the autochthon cosmologies and the ties of belonging to the Nation State. After the prayer that opened the rallies, the speaker requested a minute of silence in memory of the heroes of the liberation struggle. At the PD rally in Gleno, they simultaneously invoked the presence of the spirits of the dead and of God to begin the event. At the consolidation of the Fretilin Party in Same, on Feb. 11, 2007 Nicolau Lobato's son got on stage and celebrated the memory of his father who was killed in the region in 1977.

The ties of institutional belonging of the killed "liberation heroes", of whom Nicolau Lobato is an exemplary figure, were repeatedly celebrated by Fretilin during the campaign and the resistance presented as an exclusive legacy of this party. Fretilin presented itself as the only beholder of the population's history of resistance, as the symbol of its liberation struggle, with strong roots in the country's history, a quite appealing argument in a social universe in which the past and tradition are important for explaining the present condition. In contrast, the opposition parties associate Fretilin to Mari Alkatiri and others who returned from Mozambique who, having lived outside the country during the occupation, supposedly cannot recognize the people's suffering. Besides this, they suggested that Fretilin was the one responsible for the political and social crisis of 2006.

Hohe (2002) identified similar arguments in the Fretilin campaign in 2001. Nevertheless, her analysis indicates that, at that time, the evocation of the party ties with the ancestors killed in war was exploited more intensely than seen in 2007. She affirmed that, at that time, Fretilin suggested to the population that a vote for the party was a way to pay respect to those killed during the occupation fighting under its flag. The power of this argument is derived from the fact that to a significant part of the local population, those killed in the war are seen as actors with great influence on the lives of the living, above

all those for whom proper funeral rituals were not conducted. In this context, the vote in Fretilin was presented as a form of deference to these ancestors, who, in this way, would continue to collaborate for the reproduction of social life. To the contrary, the living could be punished by the *matebian*.

During the research in 2007, I found repeated reports of people who said they voted in Fretilin in 2001 because they did not know there were other parties or because they did not know that Xanana was not Fretilin. They believed that it was exclusively under the leadership of Fretilin that the resistance had achieved its objectives. They did not see a difference between the *Conselho Nacional da Resistência Timorese* (CNRT) [National Council of East Timorese Resistance], Falintil and Fretilin. Thus it is worth noting that to the degree that the divisions existing in the leadership of the resistance become public, the disputes for privileged relations with their martyrs also increase and the electoral preferences become more distributed among the various existing political parties.

2.4 – Platforms

On April 25, 2007, I attended the rally of Fernando Lassama (PD) in Ermera. As usual, I got a ride with party leaders in Díli. When we arrived we had lunch at the house of commander Fitun, a very popular leader in the district, and not by chance, a former guerrilla. Returning to the center of Gleno, while we waited for the caravan of the PD to arrive, one of the young party leaders commented to me that it would be useless for him to speak on stage because the people would not listen. He said this is because he did not spend the resistance years *suffering* with the local population. The people did not know who he was, so they did not trust him. For this reason, the role of the people who stayed in the mountains during the resistance was essential. Two party figures with this profile, the former guerrillas Dudu and Fitun, were responsible for the organization of that rally. Not by chance, former commander Dudu sat to the left of Lassama on stage.

It was quite common and desirable to have the presence at campaign events in the interior of the country of Falintil veterans, or of people who had an active role in the resistance to the Indonesian occupation.¹⁰ There was even

10 In the final years of the occupation, the Timorese resistance was organized in three *fronts*, under direction of the National Timorese Resistance Council (CNRT): the armed front, represented by the FALINTIL; the clandestine front, represented by members of Timorese civil society in

a dispute among the candidates for the support of these veterans, who were seen as people with great popular charisma due to their past – of suffering – shared together with the people *no mato* [in the mountains]. It was also stated that these people had great power to influence the local authorities – *suco* and village chiefs¹¹, *lia nain* (the lord of word/spokeperson)¹², *matan dook* (literally, those who see farway)¹³ – who, in turn, influenced the choice of votes of the people of their village or *suco*. In addition, the former guerrillas had a role at the rallies as symbols of suffering and resistance for voters to identify with the candidates. Thus, part of the dynamic of the campaigns, as McWilliam & Bexley (2008) suggested, consisted in exploiting the heroic images of the resistance leaders.

At the rally of Lúcia Lobato, in Manatuto, on March 26, for example, another Falintil veteran was on stage: Riak Leman. On the route to the district, the party personnel proudly commented on the adhesion of Major Tara – a petitioner of the F-FDTL and former guerrilla – to the candidacy of Lúcia Lobato. It was hoped that this support would bring voters from the district of Ermera to Lúcia, a region in which Major Tara was born and where he was living.

In Aileu, on March 24, Ramos-Horta's rally had the presence of Cornélio Gama (L-7) and of representatives of Colimau 2000. It was also mentioned that Ramos Horta sought support from Vicente Rai-Lós, another petitioner and former guerilla, for his campaign. In addition to these names, Ramos Horta had the support of the person known as the most illustrious ex-Falintil still alive, then president Xanana Gusmão who, in turn, had behind him an important portion of the former fighters and veterans decorated by the

the territory and; the diplomatic front, formed by members of the Timorese diaspora in Australia, Portugal, Mozambique and Angola. Each one of these fronts had organic relations with the others. The FALINTIL, for example, survived for 24 years with arms and other types of goods taken from the Indonesian army or sent by the clandestine front. The language of communication used by the movement elites was Portuguese. For a description of the different phases through which passed the Timorese resistance movements from 1975 - 1999, see , Magalhães, 1999.

11 Chiefs of *suco* and village are now local State authorities who operate, respectively, in the domain of the *suco* (an administrative unit formed by a group of villages) and in each settlement. The institutionalization of these authorities dates back to the Portuguese colonization period, during which these figures acted as intermediaries of the administration at a local level. Although the *suco* and village chiefs are now elected, because of universal suffrage, their legitimacy for the exercise of these functions is strongly anchored in the local hierarchy between the *houses* from which they originate.

12 The one responsible for the processes of local judgment, for the operation of customary law (*adat*).

13 The local healer.

recognition commissions of the resistance heroes that he established.

At Fretilin's party consolidations in the district of Viqueque, the deputies Antônio Machado, Joaquim dos Santos and Madalena da Silva had a central role on stage and in the event organization. All three were born in the district and had lived together with the population, in the mountains, during the occupation. In addition, it should be highlighted that the then Fretilin candidate, Lu Olo, was himself a former guerrilla. This historical background was used in the party's various campaign vehicles.

In this context, it is important to underline the existence of a certain tendency among the resistance veterans, who, after the restoration of independence, entered the country's political parties. Note that since 1999, former members of Falintil of *Lorosa'e origin* had been profiled alongside Fretilin, such as Lu Olo, Somotxo, and others, while many of the political party leaders in opposition to Fretilin, former members of the armed resistance, are of *Loromonu* origin. For example, we observe that among the national leaders of the Democratic Party, over which Xanana Gusmão had exercised great ascendancy until, at least, the founding of the *Conselho Nacional da Reconstrução Timorense* [National Council of East Timorese Reconstruction] (CNRT), were, in 2007, the former commanders Dudu, Fitun, Sesurai, Decker, and others who, being of *Kaladi* origin, probably influenced the large vote for the PD in the districts of the country's western region. Meanwhile, Riak Leman was with PDS and was also of *Loromonu* origin. In these presidential elections, the *Conselho Popular pela Defesa da República Popular de Timor-Leste* [Popular Council for the Defense of the Democratic Republic of East Timor] (CPD-RDTL), commanded by former guerrilla Oligari and with a strong base in the eastern region, supported Fretilin. There were, however, various exceptions. The *Sagrada Família* [Sacred Family] of L-7 (Cornélio Gama) which, in the electoral period was transformed into *União Democrática Nacional da Resistência Timorense* (UNDERTIN) [National Democratic Union of East Timorese Resistance] and had its headquarters in Laga/Baucau and, therefore, in the *Lorosa'e*, region, supported the presidential candidacy of Ramos Horta, having after that supported Fretilin in the parliamentary elections (MacWilliam & Bexley, 2008).

In addition to the resistance veterans, it was common to find on stage at the campaign rallies, or even in the audiences, local authorities such as

lia nain, *suco* or village chiefs or family members of former *liurais*.¹⁴ The campaign committee of João Carrascalão even traveled through the country with a white flag with an image of *Kaebauk*, a decoration used by *liurais* and other local authorities, as a symbol of temporal or religious power,¹⁵ in ceremonial and ritual contexts. At the candidate's rally in Viqueque, on March 24, 2007, a reference was made to the presence of the former *liurai* in the district. According to the campaign coordinator, Ângela Carrascalão, João had the support of many noble *houses* in the Aileu region. In this district, at the PD rally, a *lia nain* was in the first row on stage. In Suai, where the Lassama candidature was launched, the rally finished with a ceremony by bringing him into a local *Uma Lisan* (Traditional Cerimonial House). At the launching of Lu Olo's campaign, in Ossu, a *lia nain* of his family gave a speech, in which he expressed his support for the Fretilin candidate because he was from his family. Among other things, these phenomena express the way that these candidates sought legitimacy through alliances with local authorities.

Another common element is found in all the rallies. The presidential candidates were always the last to speak at the event. Before them, local personalities who supported the candidates appeared with the understanding that these authorities (veterans, *lia nain*, *suco* or village chiefs), by giving their speeches, placed their charisma, prestige - their *mana* - at the candidate's disposition. Thus, adorned and dignified by these moral forces, the candidate then spoke.

The electoral events in the districts and subdistricts were, in most cases, organized by the leaders of the party's local support bases, whether they were former guerrillas, "traditional" authorities or even local intermediaries of the government administration: village or *suco* chiefs. The success of the rallies

14 The term *liurai* (literally meaning above the land) refers to the *régulos*, local authorities from high status *houses*. Their existence predates Portuguese colonization, when the now unified territory of East Timor was organized in a series of semi-independent kingdoms. The exercise of authority of the *liurais* involved, among other things, the demand to conduct a series of ritual services and payment of tributes, in the form of compulsory labor, to a specific set of villages and or *sucos*. The place and function of the *liurais* in the local social structures changed over time, as a result of the relations constructed with the Portuguese administration. Many of the *liurais* were essential intermediary agents of Portuguese colonization, to which were attributed, in many cases, titles of European nobility or military titles. They and their descendents also constituted, in many cases, a significant portion of the assimilated population, given the privileged entrance they had to western school institutions.

15 The *kaebauk* is a decoration in the form of a buffalo horn, normally made in silver, used on the front of the head, usually by men. It is a typical element of local jewelry.

was in large part due to the charisma of the members of the local bases of the candidates or party in the various regions in the country's interior. On the other hand, many of the outstanding personalities in the parties in Dili were personalities unknown to the population in the interior. Nevertheless – and precisely for this reason – they spoke at the campaign events. At the PD rally in Ermera, for example, talks were given by João Boavida, Mariano Sabino, Rui Menezes, among others, before Fernando Lassama spoke. Maria Paixão, João Gonçalves, and others, also spoke in Manatuto at the campaign of Lúcia Lobato.

In this way, new and old political leaders, modern and “traditional” were found at the East Timorese political rallies, reciprocally strengthening each other, as a function of the resources made available by each one of them to the execution of the rallies, in acts of diffuse reciprocity. The financial resources captured by the cosmopolitan urban leaders of the parties, passed on to the bases, stimulated the organization of the rallies, which implied, among other things, contracting trucks for transportation, distribution of meals, musical concerts etc. The local leaders, upon presenting themselves to the populations of the villages as responsible for the structuring of these events, strengthened themselves before their bases. On the other hand, by being present on stage, they transferred their prestige to the presidential candidates who they supported. By organizing these events, they also created objective conditions so that new and old national leaders were strengthened among the populations of the interior.

The literature about the electoral dynamic in Indonesia under the regime of the New Order (Antlöv & Cederroth, 2004; Anderson, 1990; Alagappa, 1995) has suggested that the local authorities and leaders (chiefs of villages or of groups of villages, sub-district administrators, public employees etc.) are branches of articulation that are essential to the political system, sources for arranging votes and consolidation of the hegemony of political forces on a national scale. The strength of these social actors in practices of this nature is rooted in patronage relations, sociologically qualified as patron-client relations. It is thus based on this historic background that certain aspects of the contemporary East Timorese political dynamic should be understood, given that it was during the Indonesian administration that many of the elites and the East Timorese population made contact with electoral practices, until then little known during the Portuguese colonization period.

Thus, the attention to the phenomenology of the rallies provides some clues to understanding the mechanisms by which the dialectic of modernization (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1998) has taken place in East Timor since the restoration of independence. The indications that can be observed in the events discussed above suggest that this phenomenon took place by means of alliances between the cosmopolitan urban and local (traditional) elites, mediated and strengthened reciprocally by support of the veterans of the resistance.

3 – Perspectives

My objective in this text was to identify some of the values that had been used as political mobilizers in East Timor based on an analysis of public praxis of the presidential electoral dispute in the first semester of 2007. The data provided above and its comparison with other moments of political conflict in the country indicate that the articulation of the idea of suffering and of its correct recognition, mediated by the ideology of reciprocity (Forman, 1980) are fundamental in the contemporary local symbolic repertoire. This theme permeates the campaigns of all the candidates, manifesting itself aesthetically, politically and morally and imposes itself in the organization of people placed on stage, in the composition of alliances – support was always sought from a veteran of the Falintil – in the speeches made by the candidates etc. In this context, it is important to remember that the ethnology produced about the populations that inhabit the sociopolitical border of what is today called East Timor, highlights the centrality of the principle of alliance and reciprocity in various dimensions of the dynamics that conform their respective social lives (Fox, 1980). Given that perspective, the configuration of the post-colonial repertoire that structures political disputes of various natures in the country, as portrayed here, can be considered to be a result of the reviving of this ideology. In this dialectic process, the dispute for access to institutions of the modern State are structured through a exhibition of values important to the universe of the villages, creating conditions for their reproduction.

Moreover, this is done creatively, based on which new categories of organization of experience are re(elaborated). The results of the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2007, forged in the wake of the crises of 2006, indicate a regionalization of the support bases for the country's political parties. In both elections, it was seen that the various parties in opposition to

Fretilin won the elections in the districts that composed the Western and therefore *Loromonu* region (from Dili to Oecussi). In contrast, the Fretilin was victorious in all the districts of the Eastern *Lorosa'e* region (Baucau, Viqueque and Lautem).

In the second round of the presidential elections, Lu Olo achieved 67% of the votes in Baucau, 68% in Viqueque and 51% in Lautém (RTDL, 2007), having lost the elections in all the other districts, in which Ramos Hora was victorious, which allowed him to win the presidency with 65% of the total valid votes in the country. In the parliamentary elections, Fretilin won 45.5% of the votes in Lautem, 62.4% in Baucau and 60% in Viqueque. On the other hand, the ASDT-PSD alliance won 47.3% of the votes in Aileu, 29.1% in Bobonaro and 26.8% in Manufahi (MacWilliam & Bexley, 2008). As an example, the PD achieved 22% of the votes in Ermera, 20% in Covalima and 19.3% in Bobonaro. As we know, although Fretilin was the most voted party in the parliamentary elections of 2007, with approximately 29% of the electoral preferences, it did not form a government due to the post-election alliance formed among CNRT, PD, ASDT, PSD and others.

As I mentioned, the veterans of the Falintil are central actors in East Timorese political equations (Rees, 2004). In light of this fact, I suggest that the configuration of the scenario above arose, among other reasons, because many of the veterans of *Loromonu* origin entered political-party life by associating themselves to the parties in opposition to Fretilin while other veterans of *Lorosa'e* origin adhered to Fretilin, in a social universe oriented by expectations of reciprocity, in which those who suffered must be compensated. In this context, the vote for a particular party, or for a particular candidate is treated as an expression of recognition and of compensation for the suffering experienced during the Indonesian occupation.

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to discuss some of the values that have been mobilized as a source of political legitimacy in East Timor since the

restoration of independence. To do so, it uses as a principal analytical anchor the campaign activities held in the realm of the first round of presidential elections in the country in April 2007. They are placed in perspective through a comparison with other moments of political conflict. By means of ethnographic observation of electoral phenomenon – rallies, radio and television programs and journalistic coverage – I seek to identify some of the moral and sociological principles on which modern political authority is claimed in the country by the different groups of its elites. Among other things, I highlight the centrality of the veterans of the Falintil in this field. This fact, associated to the discussion of the public performances of the various candidates during the campaign, is seen as an indicator of the importance that ideas and values such as suffering, recognition and reciprocity occupy in the repertoire of contemporary East Timorese political culture. I also present a hypothesis about the mechanisms through which the capilarization of modern institutions such as political parties and the Nation State, have taken place in the country: by means of alliances between the cosmopolitan urban elites and local authorities, mediated by veterans of the resistance.

Key words: East Timor, political culture, elections, recognition, reciprocity.

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