"REMAKING A WORLD BEYOND STATE DEMARCATION"

EMOTION, VIOLENCE AND MEMORY IN POST-CONFLICT OECUSSI, EAST TIMOR

VICTORIA KUMALA SAKTI[1]

Freie Universität Berlin

Abstract Since achieving independence from the 24 years of Indonesian occupation in 2002, reconciliation efforts enabled processes of rebuilding relationships in conflict-torn East Timor[1]. Nevertheless, a large number of East Timorese continues to live in the bordering West Timor, Indonesia. Many of them were involved as pro-Indonesia militias in the 1999 atrocities and avoid returning to their home country in the fear of retribution. Based on a multi-sited ethnography this paper demonstrates how the bonds between the two communities, now separated by a formal state demarcation, continue to be negotiated in their everyday lives. Scrutinizing the role of emotion in this process and how it is influenced by existing politics of memory sheds light to what is actually at stake for people affected by past violent conflict. Ultimately, the paper discusses the questions of how people process, communicate and remember past experiences of violence and how emotions are articulated and experienced in these processes.

INTRODUCTION

[1] Victoria Kumala Sakti is a researcher and PhD Candidate at the Cluster of Excellence, "Languages of Emotion", Freie Universität Berlin. The author wishes to extend her gratitude to the communities in both Oecussi (East Timor) and Kefamenanu (West Timor), particularly to Sra. Fransiska Obe and Sr. Ello Juvinal Marques Ena for their indispensable assistance.

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"Seperti tali benang persahabatan yang tidak bisa dipisahkan dan telinga jarum yang tidak bisa dipatahkan"

(Like a thread of friendship that could not be torn and an eye of a needle that could not be broken)

----- Tua Kono, ritual leader of a village in West Timor bordering to East Timor (2010)

This paper explores the complexities and significances of the remaking of everyday lives and the rebuilding of broken relationships in the context of post-conflict life of the *Atoni Meto* community originating from Oecussi highlands, sensitive to its current demarcated situation as well as to the larger socio-political context of East Timor. The focus of the unfolding discussions is inspired by the highly influential book, from which a part of the title was borrowed for this paper, "Remaking a World – Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery" (Das, Kleinman, Lock, Ramphele & Reynolds, 2001). Here, Das et al. (2001) accentuated an often overlooked yet essential point relevant to post-conflict studies; that *"even in the midst of the worst horrors, people continue to live, to survive, and to cope"*"– an underemphasized yet remarkable achievement of the human capability in response to severe disruptions in life.

Most of all, this paper is based on my own fascination but also perplexity that was encountered in the course of my 12 months field research among the conflict-divided communities of the Oecussi–*Atoni Meto* that are now dispersed into bordering villages of two sovereign nations, Indonesia and East Timor. Despite the violent political conflict during East Timor's vote for independence from Indonesia in 1999, which had fragmented the *Atoni Meto's* community life; turning neighbors, friends and families against each other and that

had culminated into their current demarcated living situation, the bond between them nevertheless seems to be continuously negotiated in their everyday lives.

The nature of the 1999 violence did not only involve transnational State actors but also non-State actors, particularly in the use of locally East Timorese men that were recruited, equipped and trained by Indonesian military as their proxies or 'militia' forces in the execution of widespread terror campaigns and human rights violations. Consequently, the involvement of 'local East Timorese sons' did not only result in the immense devastation as well as bloodshed during the conflict, but also to the breakdown of social relationships, trust and sense of normality in communities. Most of the former militia leaders and members have never returned to their home country and continue to enjoy life free from prosecution in West Timor. A large number of East Timorese, which during the mass exodus were forcedly displaced by these militias to join their 'stronghold', still remains in West Timor until today although maintaining strong ties to families in East Timor, their place of origin.

This prompted me to further inquire *how this continuous bond is at all possible?* The question is raised on a number of unresolved issues; the absence of justice and accountability of past crimes due to the reluctance of both countries in dealing with the past, lack of successful reconciliation efforts involving both communities divided by the border despite of the success in reconciling and reintegrating former militias of 'less-serious crimes' that have chosen to return to their communities in East Timor (Burgess & Doogue, 2005; Babo Soares, 2004; Kayser-Whande & Schell-Faucan, 2008) and furthermore, amidst the everyday memories as well as the extraordinary realms of remembering past violence.

To explore this question as well as its implication in the remaking of everyday lives, this paper underlines the importance of understanding the role of emotion in accentuating *what is at stake* for people affected by past violent conflict. The role of emotion in the aftermath of dispossession and war has been scrutinized by Zarowsky (2004), as critical in creating, recognizing, reinforcing, and mobilizing the moral webs on which both individual and

collective survival depend. As what Zarowsky in her fieldwork among the Somali Ethiopians encountered, the emotions and emotion talks in my fieldwork equally "evoke complex individual and collective memories that situate individual and local community experience to other realities" (Zarowsky, 2004: 190) the unresolved issues regarding past violence, the existing politics of memory, the avidity of the new nation to let the past be bygones and focus on the future, and the precariousness of survival in a harsh natural, economical and political environment. Furthermore, the shared identity of being an *Atoni Meto* further provides a crucial base in reinforcing this bond, but also in re-contextualizing past traumatic experiences in order to make everyday lives possible.

This paper is based on a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995) carried out by the author in the period between 2010-2011 in villages of both Oecussi, East Timor and in Kefamenanu, West Timor.

> "The essence of multi-sited research is to follow people, connections, associations, and relationships across space (because they are substantially continuous but spatially non-contiguous). (…) In terms of method, multi-sited ethnography involves a spatially dispersed field through which the ethnographer moves – actually, via sojourns in two or more places, or conceptually, by means of techniques of juxtaposition of data" (Falzon, 2005: 1-2).

All names of interlocutors in this article are pseudo names except the names that have otherwise been made public.

A Context of Terror and Severe Disruptions of the Everyday Life

East Timor's Road to Independence

The political conflict that translated into one of the worst human tragedies at the end of the twentieth century took place during East Timor's referendum in 1999. It was the first time in the history of this half island, since four centuries of Portuguese colonization to the 24 years

of Indonesian illegal annexation, that the people of East Timor were given the right to determine their own political status. However, the course of securing this right as well as the realization of the UN-backed referendum was not without cost. In the duration of Indonesian occupation numerous acts of killings, disappearances, programmed famine, and torture, among others, have now been widely documented.

The violence persisted and reached its peak in the 1999 ballot, subsequent to the overthrow of Suharto from Indonesian presidency. In order to compel the East Timorese to vote against independence and in favor for integration with Indonesia, the Indonesian military intensified a terror campaign under the guise of proxy forces, known as the 'militia' – groups composed of local East Timorese that were recruited, armed and trained by Indonesian forces. Despite the constant campaign of terror, on 4 September 1999, the results of the vote were announced; 78.5% chose independence while only 21.5% favored special autonomy under Indonesia. The Indonesian authorities and its proxies immediately carried out an ethnic cleansing campaign in East Timor, deporting approximately 250,000 people across the border into Indonesian West Timor. Approximately 70% of the buildings in East Timor were destroyed, vital infrastructure was crippled, and there were more than 1,400 killings, as well as acts of rape, looting and arson (OHCHR Report, 2003).

Key human rights reports, particularly "Chega!" (Portuguese for *enough!*), the final report of East Timor's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CAVR, 2005), documented with great depth and detail the inconceivable violence and suffering experienced by the people of East Timor under Indonesian rule. On-site post-ballot violence investigations confirmed evidence of crimes against humanity including systematic and mass murder; torture and ill-treatment, disappearances, violence against women and children (including rape and sexual slavery), extensive destruction, forced deportations and displacement and implementation of a scorched-earth campaign (KPP HAM, 2000 excerpts in ETAN; OHCHR

Report, 2003). The report of the UN Commission on Human Rights (2000) concluded that there had been gross violations of human rights and breaches of humanitarian law.

Both reports indicate the involvement of the Indonesian armed forces and loyalist militias in the violations and call upon an establishment of an International Criminal Tribunal in order to bring the perpetrators to justice. The estimation of death toll throughout the whole 24 years of occupation period varies according to different reports, from the minimum of 102,800 (+/- 12,000) (CAVR, 2005) to 204,000 as "a conservative upper-bound estimate on excess mortality" (Staveteig, 2007: 25) – a staggering figure, particularly when considering the population number at the start of the invasion was estimated to stand only as high as 707,500 persons (Kiernan, 2003; Staveteig, 2007). Until today, an International Criminal Tribunal or the recommendations of both CAVR as well as the subsequent joint initiative of Indonesia and East Timor, Commission for Truth and Friendship (CTF), have never followed through.

OECUSSI AND THE MEMORIES OF VIOLENCE

The intimidation prior to the ballot in 1999, as well as its devastating post-ballot violence dispersed throughout the whole country, breaking out in all its 13 districts and forcing its way into the ordinary lives of civil populations at the sub-village levels. One of the bloodiest violence and most gruesome massacres took place in the relatively stable highlands of Oecussi, an exclave district of East Timor. This massacre is known as the 'Passabe massacre', named after the village where most of the militia members were involved in the sequences of rampage against the neighboring allegedly 'pro-independence' village of Bobometo (for a complete account of this massacre, see Robinson's OHCHR Report, 2003).

The unique location of Oecussi, which is surrounded by the Savu Sea to the north and the Indonesian province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT – referred to in this paper as West Timor) on its other boundaries, distinguishes this district's uniqueness by not being contiguous with

the remainder of East Timor. It is politically a part of East Timor that is located in Indonesian West Timor. The dominant population of West Timor and Oecussi is referred to as *Atoni (Pah) Meto* or *Atoni Dawan* (Corbafo, 2009). *Atoni Meto* (which literally means 'Meto Person') in the highlands *(leten)* are largely agricultural farmers, while those living in the lowlands *(mnesat)* benefit from a more reliable water source and are producers of rice. Office positions or other occupation opportunities are also better available in the district's lowland town center, called Pante Makassar.

Geographically, the population of *Atoni Meto* covers the Indonesian West Timor areas of Timor Tengah Utara, TTU (North Central Timor regency), Timor Tengah Selatan, TTS (South Central Timor regency), most part of Kupang and the whole of Oecussi (Ambeno) in East Timor. The *Atoni Meto* share the same Austronesian language, *Uab Meto* or referred to as *Dawan* in Bahasa Indonesia and *Beikeno* as referred to in Tetum (one of the two official languages in East Timor) (Fox & Sather, 1996). Despite some dialect variation, the shared language marks a long-standing relationship between Oecussi and other *Meto/Dawan* speaking communities in West Timor. Inter-marriages between these areas further bond their relationship. The demarcation separating Oecussi and other *Atoni Meto* communities stem from their different colonial history: Oecussi was where the Portuguese first docked their sails and expanded their rule to what today is known as East Timor, while West Timor was part of the Dutch-Indies colony of the today Indonesia.

The geographical proximity to Kefamenanu, Wini, Kupang, Atambua and other towns or sub-districts in West Timor was taken into good advantage by the *Atoni Meto* and other residents of Oecussi to flee from the attacks carried out by the local militia groups, called the *Sakunar*. On the other hand, the isolated nature of the location as well as the low pre-ballot unrest resulted in the late interference from the Australian led International Forces in East Timor (INTERFET) to bring an end to the escalated violence in the region. On 8 September

1999 in the quiet village of Bobometo in the highlands of Oecussi, a local militia group launched a full attack on the villagers. Mana Dominggas recalls the day:

> "The morning started like any other, we were just waking up and starting the fire to cook our water when suddenly shattering sounds of gunshots sent us running as fast as we could to Imbate" (a bordering village in West Timor).
>
> ---- Mana Dominggas, 2010

She took her two sons and ailing husband with her and walked for days under extreme fear and physical exhaustion. A bullet had scrapped her upper thigh as they were nearly caught by the militias, but she managed to cross them all over to West Timor on the Indonesian side of the border for refuge. There she was reunited with her family and many other people from her village, her wound was treated and healed with traditional medicine. After three months of refuge, she and her family returned to their village to continue to work on their land.

I have walked with Mana Dominggas in many occasions in different parts of Oecussi highlands. Sometimes we walked to other villages, or to a graveyard to burn candles for the ancestors, or to take part in traditional ceremonies near the borders. The distance is overwhelming to an extent that does not need to be exaggerated. The narrow man-made paths concede to the curves of the highlands' rugged contour, stretching up and down steep hills and through flooded rivers of the rainy season that nonetheless requires to be crossed. The precarious natural setting of taking a journey in the highlands itself involves not only the physical demands but also emotional endurance. It was difficult for me to imagine how she, in her condition at that time, was able to undertake that journey in a state of total fear.

For Severino Ukai, however, the experience of returning from refuge was one with a realization that two of his elder sons were brutally killed the day he left for West Timor to secure the safety of his wife and six other children. His sons fell victim to the 'Passabe

massacre' where militiamen and Indonesian military soldiers bounded 74 men in pairs, tied their hands on their backs and hacked them to death with machetes. Severino Ukai recalls the four nights of terror they experienced before leaving their village for refuge. On the day of the attack, the militia took his two sons from him to be "schooled". Ukai and the rest of his family were told to leave unless they wanted to be killed. They undertook a journey as exhausting as the journey of Mana Dominggas, and were beaten by militias that have taken hold of the bordering village in West Timor. After they have found safety, a relative came to deliver the news of Ukai's sons' death.

> "They are dead… they are dead, but they have died for Pah Bi Timo (the land of Timor). Our 74 children have died 'Tahakeb Hit Pah', to defend their country. Our government should acknowledge and recognize them."
>
> ----- Severino Ukai, 2010

As refugees, they were still living under constant intimidation from the militias that have all pulled back to West Timor after INTERFET ceased violence in Oecussi. Ukai explained that there was no time to grieve for they had to take care of their own safety. "They are dead, what else can we do?" he asked me. The family returned to their village after four months to work on their land and take care of the damages done to their crops and animals.

Jelena Lobeh, also from Bobometo village, was forced into a full loaded truck on the day of the attack. The militias deported them all to West Timor to generate the assumption that the local population was equally disaffected by the ballot results. On the truck, she continued to think about her two nephews that were taken the night before, in the same way Ukai's sons were last seen. On the way to the place where they were being deported, they passed the location where the 74 men were forced-marched and hacked to death. Jelena Lobeh saw with a silent chill down to the cliff beneath her, a river flowing with blood from the massacre. Her nephews, whom she raised as like her own sons, were two of the victims.

WHAT IS AT STAKE? NARRATIVES OF SUFFERING AND RHETORICS OF EMOTION

'UNEOP KANALEKOF' – THE QUEST OF BRINGING THE DEAD "BACK TO LIFE"

When talking about individual memories of the conflict, the stories of my interlocutors would collide with memories of the collective. A person's experience of running from the militia would merge into the collective memory of communal exodus *(amnaenat)*. Narratives of personal suffering *(suspok)* reflect events experienced by the collective within a specific period of time, such as the shared experience living in refugee camps, the memory of scarcity of food, loss of loved ones, as well as traumatic memories of war. These narratives of suffering and rhetorics of emotion, according to Zarowsky (2004) are central to the construction of a web of collective memory, which she discusses in the words of Jewsiewicki and Mudimbe (1993):

> "Collective memory is a means of producing meanings, which belong to a political field. Seen in this light, individual memory and collective memory are in dialogue. Collective memory does not signify facts about the past: it is above all a semantic code for retrieving memories, for making sense out of historical details in direct relation to political legitimacy" (Jewsiewicki and Mudimbe 1993:10).

Would collective memory then be capable to induce collective emotions as a response? Jelana Lobeh, Severino Ukai, as well as Mana Dominggas all share the experience of being uprooted and having their normal everyday worlds shattered by conflict. Lobeh and Ukai, however, have lost their sons in the conflict, while Mana Dominggas was spared from losing any children or husbands. Salient emotions observed in Lobeh and Ukai's stories, along with the stories of other similar victims, are of *anger* and *frustration*. Anger (*'to'* or in its conjugated version, *'utoan'* or *'muto'*) and frustration both emerge from *'uneop kanalekof'*

(literally *feeling* or *thinking* bad)[2]. *Uneop kanalekof* is a term that could encompass a range of negative feelings and emotions such as anger, guilt, despair, frustration, anxiety, and cannot be separated from the cognitive dimensions of the experience itself. People refer to *uneop kanalekof* also as a preoccupation of the mind, or when the mind is 'knotted' due to a perceived problem.

At first their anger was targeted to the Passabe militia members (and their families) responsible for the killings. However, through community reconciliation efforts facilitated in this region in 2004 by the regional CAVR, tensions between these two villages could be subsided – although "serious crimes" such as murder was not dealt with. Other interventions, such as from peace organizations as well as humanitarian aid have all helped in terms of facilitating affected communities (particularly the surviving families of the massacre victims) in fulfilling their basic needs to return to the "level of normalcy" as to before the conflict. The intervention that managed to divert their target of anger, however, came from the newly established Government of Timor-Leste. In order to avoid further revenge actions within local communities in the future, the Government promised to "take care" of the families of massacre victims. This promise involved "social assistance" if not reparation[2] (Regional CAVR Commissioners, personal communication, 2010). The realization of this promise, however, took the course of nearly ten years and until today not all families that were promised have received this Government's special assistance, which includes monthly money benefits.

Jelana Lobeh was among the many families that at the time of interview have not received this special assistance package yet. The anger and frustration that could be observed in her narratives about the government's delayed promises were consistent with those of other families, emerging into a shared "victim discourse".

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[2] When standing on its own, '*uneop'* is translatable to the acts of *feeling* or *thinking*, while '*kanalekof'* is translatable to *bad* or *not good*. '*Naleok'*, on the other hand refers to *good*.

> "They were all killed together, at the same time for the independence. The assistance should be given at the same time too. Either have it given at the same time, or not at all."

These expressions indicate feelings of being mistreated when compared to a situation of another that is perceived to be similar. In most of the interviews, people express that this unfair treatment, where they see other families already receiving assistance and them not, as creating *uneop kanalekof* in their own personal experience or in the interpersonal relationships with the other families ("It makes us think bad of each other"). These feelings can be better understood when considering the situation of the *Atoni Meto* (who are primarily subsistence farmers by occupation and comprise mainly very little formal education background, if any at all, among the older generation) having to deal with bureaucratic paperwork in order to have their assistance come through.

The shared discourse of unfair treatment by the Government reflects the social conflict it creates between families of massacre victims. Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine Lutz (1990) argue that emotion discourses do not only articulate and communicate feelings but also potential underlying social conflicts. Emotion discourses are shaped by the political economy in which they arise and can both assert or contest power and status differences of an unsatisfactory status quo.

Although a focus on emotion discourse proves epistemologically rewarding, it seems somewhat limited in the analysis of "hidden" emotions, which are not publicly articulated. Thus, I argue that the lack of narratives of "grief" does not indicate that the emotion does not exist in relation to the death of loved ones. It does, however, urge the question of how the *Atoni Meto* understand and deal with death and loss in general – a question that would need its own space for discussion. Nevertheless, it reminds us to further ask about *what is at stake* behind these discourses of emotion – what would it *mean* for families such as Jelana Lobeh's to receive this assistance package in relation to the death of her loved ones in the conflict?

In the occurrences of unnatural deaths, such as killings or man-made accidents, the *Atoni Meto* in Oecussi highlands believe that the dead person must be "brought back to life", which is referred to as "*tahakeb*". In my interviews with families of massacre victims, it was clear that every death requires a sequence of rituals and traditions that must be taken care of. Rituals and traditions differ between the *Atoni Meto* in the highlands (*leten*) and in the lowlands (*mnesat*). In the highlands, one of the most important parts of death ritual is the payment of "*tahakeb*" that should be performed by the person or family that have caused the death. The payment could take form of ancestral beads worn as necklaces (*inuh/ morten)*, cows and Old Dutch coins – all valued possessions of the *Atoni Meto*.

The *Atoni Meto* believe that each and every *Atoni* (person) has a 'value' or 'price' on his or her head (*ulun)*. When death occurs, the *ulun* of the person who died must be paid for. If this is not taken care of, there is fear that the ancestors or the dead person would turn malicious and inflict misfortune (illnesses, trouble in family and farm life, death to self or other family members) to the 'indebted' family. When asked about how the whole situation was affecting her, Jelana Lobeh explained that it is the only thought that preoccupies her *(uneop)* until the point she feels her head hurting *(lolek i namen)* because all she wants is to see her nephews being "replaced" or "brought back to life" again *(Au uneop, bat au i au ana he in nahakeb fain au ana).*

Severino Ukai was interviewed a couple of days after he had finally received the government's assistance. When I was there, the family was throwing a collective ritual of "burning candles" *(tot paku)* to thank the ancestors. Interestingly, the government's compensation was not only perceived as assistance, but as payment of the *ulun* of his two killed sons – both dead in the context of the independence struggle. Thus, the national government's strategy to assist the families of the 'Passabe massacre' victims did not only shift the target of the surviving families' anger (from militia groups to the government itself for its delayed promises), but affected customary practices and its relation to the surviving

families' emotional well-being by relieving feelings of 'uneasiness' and 'preoccupation' (*uneop kanalekof*). Consequently, rituals were also performed in order to inform the ancestors that they have finally purchased the *inuh* to pay for the heads of the dead sons. Relief of burden was expressed, as they were able to complete the death rituals after nearly ten years.

A widow of a massacre victim that had also received Government assistance, Magdalena Tiu, explained that she feels *better* now after doing "*tahakeb*" because she now feels safe that her life will be spared from harm. The 'uneasiness' and 'preoccupation' that haunted her before are now gone. Mana Dominggas, however, was not categorized by the State as a "victim" – a term that is in itself still problematic – and is therefore not eligible for this specific Government's assistance. As a *bystander*, she does not share that "victims discourse" of anger and frustration despite sharing the collective memory of past violence.

"POLITICAL VICTIMS" - THE SHARED DISCOURSE OF FORMER REFUGEES IN WEST TIMOR

Following the withdrawal of local militia groups to West Timor, most of them have never returned to their home country since 1999. Incomprehensive disarmament and reintegration processes by the Indonesian authorities in the early years after the conflict enabled disaffected militia members to sustain formidable threat to both West and East Timor. This was responded with a prioritization of increasing security measures instead of fostering exchanges between the two borders (International Crisis Group, 2011).

While most of the East Timorese that were forcedly displaced during the heat of the conflict have now returned to their newly independent country, a large number of them continue to remain in West Timor until today. However, they are no longer considered as "refugees" due to the cessation of status as early as 2002 (The UN Refugee Agency, 2002). This change of status (and with it the ending of State benefits) required from the affected communities immediate adjustments to return to the 'normal' everyday lives. During my stays

among former refugees in West Timor, I came to realize how problematic and complicated this process of returning to everyday lives could be, given that the majority of the displaced communities (which have had no involvement in the past conflict) are still living amongst former militias and perpetrators of violence in the former refugee camps. As long as the freedom of former militias can be enjoyed within the borders of Indonesia, former militia members and their families from Oecussi continue to stay in West Timor (International Crisis Groups, 2010; 2011).

There are no exact numbers of remaining former refugees originally from Oecussi still in West Timor,[3] however they are concentrated in other *Uab Meto/Dawan* speaking areas, such as Kefamenanu, Soe and Wini. After initially living as "newcomers" in times when former militias 'faded back' into these communities (Myrttinen, 2009), some have bought their own lands and have built homes for their families. On the other hand, many others still have no land of their own to work on and continue to live in government-established refugee settlements that are usually located far from town centre, marginalizing them from access to better quality (if at all) of basic needs, work and education.

Besides the pressures to stay exerted by family members, who may have had involvement in the conflict, many among the thousands of former refugees remaining in West Timor are there for economical reasons, others due to impaired physical/health conditions. Nevertheless, most of them have expressed their *longing* to return to Oecussi. This is expressed using the emotion term *'uneop'* (or *'taneop'* in its infinitive form), which simply refers to the act of 'thinking' or 'feeling' but also encompasses the experience of 'longing' or 'yearning' about someone (persons) or somewhere (in a place or time). They talk passionately about their lands back home in Oecussi *(au uneop pah bi Kusi)*, about how much easier their crops grew in the highlands compared to the dry lowland area they have been given. Each time I came for my visits from Oecussi, they would ask me how tall the corns have grown there. Narratives of past glory – planting and harvest time, the number of *bijael* (cows) they owned, and the joy of

collective ceremonies in the village, fuel into the present narratives of suffering – of being uprooted and living in uncertainty. Misinformation, rumors about revenge seeking, as well as an unclear legal basis for leaving Indonesia discourages them to return to Oecussi. A minority of several hundred former militia and former pro-integration leaders has furthermore politicized the question of return. They also perceive themselves as "political victims" of Indonesia's withdrawal from responsibility and seek assurances that they will not be prosecuted for standing charges of crimes against humanity if they return to East Timor (International Crisis Group, 2010).

This strategically generated term "political victims", I argue, could be seen not only as justification for past crimes of former militias, but also as their way of re-contextualizing past narratives of violence in order to make everyday life possible among the rest of the society (Das et al., 2001), which is aware that these former militia leaders or members have not been held responsible for past crimes. In my interviews with former militias, the words "guilt" or "shame" were never articulated in our discussions. It is not because the words do not exist in the local languages of Bahasa Indonesia (*bersalah, malu*) or Meto (*uneop kanalekof*), or that the emotion is not experienced at all among former militias. It is more probably related to a certain "strangeness" of emotion talk *per se* as well as the "strangeness" of my role as an outsider asking (too) intimate questions that may entail legal implications, and strategies of emotionally *coping* with guilt and shame.

Instead of expressions of regret, the term "political victims" is widely used in relation to what had happened in the past. This term may offer emotional safety, depicting what Zarowsky (2004) refers to as constructions of moral webs on which both individual and collective survival depend. The term itself has been inflated and used with such frequency that, in my observation, not only former militias are employing it. Its use has expanded to other former refugees that had not been involved in the past violence. The term, thus, suggests an emerging shared narrative of suffering that could illustrate their collective memory as well

as their present reality. By seeing themselves as 'political victims', individuals as well as collectives are able to re-contextualize the continuing sense of suffering and therefore making everyday lives possible.

FRIENDS OR FOES? ANALYSING THE REENGAGEMENT AND REBUILDING OF BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS AFTER VIOLENT CONFLICT

This paper has so far discussed segments of the complex (ongoing) process of remaking everyday lives in the aftermath of past devastation, in both communities of the conflict divided Oecussi-*Atoni Meto*. The role of emotion was scrutinized to further understand *what is at stake* in relation to how individuals and collectives deal with memories of past violence when met with the demands of everyday survival. Now, living separated by State borders, the bond between these communities remains intact and continues to be negotiated in their everyday lives. This includes reestablishment of relationships between former foes or opponents in the violent political conflict. In this section of the paper, an analysis on how the remaking of such social bonds is possible as well as whether this 'reengagement' could be understood as reconciliation or *healing* at the community level will be discussed.

In the beginning of my ethnographic study, a multi-sited approach was not particularly intended according to my research design. It was an approach (or more likely a 'cue') that was boldly embraced based on the frequent visitations from former refugees living in West Timor to their families in East Timor (excluding former militias that are restricted to stay in Indonesian territory). Some cross the borders legally by using official documents such as passports and visas. But most cross-border traffic makes use of traditional man-made paths (now popularly known as *jalan tikus* – literally 'mouse paths') connecting the two regions albeit the vulnerabilities they may be exposed to. They undertake this journey to deliver important news, such as death of a relative, illness in the family, or to take part in important

rituals and ceremonies (for more perspectives on the unresolved border issues in Oecussi, see the report of International Crisis Group, 2011).

These visitations are, first of all, nothing new but instead have existed since pre-colonial times. The metaphor expressed by Tua Kono, quoted in the beginning of this paper, illustrates the 'unbreakable' nature of the relationship between the *Atoni Meto* of West and East Timor as a result of close kinship ties. Classic ethnographies have focused on kinship systems as well as life-worlds of the *Atoni Meto* (Fox & Sather (Eds.), 1996; Corbafo, 2009). Special attention has even more so been given to specific cultural practices that have been documented by research accounts on traditional justice mechanisms (McWilliams, 2007a; McWilliams, 2007b; Yoder, 2007; Babo-Soares, 2004; Trindade, 2008), and have been effectively integrated into the implementation of the overall successful CAVR reconciliation processes at the community levels (Babo-Soares, 2004).

However, the central idea of a *continuous bond* between conflict-divided communities has so far been neglected – apart from getting brief mentions in political and security reports. I argue that this binding force, particularly among border communities in East Timor such as Oecussi, hints to a cultural resilience that enables the continuing process of dealing with past conflict and of reconciliation. As reminded by Das et al. (2001), reconciliation is not a matter of confession offered once and for all. But rather it is the building of relationships by performing the work of the everyday. By the concluding of reconciliation efforts (which was limited to East Timor and only for "less-serious crimes") as well as the adoption of both governments' policies to establish friendly and benefiting political relations in which future development instead of past crimes are prioritized (Leach, 2002; 2008; Kent; 2010; 2011), this continuous bond between conflict-divided communities challenges hegemonic rhetorics, which suggest that reconciliation is no longer an issue.

To further elucidate my argument, let me continue with the stories of my interlocutors illustrated in this paper. Severino Ukai who lost two of his sons in the massacre, which took

place in his village in 1999, demanded recognition and acknowledgement from the newly-established government along with other families of the massacre victims. Recognition and acknowledgement transpired parallel with the state's preferred narrative, which promotes the remembrance of past suffering as a 'triumphal' story based in the notion of collective struggle, unity and resistance. All those who suffered for the independence were labeled as 'heroes' rather than 'victims', and all veterans of the resistance 'valorised' through the provision of medals and pensions (Kent, 2009; 2011; Leach 2002; 2008). A monument and 'heroes' cemetery was established on top of a hill in the sub-village of Tumin, Bobometo, to honor the 74 men who died in the massacre and simultaneously including them in the national narratives of 'heroes'.

By refining the rhetoric in forms of acknowledgement and recognition, accompanied by the material needs that were finally fulfilled in the case of Severino Ukai, a transformation of a way of thinking and feeling about the experience of loss was enabled (Sakti, 2011). In the 'burning candles' ritual I attended, held in the highlands of Oecussi, a number of Severino Ukai's family members that still remain in former refugee settlements in West Timor until today were also present. Among those who attended was the wife and children of Ukai's brother, a former militia member allegedly involved in serious crimes committed in the "Passabe massacre". Ukai's brother was obviously absent but the presence of his family that were there to join (and also contributed to) the collective ritual of informing and thanking the ancestors as well as commemorating the death of Ukai's sons, suggests a reengagement of relationships of individuals and families that were once broken by the conflict.

It further demonstrates a dynamic intertwined relationship between the levels of the state, the civil society and the local community in remembering past violence and shaping emotional experiences related to collective memory. With the subsiding of negative emotions *('uneop kanalekof'),* spaces for reengagement and rebuilding of relationships are further made possible. On the other hand, for families of massacre victims that until today have not

received material assistance, such as Jelana Lobeh, the experience of *uneop kanalekof* remains accentuated in their narratives of life after the political conflict – although some reengagement with families remaining in West Timor still manages to occur. Local commemoration practices continue to take place as a way of remembering the massacre victims and the past devastation, as well as a collective reminder to the government of their delayed promises (cf. Kent, 2009; 2011).

The process of reengagement and rebuilding relationships is multifaceted. Addressing material needs as well as acknowledgement of victims are only part of this continuous, overlapping and mutually reinforcing phenomena. Besides the two mentioned elements, Hayner (2001) discussed other elements necessary to encourage reconciliation: *end to the violence or threat of violence, reparation, addressing structural inequalities, binding forces and time.* Time is certainly needed in dealing with past memories of suffering and being able re-contextualize that suffering in order to make everyday life possible. The end to violence or threat of violence is indeed a prerequisite in enabling this reengagement between the conflict-divided communities in the first place. And furthermore, the existence of a binding force between the conflict-divided Atoni-Meto, I argue, contributes a major role in sustaining their continuous bond with each other despite state borders.

In the communities of the *Atoni Meto*, this binding force is best described by their life philosophy of *"Nekaf Mese, Ansaof Mese"* or "One Mind, One Heart" (see also Corbafo, 2009). This philosophy reflects their long-standing kinship ties – which interweave individuals, families and the larger collectives from both regions into a web of familial and social relations, united in the identity of being an *Atoni Meto*. "No state demarcation would be able to break that web" (Tua Kono, personal communication, 2010). This, however, should not be falsely understood as legitimating Indonesia's occupation of East Timor in the first place. Instead, the philosophy had encouraged locally initiated cross-border reconciliation dialogs between Oecussi and West Timor – which took place even before the national-scale

CAVR reconciliation programs.[4] *"Although we differ in our political ideals, we are still one in our identity of being an Atoni Meto*" (Arnold Suny, personal communication, 2011). The shared identity, thus, enables a re-contextualization of past narratives of violence and generates new contexts through which everyday life may become possible (Das et al. 2001).

Could this reengagement, however, be understood as reconciliation? The theme of reconciliation has been widely researched and continues to be examined to deepen our understanding in assisting individuals and communities to deal with past experiences of war (see Minow, 1998; Hayner, 2001; Abu-Nimer, 2001; Bar-Siman-Tov, 2004; Chayes & Minow, 2003; Avruch, 2010). But would reengagement of former opponents be enough to declare reconciliation from past violence? Avruch (2010: 40) argues that "reconciliation is by nature intersubjective and *multiple,* can only emerge with the creation of at least minimally shared – and probably much more than minimally shared – narratives of the past and visions of the future". Kelman (in Avruch, 2010: 40) further argues that reconciliation is not only intrapsychic but also a social-dialogic process; where "one must be willing to recognize the other's truth as part of one's own narrative". In the context of the conflict that separated the *Atoni Meto* of Oecussi, or even the people of East Timor in general, the demarcation does not merely refer to the states' official borders – it also refers to the continuing demarcation between past narratives.

Former militias that remain in West Timor, in the case of this paper, continue to see themselves as "political victims" instead of taking responsibility for their past crimes in their former communities. This is made possible and perpetuated by the absence of justice and unwillingness of the two countries to end impunity – a major hindrance to achieving true reconciliation among affected communities. As described by Magdalena Tiu who lost her husband to the massacre in 1999:

"Although I have received the government's assistance and I am able to do Tahakeb for my dead husband, I still demand justice for his death. Former militias should be brought to trial."

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Amid the continuing absence of justice and the prioritizing of future development and friendly political relations, the reengagement of the Atoni Meto demonstrates the strength of cultural bond and resilience in dealing with past narratives of suffering. The process of healing in the community, thus, continues through the process of remaking everyday lives. This, however, requires a more effective and secure border system in which "traditional border crossings", such as for family visits, ceremonies and funerals (that was once agreed on by both countries in 2003, but never implemented) are facilitated (International Crisis Group, 2011: 12). Lastly, the reengagement and rebuilding of relationships between conflict-divided communities demonstrates the need for reconciliation to continue.

NOTES:

[1] In this paper I have chosen to use 'East Timor', a better-known English term to refer to the *Republika Demokratika Timor Lorosae*, rather than the official short name of the country, Timor-Leste. The choice of term is consequently followed by my respectful apologies. However for the purpose of the discussion as well as the frequent reference to West Timor made in this paper, this term has been chosen with caution. The adjective form and the term used for the inhabitants of the country remains 'East Timorese'.

[2] A Reparation scheme for victims is still an unsettled issue in today's post-conflict East Timor. To date, a coalition of human rights activists and victims' associations consistently advocate the right for reparation from the past violence during Indonesian rule in the form of a Reparation Law and the establishment of a Memory Institute, which will be the body to

implement recommendations from the CAVR and CTF (see Lao Hamutuk, 2010; International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2011).

[3] Based on a recent International Crisis Group Report (2010: 3), the overall number of East Timorese refugees was kept high by means of manipulation by former militias and local pressures to justify greater state benefits. There was considerable double counting, including the recycling of Indonesian identity cards by those who had been repatriated. At the close of its operations in 2002, UNHCR estimated that there were 28,000 former refugees remaining, a figure that had been given by the Indonesian disaster management agency BAKORNAS. The former East Timorese claim the population is closer to between 110,000 – 200,000, while the Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) provincial administration gave an estimate of just over 100,000 in 2010.

[4] A series of 'border reconciliation dialogs' were initiated by a local non-governmental organization based in Oecussi's main town. This organization, *Fundacao Fatu Sinai Oecussi* (FFSO) with its partner organization in Kefamenanu *(Lakmas Cendana Wangi)* and facilitated by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), conducted border meetings between traditional leaders from both local communities of Oecussi and West Timor. Furthermore, exchange visitations by delegations from each side of the borders were conducted with the purpose of ascertaining security conditions in Oecussi to encourage the return of refugees (Arnold Suny, personal communication, 2011). Many of them did return to Oecussi, including those former militia members whom committed "less serious crimes".

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