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Traditional Power Structures and Local Governance in East Timor

A Case Study of the Community
Empowerment Project (CEP)

Sofi OSPINA et Tanja HOHE

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Foreword

It is a great pleasure for iuéd to publish this excellent and extremely useful socioanthropological and sociopolitical study on the relation between traditional power structure and the promotion of modern forms of local governance in East Timor. The main reason why we decided to publish it is to take it out of the relative anonymity to which many good research reports are too frequently relegated. By doing so, we wish to make it available to a larger audience of Timorese public administrators and civil society representatives involved in the difficult task of providing development and building democracy in their poor and long time suffering little country.

Though being a long time specialist of Indonesia and having studied many parts of the archipelago since the early 1970s, including several of the Lesser Sunda islands, I had deliberately never wished to visit East Timor when it was under the domination of the Suharto army and regime. After the 1999 referendum, I had the opportunity of doing so in the best conditions, thanks to the support of Sergio Vieira de Mello, the new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and iuéd nearest neighbour in Geneva, then UNTAET head in Dili. Spending the last week of September 2001 in East Timor, I was able, through the efficient support of UNTAET staff and especially of Jenny Grant, to make some field trips in the country and to interview several of its leaders, including Mari Alkatiri, current Prime Minister. Then I came to realise and understand concretely the incredible level of destruction and the terrible legacy left by the Indonesian army and its militias. This publication should be seen as a modest contribution of iuéd to the huge endeavour of reconstruction, reconciliation, democratisation and development in East Timor.

Another good reason to publish this study is that one of its coauthors, Sofi Ospina, has been a student at our Geneva-based Institute. As the director of iuéd, I consider this applied research to be a very good example of how scientific qualifications acquired in universities can be useful for understanding and proposing solutions to practical development problems affecting people in their everyday life. This is the reason why I am confident that this fine study will be highly appreciated by many Timorese.

Prof. Jean-Luc MAURER
iuéd Director

Introduction

The Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project (CEP) was set up under an agreement between the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and the World Bank with funding from the multidonour Trust Fund for East Timor. It aimed to provide support for poverty alleviation and to strengthen the capacity of community institutions. Democratic elections for Village Development Councils were to introduce a 'bottom-up' method of community empowerment, after years of 'top-down' decision-making by the Indonesian government. The councils were to be integrated into the local governance structure at a later point.

In October 2000 the Anthropology Research Team of CEP was established to study the interplay between local Timorese power structures and CEP. Its aim was also to provide a more culturally informed background for the development programme.

The study required an analysis of traditional power systems and their historical development. It examined how far these and related traditional concepts are of relevance for the present local communities and how much they influence governmental and other development programmes. One intention of CEP was to take a 'bottom-up' approach to communal empowerment and local governance. To examine the appropriateness and cultural sensitivity of this approach, the study team explored the interplay between local power structures and the system of councils set up by CEP.

It is a challenging task to inquire into and report on power structures and local governance in a time of socio-political turbulence and change in a young nation like East Timor. After such a long period of foreign rule (Portuguese, then Indonesian) and in a stage where a new nation is being formed, many different ideas about power on the local level have appeared. Therefore, summarizing existing ideas has required considerable simplification of the findings. As power concepts at the local level are still very much dominated by traditional ideas, this report has to provide and be read as an introduction to traditional Timorese concepts and ideas. Similarly, as local power structures are often forgotten when considering national issues, our concern here is to emphasise how relevant they continue to be. They are especially important to the Timorese in rural areas, who still make up the majority of the population in the country.

To implement development projects, especially if implemented or influenced by foreigners, a culturally informed background can be of help. This report aims to provide such a background. It does not aim to promote traditional ideas, nor try to give them greater importance on the national level. It aims only to show the richness and complexity of Timorese political concepts and power structures at the local level and to demonstrate how these ideas have survived hundreds of years of outside rule. Nor does it argue for the preservation of traditional values and ideas; how far the Timorese decide to preserve or change their traditional ideas should be determined by the dynamics of the society itself.

Chapters 2 and 3 of this report describe traditional power concepts and their historical development, while chapter 4 focuses more specifically on CEP and how it has been implemented, including the major challenges faced by the programme. Chapters 2 and 3 may be seen as a contribution by CEP to other governmental programmes, UN agencies, bilateral cooperation agencies and NGOs interested in understanding East Timorese local notions of power and social dynamics at the community level. For it is here that the real impact of any development intervention is expected to make a difference. Chapter 4 provides concrete examples of how a

development programme, as ambitious as CEP, can be affected by local power structures. It also provides examples of conflicts that highlight social dynamics at the local level.

The conclusion briefly summarises and links the previous chapters. It underlines that traditional power structures continue to be important but are challenged by recent changes including the CEP Village Development Councils. It points out that harmony between the two systems will be needed for development efforts to be accepted and to have maximum impact.

1 Research

Objectives

The anthropological study conducted was qualitative and exploratory and had three major objectives:

- *to better understand the existing systems of power and social structures in East Timor.* Information on various local systems of power and social structures was to be gathered to provide a picture of the variation in the present local power structures. This ethnographic account was considered important because local cultural systems are likely to affect the project in different ways;
- *to examine CEP's interaction with the existing systems of power and its acceptance by the community.* This objective leads to recommendations that policy makers and programme implementers may use to improve the social impact of CEP, by adjusting the programme's design to the cultural background of East Timorese societies;
- *to support a small group of East Timorese social scientists to gain competence in applied social research at the community level.*

Table 1: Main Topics Addressed by the Research

Identification of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • autochthonous power structures; • the impact of Portuguese administration; • the impact of Indonesian rule; • the impact of the clandestine movement; • present changes in internal society; • changes inflicted by UNTAET.
Identification of the role of CEP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which powers are favoured by the programme? • How do the existing powers cope with the programme? • Which new power positions are created through the programme?
Evaluation of the aims of the CEP programme in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Bottom-up' empowering mechanisms; how well can the local councils integrate into a formal civil service that begins only at the district level? • Democratic accountability; to what extent do democratically elected councils come into conflict with the sources of traditional leadership? • Gender balance; to what extent can the 'one-man/one-woman' voting requirements be recognised when the institutionalised problems of gender discrimination remain present in both the modern and traditional parts of Timorese society? • Transparency.

Methodology

Research Sites

Research was conducted in three districts of East Timor: Aileu, Baucau and Bobonaro. These three districts were selected due to the following multiple features:

- presence of different ethno-linguistic groups;
- different geographical locations (central, eastern and western parts);
- coverage of urban and rural environments;
- different strong historical influences (presence of FRETILIN and FALINTIL fighters, strong militia presence, relevant kingdoms during Portuguese rule);
- presence of CEP in the different stages of its implementation.

Research Cycles and Methods

The research consisted of three cycles. Cycle one covered preparation, recruitment of assistants and a review of literature. The fieldwork was conducted during the second and third cycles¹ in two teams: one went to Bobonaro and the other to Aileu to undertake field research for three months. During the following two months both teams worked in Baucau.

During the second cycle, 150 in-depth interviews were conducted at the district and subdistrict level with key informants. These informants included CNRT representatives, FALINTIL commanders, traditional elders, descendants of former kings, representatives of civil society organisations, Church representatives, UNTAET and CEP councils and officials. The objectives of this first immersion in the field were to gain a general understanding of issues related to current and past power structures as well as an overview of the functioning of CEP.

At the end of the second cycle, three research sites within each district were chosen. Here, the objective was a microsocial analysis of the dynamics of power structures, the functioning and interaction of CEP Village Development Councils within their communities and an analysis of major social players and power holders. Each research site consisted of a village and its constituent hamlets.

During cycle three, in-depth research was conducted in ten villages: three in the Aileu District (Liurai, Manukasa, Asumau); three in the Bobonaro District (Ritabou, Raeheu, Tapo/Memo); and four in the Baucau District (Afaloikai, Bahu, Soba, Uato Hako).

One hundred and fifty-nine in-depth interviews were conducted with key actors: village and hamlet chiefs, civil society representatives, CEP council members and village facilitators, traditional elders, informal power holders and common villagers. Participant observation was used to observe several meetings including political gatherings, conflict resolution meetings, ceremonies, and CEP council meetings.

During this cycle, special attention was paid to the role and functioning of CEP Village Development Councils, the membership and personal background of their

¹ From 23 October 2000 till first week of April 2001.

members, the constraints faced by them in the development of their tasks and the efficiency of consultation within communities in the decision-making process.

In total, 309 interviews were conducted in the three districts.

The Anthropology Research Team

The research team was composed of two international anthropologists and four young East Timorese researchers who all have an academic background in social science (see Appendix B).²

The East Timorese researchers received on the job training and guidance in social science research and, in turn, provided the team with sound cultural and linguistic knowledge. The final report was written by the international researchers and their Timorese colleagues contributed with reports on their field experiences and reflections on their 'own roots' and their society (see Appendix A).

Working Together and on the Job Training

Initially, a three-day workshop was conducted to train the research assistants in basic anthropological concepts and methods, the anthropology of East Timor and in-depth discussions on the research objectives and methodology. They collaborated in the development of the research questions and identification of key informants to be contacted.

During the fieldwork period five workshops were conducted with the aim to coordinate the work between the two teams, to discuss in depth the research locations, to rethink research questions and informants and exchange experiences in general.

The interviews were mostly conducted in Tetum, though some were in Indonesian, Portuguese, Mambai, Makassae and Naueti. Each interview was discussed and analysed by each research team and then transcribed into English or Indonesian by the research assistants.

Perceptions of the Research Team

The teams were very well received by the local populations in the different research locations. It was astonishing how willingly people were to patiently try to explain their social structure, worldviews and customs. Even more so after they understood that the team was not connected to any government or NGO aid program and would bring nothing into the villages. They always appreciated the research objective of giving international organisations a more culturally informed background. Many of the villagers in remoter areas seemed to feel honoured that finally someone from the 'outside' had come to ask about their lives. Villagers and power holders were also convinced that this research was going to bring their voices to the 'outside.'

² Our thanks to the research assistants Fernando da Costa, Cesar Melito, David Alves Lopes, Estanislau Babo Soares.

Background Information on the Three Districts

Aileu

Aileu District is located inland in central East Timor, 47 kilometres south of Dili, and is one of Timor's smallest districts, encompassing only 729 square metres. The district is quite mountainous, alternating with river valleys. The total population is approximately 33,000. Administratively, it is divided in four subdistricts: Aileu Kota (containing almost half of the total population), Laulara, Remexio, and Liquidoe. There are 31 official villages and 13 new or independent villages that have emerged since the popular consultation in 1999 as a reflection of the local clandestine organisations (Aileu District Administration 2001).

The predominant ethnolinguistic group is Mambai, an Austronesian language with a small minority of Galoli speakers in a few hamlets of Rileo (Remexio) on the border to Manatutu District.

Subsistence agriculture and livestock are the most important economic activities. The major agricultural products are rice and maize, which are grown almost exclusively for household consumption. The most important cash crop products are coffee and tobacco, along with fruits that are mostly produced in the subdistricts of Liquidoe and Remexio. Women are active in the production of vegetables, millet and tubers cultivated in individual gardens. Men and women participate equally in the agricultural work. Men do the clearing and burning and women the daily weeding. Planting and harvesting are also performed by both men and women.

Historically, during the time of Portuguese rule, the nowadays District of Aileu had five kingdoms: Dailor, Aileu (Hohulo and since 1947 Bandera Hun in Suco Liurai), Liquidoe and two in Remexio (Manumero and Kaimao). Aileu was the symbolic heartland of FRETILIN and the struggle for independence. After the coup on 11 August 1975 by the UDT, FRETILIN leaders gathered there and declared their counter coup (Aileu District Administration 2001). After the Indonesian invasion, 99% of Aileu's population sought refuge in the mountains because the large majority of Aileu's inhabitants were FRETILIN followers.

Bobonaro

Bobonaro is a district that covers a large part of the western border to West Timor. It is a very mountainous environment but also has a long coastline to the north. The main ethnolinguistic groups of Bobonaro are the Kemaq and Bunaq. The Kemaq language is Austronesian and its speakers mainly live in the subdistricts of Atabae, Balibo, Maliana, Kailako and partly in Bobonaro. The Bunaq language belongs to the Papuan language families and its speakers cover a part of Bobonaro and Lolotoe. Bekais speakers inhabit a small pocket of the Balibo Subdistrict – this Austronesian language is spoken by a small group of speakers. A big part of the population used to settle in the mountains and survive on their hunting and gardening activities. The Portuguese migrated a large number of people down to the fertile valley of Maliana and initiated agricultural programmes. Nowadays, Maliana is a known rice-growing area. Historically, there were at least eight larger kingdoms covering the area of the present day Bobonaro district. Due to its border, Bobonaro was throughout Indonesian rule very much under the power of pro-Indonesian forces.

Baucau

Baucau is located in the central, eastern part of East Timor. Its capital is the second largest city in the country. The district is very mountainous and extremely fertile. Large wet-rice fields are planted in some of the subdistricts and other parts are

covered by lush rain forest. The ethno-linguistic situation here is diverse. Vemassee Subdistrict is partly inhabited by Galoli speakers and by Waimua speakers. The latter also settled in Venilale and they share the location with Makassae and Mediki speakers. Makassae speakers mainly cover the Quelicai and Laga Subdistricts. Baguia has a partly Makassae- and partly Naueti-speaking population. Makassae and Waimua speakers inhabit Baucau Kota. Most of these languages belong to the Austronesian language family; only Makassae belongs to the Papuan language families. Historically, most locations within Baucau were either ruled or influenced (according to oral history) by the kingdom of Vemassee from the west and by the kingdom of Luka from Viqueque.

During the Indonesian period the second highest mountain of East Timor, Matebean, was an important hideaway for many FALINTIL soldiers. Therefore the Indonesian government resettled a large number of the population away from the mountainous areas.

2 Local Power Structures

Social Structures

A core family usually inhabits a single house. It consists of a married couple and their unmarried children. The core family never exists by itself; it is usually bound in a whole universe of social relationships. Its closest relatives are members of its 'lineage.' A lineage consists of a group of people that are related to each other in a 'unilateral' way. This means either through the father's ('patrilineal') or through the mother's ('matrilineal') side. For Ego in a patrilineal system, all relatives from his father's side (e.g. his father's brothers, father's father or his own brother) are his close relatives and they are all perceived as being connected through 'the same blood.' The same structure is applied in a matrilineal system, with the difference that the relatives here are reckoned only through the mother's side. East Timorese societies are mainly patrilineal, with some exceptions.³ In such systems, all members of the lineage refer to a common ancestor. This group of people forms the 'descent group' (*uma kain / ahimatan*).⁴ The oldest male person usually heads it.

One or more descent groups can refer to a 'sacred house' (*uma lulik / uma lisan*). All members of the sacred house still refer to a common ancestor but their genealogical links are not traceable anymore. Such sacred houses can be found in many settlements across Timor. Depending on the different societies they have different architectural features. Sacred houses represent the whole cosmos and contain the heirlooms of the ancestors. Therefore they represent the ritual focal point of the group, since 'the *uma lulik* was the residence of the first ancestors.'⁵ The sacred house is guarded by whoever is perceived to be the eldest member of the community, who is seen as the oldest living representative of the ancestors, and his/her spouse. According to the kinship system this is either the eldest male (in patrilineal systems) or the eldest female (in matrilineal systems).⁶ The local perception of the sacred house, or *uma lisan*, is expressed by one of the informants:

We always have a close relation with our *uma lulik*, because the *uma lulik* is a symbol for Timorese culture. When God created the world, people already adhered to the *uma lulik*.
(CNRT leader)

The House and the sacred house represent the most important social units in Timorese social structure; they are the focal point of marriage relationships and ceremonies as well as political powers. The idea of the sacred house is the centre of concepts and activities and has not lost its importance.

All the Houses of a specific territory are in relation to each other and ordered by a hierarchical system. The hierarchy amongst them is explained through seniority. The

³ For example, the Bunaq in Bobonaro District have a matrilineal kinship system.

⁴ *Uma* is the Tetum translation for the word 'house' and from hereon in the report the descent group will be referred to as the 'House.'

⁵ Informant: villager.

⁶ Many sacred houses were burned when the Indonesians entered the area in the 1970s and during the unrest following the popular consultation in 1999. Hardly any of the sacred houses have been rebuilt, as this is connected with immense costs for the rituals.

most important entities in this hierarchy are the sacred houses. A specific sacred house is thought to be the 'oldest' House. Its ancestors are thought to have been the first people to settle the territory and to 'open the land.' Therefore it is regarded as 'senior' to the others. Following the oldest House, there is always an ordering of second oldest and third oldest sacred house and so on; when asked, the traditional elders can always count them down. Every House has a fixed position in the hierarchy. Some of them in the past separated from the oldest House and therefore became 'smaller sacred houses'; others have migrated from elsewhere and are seen as 'newcomers.' Usually a number between four and twelve Houses are regarded to be important. Then it is often mentioned that there are 'countless smaller ones,' but they are only *uma kain* and not 'sacred house' anymore.

Table 2: Houses' Hierarchical Classification: Example from Ayasa, Bobonaro District

Name of sacred house	Order of arrival in present location
1. Buihale	Oldest
2. Belegatal	Second oldest
3. Ojabul	Third oldest
4. Leikatan	Fourth oldest

The House forms the main entity when it comes to marriage relations. It is an 'exogamous' unit, which means that one cannot marry with members of one's own House. Through oral history, which remembers all the relations between the Houses, a fixed marriage system has been established. Through this system, all Houses are classified in a certain way to indicate their position in the social cosmos. Therefore, some Houses refer to each other as 'siblings' ('Younger Brother' or 'Elder Brother'), whereas others are classified as one's Wife-Giver House or Wife-Taker House, or as 'newcomers,' and still others as 'indigenous' to the land.

**Table 3: Houses' Hierarchical Classification:
Example from the Hamlet Ritabou Bawah, Maliana, Bobonaro District**

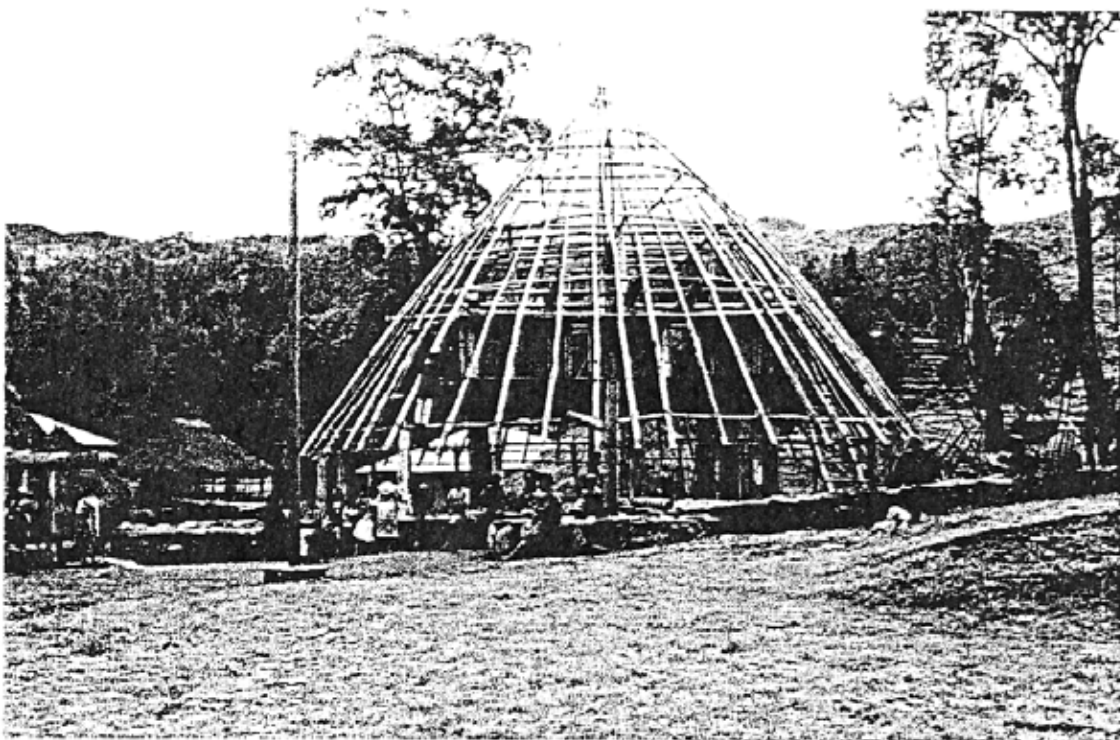
Name of sacred house	Classification	
1. Sirobere	Wife Giver	Father (still at former location of the group)
2. Bau'ubun	Wife Taker	Oldest in the hamlet
3. Lekiloko	—	Younger brother of Bau'ubun
4. Lori'ubun	—	Younger brother of Bau'ubun
5. Bili'ubun	Wife Taker of Bau'ubun	

**Table 4: Houses' Hierarchical Classification:
Example from the Hamlet Osogori, Village Uato Hako, Baucau District**

Name of sacred house	Classification
1. Mainaua	Indigenous
2. Utabalu	Newcomer
3. Manuboi	Indigenous
4. Uaimuta	Indigenous



Kuku nains, lia nains and feriks (traditional elders) in front of the uma lulik Karhili, Aldeia Fahi Lebun, Remixio, Aileu.



Uma lulik under construction. Mapping the community with the traditional elders in the bosop (sacred stone area), Aldeia Er Hetu, Aileu.

Through a House's specific position in the cosmos, specific tasks are given to it. These include all important ritual and political activities. For example, a House can be the 'owner' of political authority or 'holder' of ritual authority. These Houses are said to 'hold titles.' Some Houses are responsible for the security of an area or for the water sources, some for the drumming and dancing at specific ceremonies or for holding flags, and some are 'just commoners.' These attributed tasks are formulated in mythical happenings.

**Table 5: Houses' Tasks According to Their Hierarchical Classification
Example from the Hamlet of Ritabou atas, Maliana, Bobonaro District**

Sacred house	Position	Function	Classification
1. Bau'ubun	<i>Liurai/Bei</i>	Holder of political/ritual authority	First and biggest House/Elder brother
2. Manepat	Village chief	Gives tasks to people	Younger Brother
3. Manetelu	<i>Dato</i>	Political power	
4. Leka'ubun	<i>Cabu</i>	Takes drums and Portuguese flags to ceremonies in other territories	
5. Guru'lelo		Passes on tasks from dato	
6. Leamatan			
7. Orhomane		Drumming and dancing in ceremonies	
8. Likomau			
9. Beregatal			
10. Leaoboi		Takes drums and Portuguese flags to ceremonies in other territories	
11. Maliubu		Drumming and dancing in ceremonies	
12. Learema			

The members of one sacred house sometimes live scattered over a wide area. Settlements consist of one or more *uma kains* that can belong to one or two different sacred houses. The settlements used to be located up in the mountains before and during the Portuguese times. Later, when the Indonesians tried to resettle them for various reasons, a large group moved to the lower land.

Traditional migration emerged if a fight occurred in a settlement, or if the fertile land was not enough for the whole population. Part of the population then migrated to another location where they 'opened new land.' They became the 'first ones' on the new land and therefore the 'Lord of the Land.' Nevertheless, they still maintained relationships to their Houses in the former location. Often the latter were classified as a 'mother-father' House and ritual relations were maintained. This also explains the classification of 'sibling' with another House or as Wife Giver or Wife Taker. The House classified as Wife Giver is often also the oldest House in the location. Furthermore, the 'ownership' of the land and the fertility of women who are given in marriage are closely connected.⁷

The status of a village (*suco*) or a hamlet (*povoação*) as an administrative unit was only introduced with the arrival of the Portuguese.

⁷ Nevertheless the Wife Giver is always perceived as 'male' and in most contexts as 'superior' to the Wife Taker.

The Kingdom

When the Portuguese arrived in Timor, there were two big kingdoms that asserted their power over a lot of smaller kingdoms: Wehale and Sonebait. They were located in the territory of nowadays West Timor. The eastern part of the island consisted of a number of smaller kingdoms.

Internal Structure of a Kingdom

A kingdom consisted of a specific geographical territory, referred to as 'ancestral land,' and combined a number of Houses. The structure within a kingdom varied from area to area, but generally a single 'king,' or *liurai*, who descended from a specific sacred house, ruled a kingdom. His position was legitimised through his ancestors who had performed a blood oath⁸ and agreed on his sacred house's entitlement to political authority.

Next to the sacred house of political authority, there was also a clear structure of sacred houses and their positions and tasks within a kingdom (see table 5). The kingdom itself was often divided into two parts. Kailako Kingdom, for example, was split into an eastern and a western kingdom and the eastern Kailako Kingdom was considered superior to the western one. In other cases, one kingdom perceived another kingdom as its dual opposition, which was evidenced in the way the two kingdoms classified each other.

Table 6: Division of Kailako Kingdom (Bobonaro)

	King of the East (<i>tata-bei lelosae</i>)	King of the West (<i>tata-bei lelotu</i>)
Classification	Male/younger brother	Male/elder brother
Location	Atudara/Aitutu	Lesoluli/Nami'ilat
Oldest sacred houses	Mambu/Loi'ubu	Bere'o'mau/Kali'ubu

External Relations of Kingdoms

Kingdoms were autonomous⁹ units and yet there were relationships between them. Traditional Timorese societies were fairly warlike, so with defence in mind, many settlements were built upon mountains and not in the valleys where there was fertile soil. Military agreements were very important – even more so for fighting against the Portuguese when they tried to rule the whole territory. Kingdoms often had hostile relationships towards an immediate neighbour. However, when peace agreements were made with other kings they would support each other against attacks from a third kingdom. Two kings would enter a blood oath. They were then perceived as being from the 'same blood' and were classified as siblings, adhering to each other as 'younger' or 'elder brother.' The population could visit each other's territory and take goods, like fruits from the trees, and establish peaceful trade. The population were not allowed to be angry at each other. If conflicts did occur, they had to be reported to

⁸ Such an oath is a ceremony where, for example, a dog is sacrificed and its blood mixed with the blood of people taking part and then drunk.

⁹ At least before the Portuguese arrived.

the kings, who then gathered the people to discuss the matter. The atmosphere in these meetings had to be peaceful, as it would be in a gathering between brothers.

In the Bobonaro area, for example, the kingdom of Ayasa had such a blood oath with the kingdom of Bobonaro. Their relationship was classified as elder brother – younger brother. The kingdom of Kailako received military help from Hauba and used to have relationships with Atabae, Ermera, Ainaro, Luka, Marobo,¹⁰ Ayasa and Bobonaro.

If the blood oaths proved to be not strong enough, another method of tying another kingdom into a peaceful relationship was through marriage. Classifications of Wife Giver and Wife Taker for the specific kingdoms followed, with one kingdom being always clearly classified as Wife Taker and one as Wife Giver (see table 7).

Table 7: The Wife-Giver Kingdoms of Kailako

Wife Taker	Wife Giver
Kailako	Marobo
Kailako	Bobonaro
Kailako	Atsabe

The same ways of pacifying kingdoms were used internally if there were fights amongst Houses. Blood oaths and marriage were the most crucial mechanisms in uniting people.

There used to be a lot of wars because of borders, women and theft of animals. Conflicts between groups could be settled through a marriage relationship. *Belis* [payment for the bride] was given and therefore a relation between the Wife Taker and Wife Giver was established. This marriage relation could unite the people of Timor.

(*Liurai*, Bobonaro)

Marriage Systems

In traditional societies, where there is no state system, social relationships are extremely important for the survival of the individual and the group. One would mostly trust people that are classified as ‘relatives.’ Relatives are related through blood relations or through marriage. Marriage is not a connection between two people – the groom and the bride – but between two or more families (Houses). It can either connect ‘foreign’ Houses or emphasise the continuity of a relationship between Houses. Marriage relations can establish peace or trade relationships between social entities. When imagining Timorese societies in pre-Portuguese and Portuguese times, with their autonomous kingdoms that were continuously threatened by other kingdoms, it becomes apparent how important the establishment or maintenance of connections to other families must have been. Thus, even today, Timorese families must consider very carefully to whom their offspring are going to be connected through marriage.

Different societies worldwide have developed specific systems of marriage to maintain social relations or secure their community. In the societies of East Timor, as well as in neighbouring societies in Eastern Indonesia, the preferred marriage is what is called ‘mother’s brother’s daughter marriage’ (or MBD marriage) or ‘cross-cousin

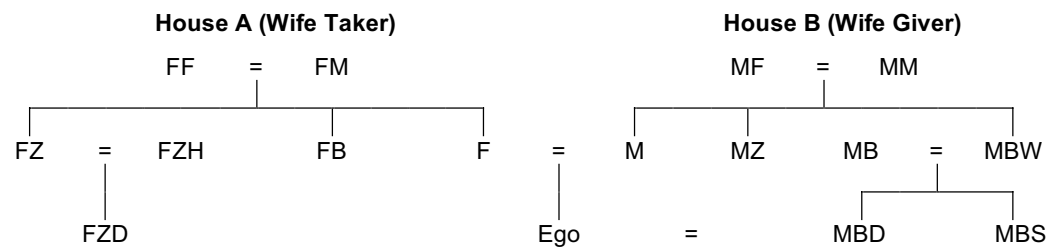
¹⁰ Also described as a hostile relationship.

marriage.¹¹ This is a very elaborate system that can combine many families into a wide social environment.

Mother's Brother's Daughter Marriage (MBD marriage)

This type of marriage system can be conducted in unilateral societies, e.g. societies that organise their kinship arrangements either through their patrilineal side or matrilineal side only (see figure 1).

Figure 1: MBD Marriage, Patrilineal System (Male Ego)



Kinship terms abbreviations

FF	Father's father	M	Mother
FM	Father's mother	MZ	Mother's sister
MF	Mother's father	MB	Mother's brother
MM	Mother's mother	MBW	Mother's brother's wife
FZ	Father's sister	FZD	Father's sister's daughter
FZH	Father's sister's husband	MBD	Mother's brother's daughter
FB	Father's brother	MBS	Mother's brother's son
F	Father		

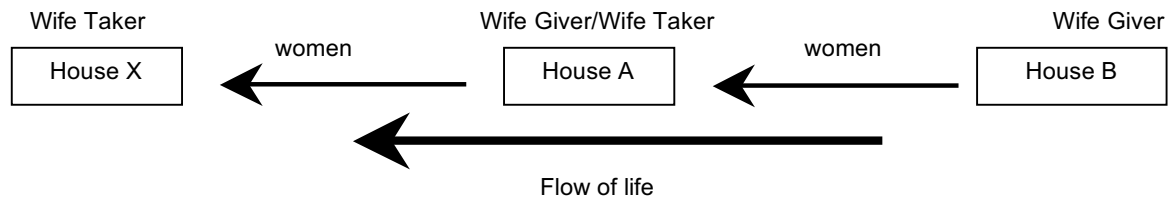
Ego belongs to House (lineage) A, as only his father's relatives are considered to be his kin. Marrying his mother's brother's daughter (MBD) is like marrying into another House, but he does not marry 'far.' He marries into a family that can be trusted because there are previous marriage relationships; the same House had given his mother to join his father's family. His own House therefore becomes the group of the Wife Taker, whereas his mother's family becomes the House of the Wife Giver. Yet if Ego wanted to marry his FB's daughter, he would be marrying within his own family and in an unilineal kinship system such a marriage would be incest and strongly forbidden. Incest regulations are a universal matter.

Ego's mother was already given from House B to House A. Now again, in Ego's marriage, a woman (MBD) is given from House B to House A. So House B continues to be the Wife Giver and House A continues to be the Wife Taker. House B can only give women to House A and House A can never give women to House B. If this system is continued, and there is always a male child of family A marrying his MBD, we have a continuous system where House A acts as Wife Taker and House B as Wife Giver. House A has its own Wife Takers to which it gives his daughters; House B has its own Wife Givers from which it receives women. Finally it becomes a large system in which

¹¹ Although the term 'cross-cousin marriage' also includes the marriage of ego and his father's sister's daughter, which is a possible connection but not a preferred one.

many families are interrelated (see figure 2). After marriage the woman moves to the man's family.¹²

Figure 2: Systems of Wife Giver and Wife Taker Relationships between Houses



So every House acts as Wife Giver and as Wife Taker to some other Houses, but the relationships are never reciprocal. Hence, at least three Houses are required to make the system function. In figure 2, House X could give women to House B, for example. Often these systems include a large number of families. Usually, a House has at least ten different Wife Givers and Wife Takers. For certain ceremonies, like burials or childbirths, all Wife Givers or Wife Takers have to be present. Especially in the mortuary process their participation is important, as is their contribution of goods.

Continuity: Flow of Life

The Wife Giver is often associated with the value of fertility. It is not perceived that the woman, as an individual person, is passed on to another family, but that the value of fertility is supplied to one's Wife Taker. In the Wife Taker family, the new woman produces new life again in her children and this new life is then passed on to one's own Wife Taker. Thus, we speak of a 'flow of life' (Fox 1980) that flows from the Wife Givers to their various Wife Takers.

As 'life,' and therefore reproduction, is one of the most important values to society, the maintenance of the system is extremely important. In daily life the relationships of Wife Givers and Wife Takers are always remembered. Often in conversations, people do not call an absent person by name, but use the term for Wife Giver (*uma mane*) or Wife Taker (*mane foun*) according to their relationship towards the person. These relationships order a big part of the social cosmos, with the Wife Giver always seen as superior. The advantage of this system is that it can combine a large number of families and hence contribute to the establishment of peaceful relationships in a wide territory.

Marriage Negotiations

The most important act in a marriage is the exchange of goods. The elders (*lia nains*) of the Wife Taker and Wife Giver Houses sit together to discuss what amounts of goods have to be exchanged for the marriage. This is a very important task of the elders. They are the only ones to know all the kinship relations and the hierarchy of the

¹² In a matrilineal system everything works vice versa.

Houses, and therefore the appropriate amount of goods to be exchanged. The couple is not of big importance here. The most important element is what the Wife Taker and Wife Giver groups have to bring.

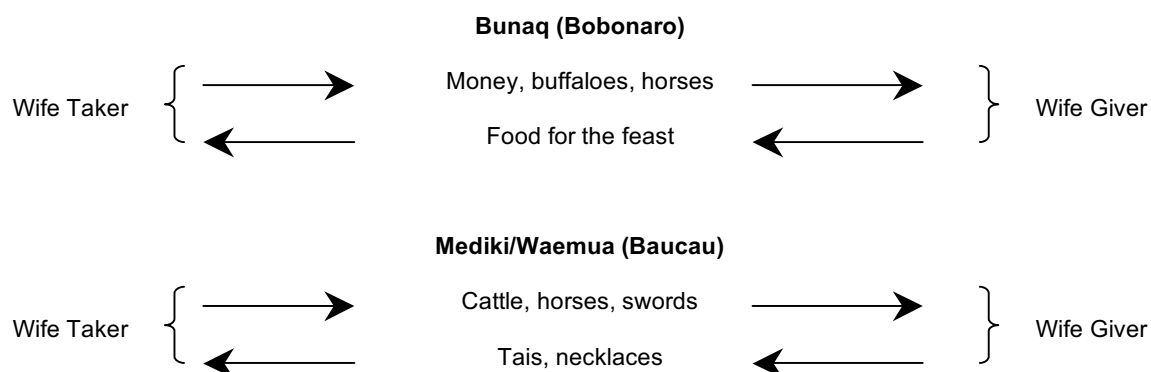
After the agreement is concluded between both sides and the payment of goods by the Wife Taker is made, the bride is ceremonially transferred to the groom's family. This ceremony acknowledges her new status as belonging to the man's lineage. As soon as the man can afford it, he builds a separate house for them on the land of his House. Conversely, in matrilineal societies, the husband moves to the wife's group.

The other rather atypical form of marriage is when the groom's family is not able to pay the exchange goods, because they do not have enough money or because the relatives deny their contribution. In this case there is no relationship established between the two Houses. The groom moves to his wife's location and will be considered by his in-law family as a son but his children will belong to her House. The groom is also expected to contribute to any request of work from his wife's kin.

Exchange of Goods

Traditionally the exchange of goods, agreed upon by the elders, involves very specific goods. There are certain items that the Wife Taker has to pass to the Wife Giver group, and certain goods that the Wife Giver gives to the Wife Taker. This order can never be reversed. Two examples are shown in figure 3.

Figure 3: Exchange of Marriage Goods in Bunaq (Bobonaro) and in Mediki (Baucau) Society



Nowadays, some of the Wife Taker's goods can be replaced with money. The money in this case corresponds in value to, for example, a certain number of buffaloes. As both sides are exchanging goods it is not spoken of as bridal wealth. Although it is said that the 'Wife Taker buys the woman and the Wife Giver sells the child.'¹³

A marriage is an exchange of values. We have spoken about the 'flow of life' when in each generation the Wife Giver gives women to the Wife Taker. The goods given by the Wife Giver are symbolic for exactly this value of 'life.' Food or weavings represent the female value of fertility that is given to the Wife Taker. On the other

¹³ Informant: villager.

hand, the Wife Taker supplies the Wife Giver with male values, symbolised in the buffaloes or in weapons such as swords.

Both sides collect the goods they have to give from their respective Wife Givers or Wife Takers. So the Wife Taker collects buffaloes within his own group and then goes out to ask his Wife Taker groups for additional buffaloes. He would never ask his Wife Giver for buffaloes, since the value would then flow in the wrong direction.

It becomes apparent that in such marriages not only the two Houses are involved, that of the bride and the groom, but also all their Wife Giver and Wife Taker Houses. Hence, marriage is a significant social event in which the people are reminded of their social cosmos.

Divorce

When the relationship between the couple is not going smoothly, the husband may complain about his wife and decide to separate from her. In this case the husband's House has to pay a considerable fine to his wife's House because 'they have to tie the door'¹⁴ between the two lineages. If the husband doesn't have sufficient means to pay, the couple is obliged to continue their life together. If the wife wants to leave the husband, her House has to provide another woman from the same House. Then there is no further payment required and the relationship between the two Houses as Wife Taker and Wife Giver is maintained. When both sides want to separate no fine is to be paid.

Political Concepts

Division of Ritual and Political Authority

As seen above, there is a basic dualistic structure that underlies most of the concepts in Timor's traditional cosmology and social structure. There is a Wife Giver and a Wife Taker, there are female values that are opposed to male values and there are Houses classified as newcomers and others as indigenous. This dualistic structure is extensively described in anthropological sources on Eastern Indonesia and East Timor (Fox 1980; Traube 1986).

This structure provides an excellent framework for the local societies to integrate new happenings into their worldview. This was especially relevant when the arrival of the Portuguese and their colonial system had to be explained. The way the Timorese societies dealt with it is in accordance with the findings of Dutch anthropologists in the early 1930s, who identified 'the capacity to integrate foreign influence' as one of the core elements that can be found all over Eastern Indonesia (Van Wouden 1935).

The very basic conceptual dualism of East Timorese societies, that plays a major role in their political concepts, is the opposition between ritual and political authority (Traube 1986). In our research we strongly confirmed this concept, as we found many similar examples across the different districts. It is important to understand that this concept is still very relevant today. It may have started to fade in urban areas, but the majority of the rural population still seems to order their world according to this paradigm. The following two examples, from the Vemasse Kingdom and the village of

¹⁴ Informant: *regulo* descendent, Aileu.

Raeheu in Kailako Kingdom, illustrate what is meant by the division of 'ritual and political authority.'

The Example of Vemassee Kingdom

In Vemassee the former *liurai* and present-day subdistrict chief recounted the myth summarized in box 1. The myth and the idea of origin included in it well express the division of political and ritual authority.

Box 1: Establishment of Political Power in Vemassee Kingdom (Baucau District)

My ancestors stem from Larantuka and I am not Lord of the Land here; I became *liurai* through an oath. My ancestors came to Timor. There were three people; one went to Vemassee, one to Los Palos, one to Lifao. They came for trading and then they took the water from the well in Vemassee. After they met with the *liurai* there, the people from Larantuka were invited to his house because the *liurai* saw that these people were literate. He broke the boat that was sent from the *liurai* of Larantuka. Then he saw that these people were not married yet, so the ancestor brought one woman for marriage. That woman stemmed from the Lor family. They had no descendants and the woman died. They brought another woman from Lor and she also died. Then they brought the child of the *liurai* Luka Viqueque. After marrying with the child of *liurai* Luka they had descendants. Because of that, the Lord of the Land approached the *liurai* from Larantuka: 'You already have taken women from here and I am the *liurai* here. But I do not know how to write and to read so I hand over to you.' After he had passed his power to him, they conducted an oath for the Lord of the Land. In this agreement, he received power from the original Lord of the Land and it is said that whoever wants to fight with the new *liurai* will not become old.

After that the *liurai* started to form or divide the borders between the two Houses *Uma metan* and *Uma mutin* [Galoli: 'black house' and 'white house']. The border of *Uma metan* is in Uailili and Garuvai, whereas *Uma mutin*'s borders are in Quelicai. From that moment on the *liurai* had to bring his rattan stick every time he visited the area of his power. They formed a power structure with a responsible person in every area.

(*Liurai*, Baucau)

This myth contains typical concepts of the local systems:

- The newcomer arrives and gets in touch with the local 'Lord of the Land.' The Lord of the Land is always connected to the female values of fertility and to the land. Here the newcomer takes water from a local well and in doing so gets in touch with the local value of fertility. In most of the myths across the country the outsider is perceived as being literate; here the newcomer from Larantuka (Flores) is able to read and write.
- Through a marriage union, a relationship between the indigenous Lord of the Land and the foreigner is established. The Lord of the Land always presents the value of femaleness and fertility towards the 'male' outsider. He is acting as Wife Giver, which is the part that guarantees the 'flow of life.'
- After establishing a relationship with the outsider, the rattan stick is passed from the Lord of the Land to the newcomer to appoint him as *liurai*. Another powerful political ruler, Luka from Viqueque, is also involved.
- The newcomer is now in charge of the political authority and the first thing he does is to order the borders of his realm. One of the most important tasks of the *liurai* is his responsibility for the borders of the land that is owned by the Lord of the Land.
- At this point, the main values of society are split up. There is now established political authority, as well as the Lord of the Land's responsibility for the fertility of the land. Now society is created and 'in order.'

The dualistic categories and the separation of political and ritual tasks of the main Houses in Vemassee are shown in table 8.

Table 8: Main Sacred Houses in Vemassee and Their Classifications

Sacred house	Classification		Tasks	Origin
Lor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mother-father Wife Giver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lord of the Land Executive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gave land Appointed <i>liurai</i> Made decisions about land and <i>liurais</i> Made decisions for war 	Autochthonous
Raha				
Uma metan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elder Brother Wife Taker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointed as Raja upon arrival (because they had been to school) Legislative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct rule (through blood oath) Conducts war 	Immigrant from Flores
Uma mutin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Younger Brother Wife Taker 			
Sasau Gagari	People			

The Example of Raeheu Village

The village of Raeheu in Kailako Kingdom (Bobonaro District) is another illustration of the division between political and ritual authorities. This can be seen in the layout of the village. In the main village centre a flagpole is located between the town hall and the residence of the village chief. This presents the political side of the village cosmos. Outside the village, on top of a nearby hill, is the location for the sacred houses, sacred stones and sacred gardens.

The flagpole, in the centre of the town, represents the political authority of the village. It is built like a pyramid and has seven levels, with the flagpole located on the highest level. Distinctive stones are placed on the different steps. Every stone represents a specific sacred house. The most important Houses are on the highest step of the pyramid, according to their hierarchical position. All of these Houses are united under the flag of the king. In the middle of all Houses is the Portuguese flag given by the Portuguese to the sacred house of Loi'ubu (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Raeheu Flagpole 'Pyramid' (from Above)

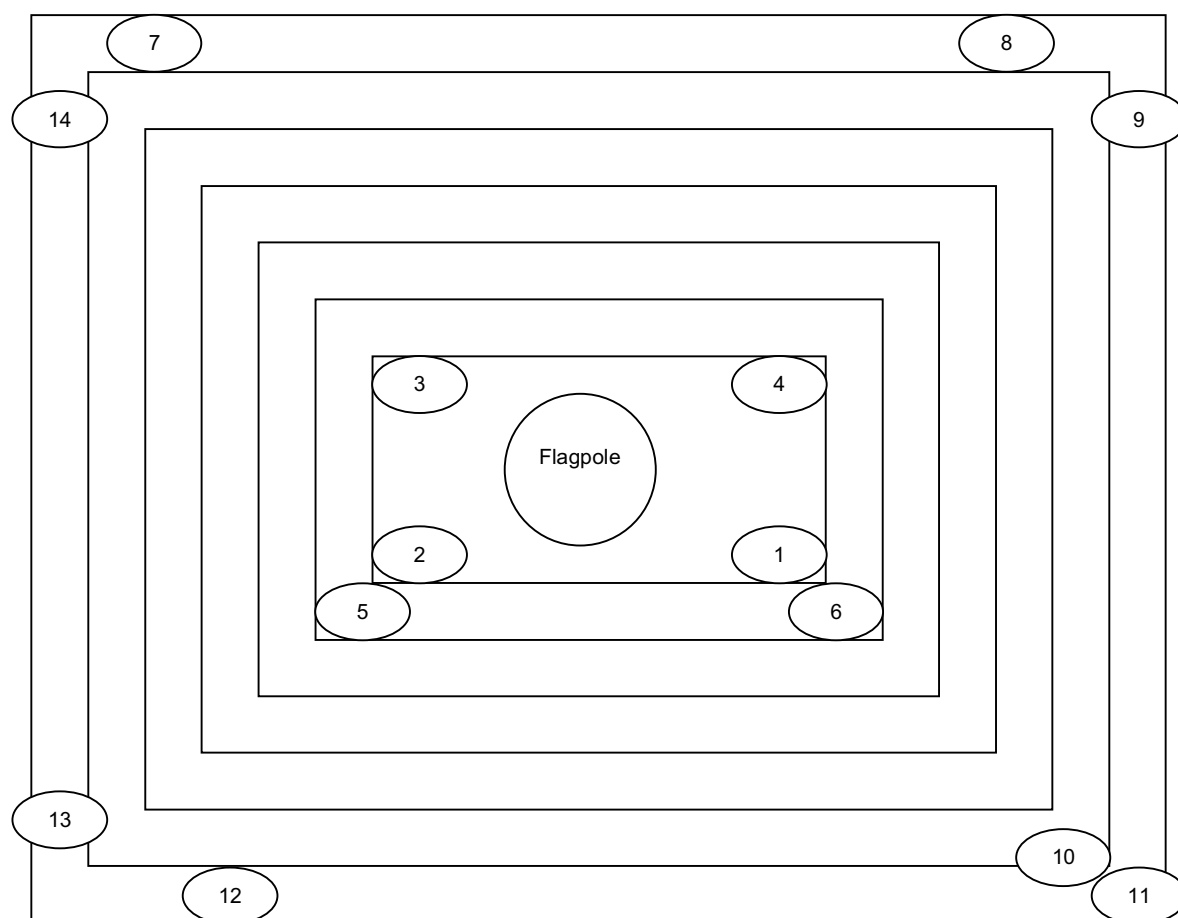
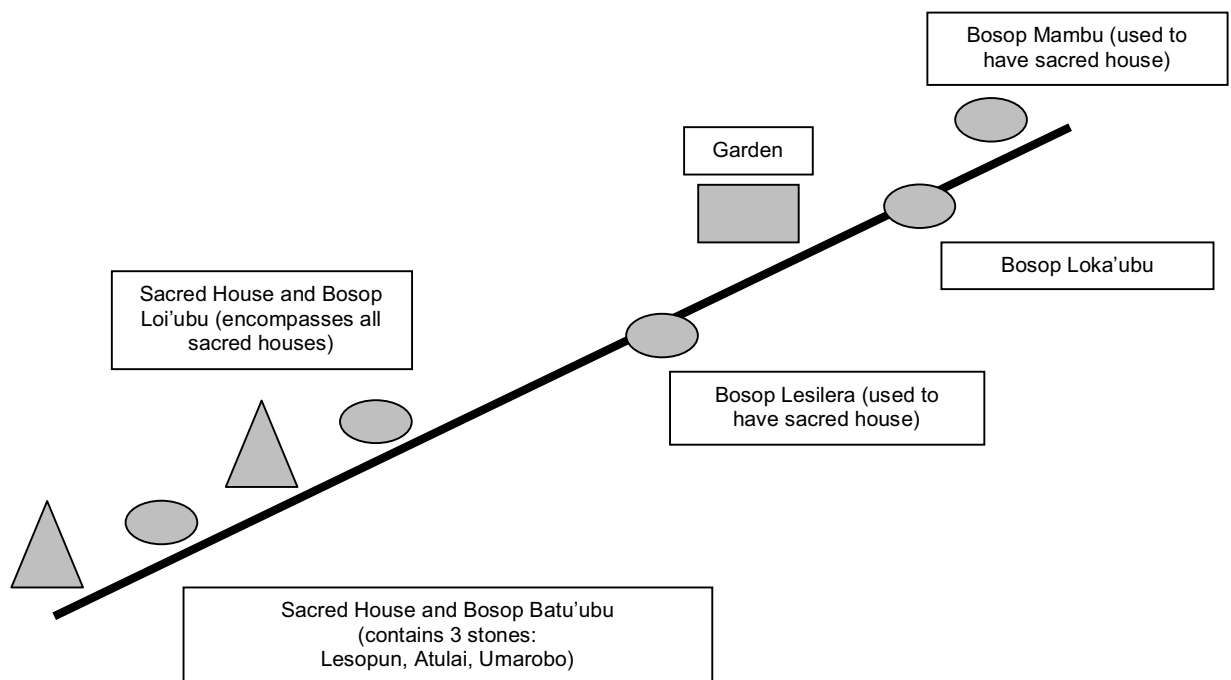


Table 9: Order of Sacred Houses Represented on the Flagpole Pyramid in Raeheu

Sacred house	Function	Position
1. Loi'ubu	Govern society	King (stone has 'hat' on top)
2. Mambu		Deputy
3. Batu'ubu		
4. Ma'ubu		
5. Lema'ubu	Executive power ('security')	
6. Oso'ubu	Executive power	
7. Poirema	Helper of the king	Commoners
8. Manapa		
9. Daum	Make weavings for king	
10. Kamaq		
11. Gololo		Commoners, first child of king
12. Miligu		Commoners, first child of king
13. Nanulait	Govern in the west, receive orders from king of east	Commoners
14. Lesoluli		Commoners

In opposition to the political centre, in the middle of the town, the hill next to the town is the location for ritual authority. It contains sacred houses and sacred stones (*bosop*) of the same Houses (see figure 5). Here the same important Houses act in the context of ritual authority. In close connection is the fertility/garden, closely located to the ritual centre. There used to be five sacred houses¹⁵ and there remain five sacred stones. The sacred stone of Loi'ubu is located in the centre, emphasising the central and highest position of the sacred house in ritual authority.

Figure 5: Sacred Hill of Raeheu



The ritual system has the same social structure as the political system. The same sacred houses are perceived as being the 'eldest' or 'highest.' They act as superior in the two different contexts of political and ritual life. Social hierarchy therefore supplies the basis for the different spheres of issues that are present in communal life.

The Perception of the Outside

As shown in the myth from Vemassee Kingdom (see box 2) where the House holding the political authority is different from the ones in charge of ritual authority, the political House is classified as 'newcomer.' In Vemassee it is said they have come from the island of Flores. This is a typical feature and can be found in many examples throughout East Timor. The 'outsider' or 'immigrant' entity is connected to political power whereas the 'indigenous' Houses, as 'Lords of the Land,' are connected to ritual

¹⁵ They were burnt by the Indonesians in 1975. So far they are not rebuilt because of the immense ritual costs connected with building a sacred house.

power and fertility. Several versions of the myth described in box 2 have been recounted in the course of our research.

Box 2: Myth of the Establishment of Political Power in Sanirin (Bobonaro District)

Two kings and eight guardians descended from Mount Leolaku to the coast of Balibo. The two kings were Nai Kerek and Samlelo Dom Dua. They searched for a fertile place for farming because in their location, on the mountain of Leolaku, they had a food crisis. Nai Kerek led the first group of people to Balibo, another group followed Samlelo to Sanirin. Nai Kerek was appointed as king in Balibo. His area of power didn't include Sanirin. At that time there was no king in Sanirin, because Samlelo, with his friend Dom Francisco from Batu Gede, went to Oecussi to receive school education. They didn't succeed in finishing their education. Finally, they were called back and given the Portuguese flag to rule. So far, only the Portuguese had been ruling Oecussi. Dom Francisco went straight back to Batu Gede, while Samlelo went to Sanirin. In Sanirin, Samlelo was then appointed as king for his people. He was appointed as the first king because he had brought the Portuguese flag. The name Sanirin was brought from Oecussi. From then till now there has never been a conflict between Balibo and Sanirin, because the kings and the people of the two places both originate from Leolaku.

Other versions of the same myth always show the same structure:

- one brother stays in the original land, while the other brother leaves to go 'abroad';
- abroad, the brother usually acquires the skills of reading and writing (symbolic for political power);
- then the brother comes back to his origins and is appointed as 'political ruler.'¹⁶ His older brother stays as 'Lord of the Land.'

This myth illustrates how it is understandable that newly arriving powers, like the Portuguese, were easily ordered into the matrix as 'political power.' At the same time, in classifying the Portuguese as political, the local Timorese societies perceived themselves as the opposite value: the Lords of the Land.

Since the Portuguese were connected with 'political power,' they had the authority to appoint local political positions. In the perception of the local societies this was symbolically conducted through the handing over of the flag, or the rattan stick, as ultimate symbols for political rule. As the Portuguese had passed them on they became important insignias for the local political House and today they are still kept as treasures in some of the sacred houses.

In a number of cases we were told that all people from the 'outside' originate from Timor. Everybody's ancestors descended from a Timorese mountain and then went overseas. In this system the outside is always classified as Wife Taker/female or younger brother, whereas the Timorese societies act as Wife Giver/male or elder brother:

*Malays*¹⁷ are from this location as well. We are all one family, but this is a long story. Black skin/white skin, they all originate from here, from Timor Lorosae. Then they split.
(*Kuku nain*, Aileu)

The Dutch originated from here. They had received the book as female [another classification for Wife Taker], the male [Wife Giver] received the stick for digging. So the women could sit back home and write. When the Dutch and the Portuguese came, the ancestors said, 'Hey, there are the children of the female coming.' They came to guard the

¹⁶ Which probably went along with the fact that the Portuguese government looked for people as *liurais* that were literate.

¹⁷ *Malay* is the generic term for 'foreigner.'

Timorese because they had difficulties, they didn't come to rule. But the kingdom here is shaking; if you want to find a chair to sit on, find a table.

(Traditional elder, Balibo)

Luarsa and Kisa. Luarsa went to a foreign land and Kisa stayed in East Timor. Foreign people descended from the generation of Luarsa and East Timorese from the ancestor Kisa. Luarsa went across the sea and to the outside; he became *malay*, and brought back the book and the pencil.

(*Kuku nain*, Aileu)

Ritual and Political Tasks

The ritual authorities are mostly the 'first on the land.' They are connected with the ancestors of the sacred house and all sacred issues. They guard the sacred house, sit inside the house and are thought to be quiet. They have the most powerful position, but they do not speak. They only pass on their decisions to the political authorities. Thus they are not connected to the outside world or its people, like the Portuguese. They are the ones to conduct ceremonies and they are the guards of fertility and the land. Such are the positions of the *bei* in Bobonaro, the *kuku nain* in Aileu or the *bararin* or *la'ir atar* in Baucau (Makassae).

Throughout history the ritual authorities, in the eyes of the outsider, have always played a minor role. This is only due to the fact that the political authorities dealt with the 'outside.' On the local level the ritual authorities have an immense influence and power. In the world, as a totality, they are seen as superior to the political authorities.

Political authority is usually appointed by the ritual powers, as this can only happen after consultation with the ancestors. In general they are inferior to the ritual powers because they are the ones connected to worldly issues. The political authority deals with conflict resolution, like the *lia nain* in Aileu. They conduct marriage negotiations and are connected to the outside; they go to speak to the people, like the *tata* in Bobonaro or the *sobu* in Makassae.

When the Portuguese arrived and demanded a leader to deal with them, the local dualistic structure provided an easy matrix to create these political positions since the ritual leader in the inside was not to deal with outsiders like the Portuguese. The kings (*liurais*, *doms*, *regulos*, *reis*, as they are known) on the other hand became important representatives of political power. In accordance with the traditional paradigm their position developed into the link with Portuguese governmental powers. They dealt with the Portuguese government and were the leaders of a kingdom.

The king had to originate from 'royal' descent (a sacred house) and be appointed by the ritual elders. They looked for a clever descendant of a specific House, who was able to 'speak and solve problems.'¹⁸ Once he had been appointed, he had to conduct a blood oath with a group of elders from several Houses. The agreement that is sanctioned by the blood oath says that someone else cannot overtake the position of the king; it can only be passed on within the same House.

¹⁸ Informant: villager.

Table 10: Appointment of Political Authorities in Makassae Area

Title	Position	Tasks
<i>Liurai (soru)</i>	King/village chief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads society • Conflict resolution • Passes on orders from government
Raja	Ritual elder	Appoints <i>soru</i>

Another entity that became an important political authority under the Portuguese rule was the *dato*. The sacred houses, under the *liurai* House, were often connected to the position of *dato*. They were also seen as ‘royal’ and became a governmental institution.¹⁹

Appointment of Political Powers: The Rattan Stick

The political rulers are always appointed by the ritual powers. In most cases the elders sit together and discuss who should be the new political ruler. They choose from the right descendants and discuss which of the available people are the most skilled in speaking and negotiating.²⁰

The ritual authorities are seen as superior, as they have the connection to the ancestors who are the founders of the Houses. Only the ritual authorities have the knowledge about the descent lines and oaths that were taken in the past. Hence they have the capacity to choose a political ruler that is also sanctioned by the ancestors. People are often scared if a ruler does not conform to this system, as this can mean misfortune for the whole community caused by angry ancestral powers.

The elders appoint the political ruler. However, it is the ‘outside’ power, like the Portuguese or a powerful ruler in the neighbourhood, that actually hands over the power by giving the flag and rattan stick to the new ruler. His House then keeps the insignias and passes them on through their descendants. Though given by the political power, the rattan stick and the flag have become ‘sacred.’

The traditional power is the *lulik* (sacred), because according to the stories, the one that holds the rattan and the flag has the power to rule. That is the person named *liurai*. These two goods are usually stored in the sacred house of the *liurai*. Every good that is stored in the sacred house contains the *lulik*, because of that the rattan and the flag are *lulik* items. If the *liurai* has died, the power has to be held by people from his House because it is only the *liurai* that owns the rattan and flag.

(*Liurai*, Baucau)

¹⁹ The term *dato* can be used for everything that is perceived as ‘royal’ and can sometimes lead to confusion, as it may mean:

- from the *dom* descent;
- like the *chefe*, only for ritual issues;
- hamlet chief;
- from the west (local peoples say *chefe kapitan*, the person who holds the rattan).

²⁰ If there is nobody available, the position can be passed on to another sacred house.



Assistant to the kuku nain in Er Hetu, Aileu, sacrificing a chicken at the base of the ai lulik (sacred tree trunk) in the bosop. This ritual was to seek permission of the ancestors to talk to the research team about Er Hetu's history.



In preparation for the kuru bee ceremony — to bring spring water to the uma lulik — sacred objects are arranged on the ai lulik. Here, in Raimansu, Kuku nain Maun Duan oversees the preparation.

The myth in box 3 depicts how the rattan could be taken elsewhere to establish a new kingdom as the rattan itself contains the power for a king. Historical incidents can cause the rattan stick to be given to other families.

Box 3: Establishment of New Kingdom through Rattan Stick in Atabae (Bobonaro District)

Before the arrival of the Portuguese the people of Atabae lived as a free society. They had their own king. The first king of Atabae was named Rapubuti. He was from the village of Aidabalaten, sacred house of Kelama. While he was reigning, he was always fair and clear to the people, so he was honoured a lot. His tasks were to teach the people to plant fruits, vegetable gardens and to raise animals. The people enjoyed the outcome of this and a part was given to the king. When he died, the seat was given to his child named Tesmali. He became the second *liurai*, from the same village and sacred house.

During the rule of *Liurai* Tesmali, the Portuguese came into the country. As a sign for his good deeds they gave him the Portuguese flag and a couple of other items. Then Tesmali started working together with the Portuguese and Atabae ended up being ruled by the Portuguese. He had a wife from the village Paselara. They lived together in peace and loved each other but they had no children. When *Liurai* Tesmali died there was no one to replace him. His wife then took the Portuguese flag from Aidabalaten to her village Paselara. There she established a new kingdom with a new *liurai*. That was the end of the kingdom of Atabae

In many parts of Baucau we heard how the rattan was distributed from the powerful kingdom of Luka in Viqueque. The myth in box 4 describes this process.

Box 4: Distribution of Political Power in Baucau

The rattan is coming from Luka. From Luka it was given to Vemassee and then passed to Laga. The rattan was given from Laleia to Quelecai. One generation from Luka went to Bagaia. But the main power from Luka in Viqueque was separated in the eastern parts. The rattan is coming from Luka and was distributed to the people who have political power.

In this last account, the rattan was given by the powerful ruler of Viqueque to establish smaller political rulers at lower levels such as villages or hamlet-sized settlements. This was the case in Afaloikai, Baucau District, where the rattan was divided from one sacred house (Afaloikai) into its smaller Houses.

Table 11 : Traditional Power Structures

Social organisation		Power holders	
Entity	Description	Title	Type of power
<i>Uma lulik/Uma lisan</i>	Kinship system based on a common ancestor	<i>Liurai, dato</i>	Political power holder
		<i>Lia nain</i>	Guardian of rules and customs and conflict mediator (political power at the lower level)
		<i>Kuku nain</i>	Ritual power holder
		Deputy/Helper	<i>Liurai</i> or <i>kuku nain</i> assistant
<i>Uma kain/Uma knua</i>	Extended family/Geographical area of <i>uma kain</i>	<i>Chefe de uma kain</i>	Moral authority of extended family

3

Historical Development

Power in Portuguese Times

Short History

When the Portuguese landed on the island of Timor in 1515 their main objective was to enter the spice trade with the neighbouring archipelago of the Moluccas. Timor was at that time a source of sandalwood that was harvested by Chinese traders. The first Portuguese dependence in Timor was established in Lifao, Oecussi. The Dutch started to establish power in the western part of the island by taking over the kingdom of Wehale, whereas the Portuguese started settling in Dili because of internal struggle. Nevertheless the actual powers of the Dutch and Portuguese were still very minor and the island was divided into approximately 40 autonomous kingdoms, with kings as holders of absolute political power. The foreign powers acted as 'protectorates' over some of the indigenous kingdoms (Schlicher 1996: 108) but in 1719 the Timorese kings entered into a blood-oath agreement to fight the foreign intruders.

In 1859 the official colonial border between the Dutch and the Portuguese territory was agreed upon. A year later, Alfonso do Castro became the first governor to divide East Timor into districts that promoted a better system of administration and economic advantage (Schlicher 1996: 133). Nonetheless local leaders fought continuous wars against the Portuguese, as they were not happy 'with the Portuguese law.'²¹

Governor Celestino da Silva changed the payment of tributes into a system of tax per head in 1906 to enforce the local population to work more than just for their own needs. The tensions between the local population and the colonial power finally escalated into the 'Manufahi War,' where a large number of kings joined alliances to fight the Portuguese. The kings all united under the *liurai* of Manufahi, Dom Boaventura. In 1911 they entered a blood oath, agreeing to kill all Europeans in East Timor, and started attacking Portuguese posts, burning houses and killing Portuguese. The attacks were so strong that it took Portugal nearly one year to stop the war and then only by calling for military help from their colonial armies in other colonies.

This war didn't only happen in Manufahi, it happened all over Timor. The Portuguese had sent out people by boat to speak to all the *liurais*. At that time the *liurais* of west and east were united. Their communication worked through *tais* that were manufactured through traditional methods. With these they told each other when they would go to attack the Portuguese.

(Traditional elder)

According to other informants, the war is also seen as a 'pacification' war because the conditions in Timor amongst the kings were very violent and it was the Timorese themselves that hoped for the Portuguese to change these conditions.

Before Portugal came to East Timor, East Timor was already independent according to the stories from our ancestors. But the people didn't use law to resolve the problems, they just used force to resolve problems, like killing. So if someone caused a problem, he was killed

²¹ Informant: villager.

and his corpse was exposed on the central road, visible for everybody. So for that reason our ancestors went to Portugal to bring the Portuguese to East Timor.

(*Lia nain*, Aileu)

The Official Power and Administrative Structure

Upon the Portuguese arrival in Timor, the island was divided into a number of kingdoms, each ruled by a king (*liurai*). Many kings had hostile relationships with each other or they had entered peace agreements. A kingdom was divided into *sucos* (villages), which consisted of several settlements. The head of a *suco* was called *dato*, the other people were *reinos* (commoners) or *atas* (slaves).

Until 1860, Portuguese colonial rule concentrated very much on trade and the catholic mission. Everything was focused on Dili. The governor was the highest representative of the Portuguese in the colony and he had military and civilian functions.

The governor in the second half of the nineteenth century, Alfonso do Castro, saw that a proper administrative system was essential for economic development. So he divided the country into eleven districts: Dili, Manatutu, Vemasse, Lautem, Viqueque, Allas, Bibissuco, Cailaco, Maubara, Batugade and Oecussi. Each district had a Portuguese commander, with civilian and military tasks, and a small number of soldiers. The commanders were responsible for peace in their districts and had to work with the local *liurais*. The Portuguese commander had judicial power over the population. However, his main duty was to collect tax and so the local, traditional power structures were largely untouched by the Portuguese.

Table12: Early Portuguese Power Structures and Acknowledged Local Structures

Level	Portuguese structure	Traditional structure
Country	Governor	
District	Commanders	
Kingdom		<i>Liurai</i>
Village		<i>Dato</i>
Extended family		<i>Chefe do uma kain</i>

Governor Castro's objectives were to strengthen Portuguese rule, to influence the local kings and to stop wars amongst them. Castro described the differences in Portuguese relations with the different kingdoms: 'They reach from kingdoms that were under Portuguese rule to kingdoms (like the ones at the western border) that fought against them' (Schlicher 1996: 133ff.).

Governor Celestino da Silva succeeded Castro in 1894 and replaced his administrative structure with a military form (*commandos militares*). By 1922 the position of governor was only occupied by military officers²² and it was only in 1934 that a civilian administration was introduced to Timor.

In 1906, when da Silva introduced the tax-by-head system for the Timorese population, he stopped the payments of tribute that the population had to pay to their

²² At that time the Portuguese gave military titles to the local leaders. E.g., the *regulo* (known also as *dom*, *liurai*, *rei* and in Indonesian *raja*) was nominated *tinente colonel*, the *liurai* (*chefe do suco*) was called *major*, and the *dato* (*chefe do knua* or *povoação*), nowadays *chefe do aldeia*, received the title of *captain*. (*Dom* descendent, Aileu)

kings. In its place, the kings (*regulos*) and the village chiefs (*datos*) received part of the officially collected tax. This, of course, decreased the rights of the kings and extended Portuguese power (Schlicher 1996: 261). The Portuguese colonial government turned the *liurais* and *datos* into their 'link' with the population and finally the choice of a new *liurai* had to be approved by the colonial government.

In 1908, Governor Marques divided Timor into four units (*conselhos*) and eight *commandos militares*. The *conselhos* had a separate municipal administration, whereas the centre administered the *comandos militares*. All the districts were divided into subdistricts (*postos*) and these again into villages (*sucos*) and hamlets (*povoações*). The Portuguese now appointed local village chiefs (*chefes do suco*, formerly *datos*) and hamlet chiefs (*chefes do povoação*). The village and hamlet chiefs were used as a link between the colonial government and the local population and then the government declared all land that was not privately owned to be public land (Schlicher 1996: 262).

After the Manufahi War, when the Portuguese conquered one *liurai* after the other, they immediately took all the power from the ones that had fought against them and exchanged them for *liurais* and village chiefs that had proven to be loyal to the government. The traditional kingdoms were replaced with a new system, where several *sucos* formed a *commando militares*:

My grandfather started as *liurai* in 1912 but it was only in 1914 that he received his *liurai* consecration by Governor Celestino, for his services in helping the Portuguese in their battle against the kingdom of Manufahi.

(Dom descendant, Aileu)

In 1934 a civilian administrative system was introduced. One *administrador* was responsible for several *conselhos*. The *administrador* had military, administrative and judicial power. The *conselho* was divided into several *postos* (subdistricts), and the *postos* again were divided into *sucos*. So the *liurais* lost their absolute and their official power. Their position was now replaced through the Portuguese administration at the *posto* level. In some cases the *postos* covered the former area of a kingdom, in others they differed. The *chefe do posto* worked straight down to the *chefe do suco*. These *chefes* had to be literate, speak Portuguese and pass on orders from the government to the people. The *chefe do suco* was now also called *liurai* in some areas. The traditional kings maintained unofficial power in their kingdoms or became the *chefes do posto*.

Table 13: Official and Unofficial Political Power Structures in the Civilian Government since 1934

Level	Official Portuguese structure	Unofficial, traditional power holders
District	Administrador do conselho	<i>Reglo/Dom/Liurai</i>
Subdistrict	Administrador do posto	
Kingdom	Regulo	
Village	Chefe do suco	
Hamlet	Chefe do povoação	<i>Chefe do uma kain</i>
Extended family		

Portuguese people occupied the three important positions in the administrative structure: the governor of the territory was appointed directly by Lisbon, and the Governor, or the council of administrators, appointed the *administrador do conselho* and the *administrador do posto*. Timorese occupied the structures below the *posto*.

At the Local Level

At the beginning of Portuguese rule, the local power structures were hardly challenged. The *liurai* was the local political authority and the representative of the local community to the colonial power. His traditional duties included the conduct of wars and following the decisions of the ritual authorities. So he entered military treaties to fight the Portuguese, when the population became dissatisfied with the tax system. His traditional role as political authority was confirmed through his interactions with the Portuguese.

Mainly after the Manufahi War, the Portuguese colonial government started to exchange disloyal *liurais* for others. With the new civilian administrative structure created in 1934, the *liurais* lost their official powers and the *chefes do suco* became the direct link with the government. The official power was handed over in an adequate way from the *liurai* to the *chefe do suco* but this 'loss of power' did not happen at the informal level.

At that time Vemassee gave the power to each *suco* to govern their area. People from Vemassee came and said to the people in each *suco*: because I cannot take control myself of each place anymore, I would like some of you to be *liurais* and to govern your places.

(*Liurai*, Baucau)

The powers of the *liurai* remained and the people still adhered to them. The newly acknowledged *chefes do sucos* still came from *dato* descent, from a 'royal' class, and were therefore appropriate powers to work with the Portuguese. There were no requests from the Portuguese to elect the political leaders democratically: they were simply chosen by the Portuguese, who picked people loyal to them. If these people descended from a commoner family the appointment caused conflicts:

Before World War II started (1942) my grandfather was elected as *liurai* by the Portuguese but he didn't want to accept this title. He had not descended from the *liurai* family. So the Portuguese put him in jail for two months with bamboo handcuffs. He was finally released and was forced to accept the position.

(*Liurai* descendant, Aileu)

If the person came from another royal family, just from a different area, it seems that it was acceptable for the people. Other informants claim that the Portuguese rulers asked whom they would like to appoint. Then the person of the right descent was chosen because they were still chosen by the traditional elders. So the *liurai* was a descendant of the 'highest sacred house' whereas the *dato* and the *chefe do suco* came from the following sacred houses. The same happened with the hamlet chiefs, who were presumably the heads of *uma knuas*. These positions all stayed inherited positions. The traditional system continued and new requests from the outside were neatly integrated into an existing structure. There were no contradictions evolving.

It is said that the Portuguese never had much contact with the local population. They gave orders to the *liurai* and *dato* as a link between the government and the local level. The Portuguese also gave the 'law' to the *liurais*, so they were able to rule in their common traditional way at the local level. The Portuguese did not interfere at this level, although some informants claim that the people were not happy anymore with the Portuguese behind their *liurais*. Nevertheless, as long as the *liurai* or *dato* was still from the 'right' descent, the system that was sanctioned by the ancestors was not to be challenged:

The *raja* was from the descent of the *liurai*. If he had been a normal person, the people wouldn't have agreed with him.

(Village chief, Baucau)

The Portuguese never challenged the concept of the importance of descent instead of individualistic features, nor the customary law, the conduction of

ceremonies or the position of ritual authorities. The latter was challenged by the Church rather than by the colonial government. The ritual life could remain strong, as it was perceived to be the 'inside' of society, and had nothing to do with 'outside' political issues:

The Portuguese acknowledged our traditional system. They were clever, that is why things went fine. Because the missionaries knew most about the traditions, they had to understand the local structures to implement something else.

(Intellectual, Bobonaro)

The *liurais* are always described as very powerful, having a strong influence on the population. They were regularly in contact with the Portuguese and every week they had to come to the subdistrict to receive their orders from the colonial government regarding conduct and work in the villages. The *liurais* were held responsible for their communities and if problems arose the Portuguese would punish them by beating them or charging fines.

The main duty of the *liurai*, as the local population perceived it, was to be the link with the government. Apart from that he had judicial power. 'People saw him as a god. The voice of the *liurai* was to be questioned by nobody.'²³ He was responsible for the borders of the area, receiving visitors from the 'outside' and opening new roads. He ordered the planting and harvesting activities in the fields, plus he had to register the population for tax purposes and to collect the annual tax.

A secretary accompanied the *liurai*. Usually the secretary was an illiterate person who had sound oral knowledge on points addressed by the *liurai*. The person holding this position was knowledgeable in issues related to government. He also reported to the *liurai* about the living conditions of the population. The secretary usually came from the same sacred house as the *liurai* and was not changed until he died. This was because he was seen as the one having the knowledge and remembering all 'words' from the bottom to the top level.

On a regular basis, the *liurai* held meetings with the *chefe do suco* and briefed him about the schedules of work in the fields. The *chefe do suco* then passed on the order to the *chefe do povoação* with a deadline for the required labour. The latter was then in charge of the implementation of the task by ordering the 'commoners.' The same channel was used to pass on information, or to organise a special meeting with the communities when the government required a gathering of the population.

Table 14: Local Powers under the Portuguese Government

Position	Other terms	Task
Portuguese Gvt.		Gives orders
King (until 1934)	<i>Liurai/regulo/rei/dom</i>	Receives orders from Portuguese government
Village chief	<i>Chefe do suco/dato/liurai</i>	Receives orders from <i>liurai</i> and reports back
Hamlet chief	<i>Chefe do povoação/dato</i>	Receives orders from village chief and reports back to him
Neighbourhood chief	<i>Cabul/leader of uma kain</i>	Receives orders from hamlet chief, has to pass them on to the people and make them work. Also reports back to the hamlet chief

²³ Informant: villager.

The *chefes do povoação* were active at the very local level. They collected and passed on the taxes in their respective hamlets and had to watch the workers to make sure they were working well:

For example, in the rice fields if people had not finished their work the *chefe do povoação* had to ask them why they stopped. If they stopped because there were not enough buffalos or enough water, the *chefe do povoação* had to organise a meeting and then decide what they had to do first. If the problem was because there was no water to irrigate the rice fields they had to come together to work on it.

(Dom/regulo descendant, Aileu)

Today, opinions about the *liurai* are varying. Mainly the older informants think that some of them were good rulers: they gave the people the opportunity to make gardens and rice fields and to raise animals, and the people felt free because they could go everywhere without fear. They are seen as fair rulers, who helped to solve conflicts and establish peace. They are said to have had good programmes for education, health and other issues for the community. They were very interested in people's needs and there was no corruption. This obviously depended very much on the individual person.

Others describe their experience with *liurais* very differently. According to them, they were dictators; whatever they said had to be followed, no matter whether it was good or not. They did not pay attention to people's needs and did not want the common people to be educated, as they perceived it as a threat to themselves. They coordinated only with the Portuguese but never with their own people; every activity had to be reported to the *liurai* and he had to be asked for permission for everything.

The pictures we received from our informants also depended on the informants themselves. Some thought that the system of the *liurais* was good because they made people work hard and enforced discipline. Others did not appreciate that kind of forced labour:

Mostly in Portuguese times, the history is full of dictatorships, no justice; they just beat people without passing the court first. They did everything they wanted.

(Subdistrict chief)

The Local Perception of the Portuguese Government

The Portuguese are said to have paid attention to local customs. They allowed the population to conduct ceremonies and respected the local leaders. They left the sacred houses alone and never judged the leadership – except if it threatened the Portuguese government. As one of the informants said, the law system was the 'true law.'

The Portuguese strategic approach utilised respect for the traditional customs because the Portuguese not only accepted the local structures but also made use of them to their own advantage. For a long time the Portuguese colonial rule experienced resistance from the Timorese, as many of the *liurais* were so strong. So the Portuguese used a local method to establish peace: entering blood oaths with *liurais*, in order to create agreements that they would no longer fight war. They also started to marry the daughters of the *liurais*, which established Wife Giver and Wife Taker relationships. In the previous chapter we have emphasised the importance of the marriage system for the establishment of peace. The establishment of these relationships with the local *liurais* was the strongest method of ensuring peaceful relations with the local powers because it is forbidden to attack one's Wife Taker. Through this method, some of the *liurais* were tied in such strong relationships with the Portuguese that they had to help the Portuguese fight against other *liurais*. The Manufahi War is a good example of this. The Portuguese used the *liurais* from the east (as their Wife Giver) to fight against Dom Boaventura in Manufahi. This method enabled them to win the war.

When entering marriage relations with local families, the Portuguese were always classified as the Wife Taker, the typical classification for the 'outsider.' As the indigenous communities are always seen as the 'Lord of the Land' and therefore closely connected with the values of fertility, they have to act as Wife Giver (passing on fertility through the women that are given) in relation to the 'outsider.'

Another typical classification in this context is that the 'outsider' is seen as a younger brother and therefore connected to values such as political authority. Traube, who conducted a research among the Mambai people in Portuguese times, describes how the Portuguese were integrated into the local sociocosmic system (Traube 1986: 55). They were the younger brothers who originated from Timor, but had travelled overseas. At a certain stage these Portuguese brothers came back to introduce political values. Historical reality fitted neatly into local classification systems and even when the Portuguese misbehaved, the Mambai would excuse them as being the 'wilder young brother who doesn't know better' (Traube 1986: 61).

There are many different opinions on the Portuguese, including some declaring the Portuguese times as 'paradise.'²⁴ In these cases even forced labour is declared as positive:

It taught people how to work. And all this work was directed to raise Timor Lorosae, but that was only for the good of the people. The forced labour was to build the roads in the state and to work in the garden of the *liurai*. People were forced so they wouldn't become lazy. The Portuguese taught us discipline to work.

(Traditional elder, Bobonaro)

Some also think it was good that education standards were raised, though others claim education went only as far as primary school for most of the locals because the Portuguese were scared that the Timorese would otherwise become a threat to their government. Informants claimed that only the children of *liurais* and *datos* were allowed to attend school.

Furthermore, it is said that there was no terror against the local people and no murders. Yet this is mostly said in comparison with the following Indonesian system.

It is mostly emphasised that the Portuguese respected the local customs. Others say the Portuguese did not respect the local customs as they changed the titles of the rulers and did not respect the traditional elders (which probably means that they did not pay respect). The traditional elders had nothing to do with the government, as they were the ritual and not the political power.

For many, the tax system and forced labour were perceived very negatively:

People suffered a lot from that. They worked in their gardens and the next month they had to help the government. The payment from the government wasn't enough and the lazy people didn't have enough food.

(*Liurai*, Bobonaro)

The Church

If we compare the Portuguese with the Indonesians, the Portuguese didn't come with weapons, but with their Christian missions.

(Villager, Bobonaro)

The Portuguese government had little interest in local customs, except for the cases where they made use of them, and they had no intention to change them. The

²⁴ A phenomenon that often appears after the experience of another power.

intentions of the Church were very different. During Portuguese colonial rule, the Church and its missions were very strong.

An often-heard local perception about the missions in Portuguese times was that the missionaries tried to undermine people's beliefs in their sacred items. Nonetheless, the sacred items are so much part of the social system that they never lost their importance for the locals. Flexibility may have also contributed to their retention because often the actual value of something could be replaced by another item.

Asked about Christianity, a number of informants tried to give us interpretations of similarities between their belief system and Catholicism as they integrated the new religion into their local systems:

The Church forbade the people to believe in trees, *lulik* [sacred items], stones and other items. But with the increasing of the Catholic religion, the beliefs in traditional customs also increased. That was because offerings for God in Church were brought up to the altar. Offerings for the traditional sphere were brought up to mountains or hills or stones. And they always looked above to the stars and sun, so it was nearly the same.

(Elder, Baucau)

It was not until the Indonesians entered the country that the Church could gain a real hold among the population.

Power in Indonesian Times

Short History

In 1974 the Portuguese dictator Marcello Caetano was overthrown and the new left-wing government urged a policy of decolonisation. This meant Portugal would immediately release East Timor into independence. One informant explained:

Governor Alves Almeda called all the *liurais* to go to Dili and told them that from now on, the 25th of April, there is liberty for the Timorese people. The Portuguese governor gave authorization to the Timorese people to decide about the future of their country. He told us to establish political parties to represent us. Then East Timor had five political parties: APODETI, UDT, FRETILIN, Kota and Trabalhista²⁵. These five parties had different political ideologies. That is why a civil war happened in 1975.

(Lia nain, Aileu)

The Indonesian military orchestrated conflict amongst the new parties and in November 1975, East Timor was integrated into the Indonesian nation (Taylor 1980: 46ff.; Schwarz 1994: 194ff.).

The Official Structure

Officially the Indonesian government adjusted the administrative structure of East Timor to the Indonesian system, in line with the rest of their country. East Timor became the 27th province of the Republic of Indonesia and was divided into the categories shown in table 15.

²⁵ APODETI: Timorese Popular Democratic Association. Kota: Klibur Oan Timor Asuwain Party ('Sons of the Mountain Warriors' or Association of Timorese Heroes). Trabalhista: Labour Party.

Table 15: Indonesian Administration Structure

Unit	Indonesian term	Head
District	<i>Kabupaten</i>	<i>Bupati</i>
Subdistrict	<i>Kecamatan</i>	<i>Camat</i>
Village	<i>Desa</i>	<i>Kepala desa</i>
Hamlet	<i>Dusun</i>	<i>Kepala dusun</i>
Neighbourhood	<i>RT (Rukun tetangga)</i>	<i>Kepala RT</i>

Table 16: Comparing Indonesian and Portuguese Administrations with Local Systems

Unit level	Indonesian occupation	Portuguese rule	Traditional power holders
District	Bupati (Kabupaten)	Administrador do conselho	
Subdistrict	Camat (Kecamatan)	Administrador do posto	
Kingdom		Regulo	<i>Reglo/Dom/Liurai</i>
Village	Kepala desa (desa)	Liurai	<i>Liurai/Lia nain/Kuku nain/Adjudante</i>
Hamlet	Kepala dusun (dusun)	Chefe do povoação	<i>Dato</i>
Neighbourhood	Kepala RT (Rukun tetangga)		<i>Chefe do uma kain</i>

The new Indonesian government made changes in the administrative structure for security reasons. The Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI)²⁶ moved people out of the mountains to the lower areas that were more controllable. This happened, for example, in some subdistricts of Baucau where the population was not allowed to stay in the mountains because it was the hiding place of FALINTIL guerrillas. The Indonesians resettled them to the coastal areas.

The administrative structure of different levels was changed. At the subdistrict level the government was composed of the *camat* (subdistrict chief) and assisted by a secretary (*sekwilcam*). Other administrative sections were placed in charge of particular areas: civil administration, personnel, welfare, rural development, finance and the village offices.

Local Powers

The Indonesian administrative differences from the former Portuguese system were at the local level. The important power at the local level, the village chief, was not to be appointed anymore according to his descent, but to be elected democratically by the people. With the underlying traditional power structures, which had survived and been supported in the Portuguese period, and with the attempts by the Indonesian government and military to exert power over the territory against the local resistance, a very interesting evolution developed in the local-level power structures.

Power positions depending on descent were officially abandoned. In some areas, depending on what kind of resistance the Indonesian government faced, the government appointed subdistrict chiefs from other places:

²⁶ ABRI: Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia.

Under the Indonesian rule we didn't have people originally from Aileu in important positions; those positions were mostly held by people from Maubessi and Ermera. The only position Aileu people held was that of the village chief.

(Subdistrict chief)

Sometimes, informal traditional powers were turned into formal power positions again. In Baucau the former *liurai* was appointed, even in agreement with the traditional powers:

This appointment was through the Indonesian government and the group of all *liurais* in Baucau. So his position was agreed upon by all the *liurais*.

(*Liurai* descendant, Baucau)

In 1982 the first five-yearly democratic elections for village chiefs were held. According to our informants, the elections of the village chiefs were prepared by the subdistrict chief in cooperation with people at the village level, the hamlet chief and the traditional elders. They were gathered in two institutions called LKMD and LMD,²⁷ and had to select two or three candidates for the election.

The main criteria mentioned for a candidate's eligibility were that they had to be originally from the village in question and have knowledge about law as well as sound capacities in conflict resolution. Once the candidates had been selected, the ballot was conducted. On the day of the election, for example, the pictures of the candidates were glued to cardboard boxes so people could recognise the candidates and they put their vote into the box of their chosen candidate.

Asked about the process of elections, many interviewees describe it as democratic:

In reality it was a democratic process; all the people from the different hamlets participated in the election and stayed until the end of the counting of ballots.

(Woman, Aileu)

However, democratic appearances decrease if we look into the background of candidate selection. The process of the selection of candidates already presupposed how strong traditional power structures remained. The power holders of the village, who decided still in accordance with the traditional power structure, chose the candidates. It is therefore very likely that descent still played an important role. Their method of selecting candidates was also very traditional. A specific group of people sat together and discussed the matter until a consensus was reached. Different powers then had their influence on the actual outcome of the elections. The Indonesian government and the Armed Forces adjusted the election results to their interests. In some of the politically sensitive areas, the Indonesian government and military are said to have put the village chiefs of their own choice in place. This could be disguised as a democratic election:

But there were not really democratic elections, since Indonesian militaries were exerting pressure on the population to elect the candidate favoured by the Indonesian government.

(*Liurai* descendant, Aileu)

It appears that the Indonesian government recognised, in some cases, the convenience of having a former *liurai* in place, especially if he acted pro-Indonesian.

²⁷ The Indonesian government had formed Village Development Councils:

- LKMD: Lambaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa (Council of the Village People);
- LMD: Lembaga Musyawarah Desa (like the Council of Elders).

It is claimed that the LKMDs were working in a very nepotistic and corrupt manner. Most of the council members were government workers, sometimes coming from other areas and not being local villagers. They are blamed for often having used development money for themselves. The head of the LKMD in the village could make his own decisions because he did not have to report to anybody. The population was not free to complain and there was no transparency.

He still had informal power over the people and often still acted in conflict resolution. So some of them entered governmental positions again.

We also heard of cases in which the Indonesian government used traditional customs to integrate the *liurais* that were only holding informal power. The former *liurais* were invited for governmental activities (*upacara*) and after the activities were given a *merah-putih* flag.²⁸ Nevertheless, most of the informants state that the Indonesians did not honour the *liurais* and village chiefs anymore.

Then there were also the traditional elders who had to sanction an elected candidate because, in their view, the village chief definitely had to come from a certain family:

The *chefe do suco* ... didn't pass elections, but it were the elders from Hohulo and Raimansu who told the Indonesian government that they want this man as their village chief.

(*Chefe do suco*, Aileu)

A significant number of the population in the rural areas, and especially the traditional elders, explained to us the importance of the village chief descending from the House that holds political authority. Therefore in many cases, when nobody interfered, the candidate of the 'appropriate' *uma lulik* was elected and his informal power turned again into formal power. The traditional elders had their influence in the selection of candidates and the people then voted in the democratic elections for the 'right' person. So in the perception of some people the '*liurai*' now became the village chief.²⁹

In the eyes of the Indonesian government, rulers were elected democratically. On the surface it looked as if a change in the power system had happened, but underneath local structures continued to survive. Even in cases where informants claim that the Indonesian system was different and the descent of a leader no longer important, we would often find that the village chief in Indonesian times was still from the 'political' sacred house. In other cases, it seemed that people took the chance to eradicate a disliked ruler who then retained only symbolic power. In these cases, people tell how much they had disliked their *liurai* and how the Indonesian rule was a chance to leave the feudal system.

The elders often excused this change of power by claiming that people voted in that way because they did not have the knowledge of who was the right person to be the village chief. However, the elders were now fearing ancestral sanctions as the 'wrong' person was sitting in the *cadeira manas* ('hot chair'). To avoid misfortune, the *liurai* had to keep his position in ritual functions. In Baucau, the village chief could stem from the House that did not hold the *liurai* title, but before he was appointed he had to go to the *liurai*'s sacred house and ask for permission. The descendants of the *liurai* passed on the rattan stick and appointed him as their representative.

In other examples, the new leader was at least declared to be of 'royal descent.' In a town in Bobonaro District, where the son of a militia leader was put in charge, the elders still found that his wife was from a *liurai*'s descent and was thus legitimate in front of the ancestors.

Many of the village chiefs that came from a different sacred house are said to have not engendered much trust from society. The people did not honour them as they originated 'from a small *uma lulik*,' and this was most especially in relation to the ones that were put in place by the Armed Forces. They needed the official governmental

²⁸ Red-white flag, the national flag of Indonesia.

²⁹ Informant: villager.

power behind them to exert their power. Informants also explain that they were only 'transitional':

The village chief in Indonesian times was from the *uma lulik* Kerileloi. But he was only there transitionally. In 1997 we returned to Baheo. Nowadays the village chief is from Baheo. In 1997 there was a public vote. The people still believe that the village chief has to be of the right descent.

(Village chief, Baucau)

At the hamlet level, the appointments and the background of the hamlet chiefs were even more traditional than in the case of the village chief, since government interference here was not strong. The hamlet chief was not elected democratically. Most often someone from a 'royal' (*dato*) House acted as hamlet chief (*kepala dusun*). He was usually appointed through traditional methods, with the elders (from each *uma kain*), in agreement with the village chief, gathering to discuss the right person for the position. We were often told that if the village chief had wanted to appoint someone from a 'commoner *uma lulik*,' the people would not have agreed.

Informants complain that the Indonesian government did not pay respect to the traditional elders. They were recognised but not respected. The spheres of power crossed when it came to conflict resolution, a task of the elders connected with political authority. Traditionally it had been the elders who had to deal with conflicts. Informants claimed that under the Indonesian rule, the police and the court did not respect their decisions anymore. The really powerful people are said to have been the military, *bupatis*, *camats* and the police. In the perception of the locals, conflicts that were settled by the elders were often taken up again by the Indonesian government and brought to the court, where much manipulation is said to have happened:

The law system of Indonesia was different from the Timorese culture. What we considered as serious, they considered as light and the other way round.

(Hamlet chief, Bobonaro)

Alongside the elders' concern with conflict resolution, ritual authorities still existed. Their conduct of ceremonies is described as being prohibited. If ceremonies were to be conducted, the villagers had to ask officials for permission, who then often requested money or meat:

In Indonesian times we didn't conduct many ceremonies. The *camats* always had to check how much people spend on rituals. The village chief had to give permission for it, and therefore he had to be paid.

(Community member, Bobonaro)

The Resistance Movement

Parallel to the Indonesian governmental system, another system was informally put in place: the clandestine movement for resistance against the Indonesian rule. On 28 November 1975 FRETILIN declared unilaterally the independence of the Democratic Republic of East Timor (RDTL)³⁰ due to the threat of Indonesian occupation that was said to be advancing into East Timor at the request of help from UDT and APODETI. On 7 December Indonesian troops launched a massive attack on Dili, forcing FRETILIN forces to escape to the mountains (Morlanes Ferreras 1991). FRETILIN then started to fight Indonesia through armed guerrilla struggle.

Resistance against Indonesia was organised as a military front, FALINTIL,³¹ a clandestine structure, and a political and diplomatic front. The diplomatic front was

³⁰ República Democrática do Timor Leste.

³¹ Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste.

undertaken by some of the political leaders in the diaspora and over the years of occupation several associations were set up in different countries throughout the world. FALINTIL had two major functions: one was the political organisation of the masses through the clandestine front (*organizaçao das masas politicamente*) and the other was military attacks on Indonesian positions through guerrilla strategies.

During the long period of struggle for independence, FALINTIL members were very respected by the local people and received unconditional support by the clandestine structure because they were volunteers fighting on behalf of all the people of East Timor.

FALINTIL commanders were powerful and respected leaders in their communities. They set up a parallel system of governance, where the personnel were nominated in a clandestine way to support the resistance fight. This network of key elements was composed of the *nureps* (*nucleos representativos*), the leading person at the village level and the *celcom* ('cell of communication') leader at the hamlet level. Their main tasks were to organise the population to support the resistance fighters and to establish an information system for the population.³² Although FALINTIL nominated *nureps* and *celcoms* in the early 1990s, most of them had been actively involved in the resistance movement since the mid-1980s.

The clandestine movement did not follow the same political boundaries as the Portuguese and Indonesian administrations. Some villages were split and some hamlets considered as separate villages to accommodate operational and logistic facilities.

When the CNRT clandestine structure was set up in 1998, the same organisation was used since the majority of CNRT representatives were already involved in the resistance movement.

The designation of the clandestine 'power holders' by FALINTIL at the local level was organised through a consultation process with community members. It took into account the relationship of the potential candidate with the population, his work performance and particularly his trustworthiness. This selection process is well described by a *nurep*:

We had a big meeting with representatives of the seven hamlets and 675 people came to participate. FALINTIL also came to conduct the election of the *nurep*. ... FALINTIL members asked the people who were participating, 'Now please, all of you will chose the best person as candidate for the *chefe do nurep* for your village.' So people chose three persons. ... Afterwards the FALINTIL commander divided the room into three parts and gave a symbol to each candidate and asked people to choose the candidate by raising hands. At the end the person elected was *nurep* and the two others were elected as first and second deputy of the *nurep*.

(Village chief, Aileu)

³² Next to the military part and the clandestine movement, the *Sagrada Familia* ('Sacred Family') was established to support the military wing and to conduct socialisation campaigns in the villages for the independence fight. El Foray Boot, also known as L7, acts as their leader. Their main centre is Laga (Baucau District). In their structure, they have branches in every district with a leader at the district level. Each village has a coordinator for women and one for all the men. The leaders were appointed through FALINTIL, if they had a good background in organising people. The differences from the clandestine movement were the religious and traditional aspects:

We loved all our enemies and tried to avoid to take steps that would harm other people. If we hadn't used the religious way, we only would have had a small number of members. People would have thought that we were a political organisation.

(Village leader of the Sacred Family, Baucau)

The clandestine subdistrict chief *secretário da zona* ('zone secretary') was chosen by FALINTIL commanders. Often the people selected had been involved in FRETILIN since 1975.

In the context of a clandestine resistance fight, we do not speak about official administrative issues and so it seems that traditional, political authorities were not involved. When we asked informants, the backgrounds of the clandestine leaders revealed that people trusted them in their work and deeds. Their capacity as a person was always emphasised. This trust is very different from the belief that a specific person has to hold the political chair so as to avoid sanctions from the ancestors. In this context, people speak about personal trust and individual capacities. In the perception of the people, the clandestine movement was supporting FALINTIL who were 'warriors' and not necessarily people in the traditional position of political authority.

How many of the *nureps* were actually from 'royal' families is another point. In many cases the political positions in the village or hamlet were filled anyway, so at the political level everything was in accordance with traditional requirements. Nevertheless, in some cases the *nurep* was also from a 'political family.' Indeed, after the popular consultation, once the *nureps* had been put in place as village chiefs, *nureps* from the 'wrong' descent were often perceived as being only transitional.

The traditional ritual authorities were very involved in the clandestine movement. In Aileu, the *kuku nains* are said to have provided spiritual support as well as food to the warriors. People active in the resistance movement, both the clandestine structure and the FALINTIL guerrilla fighters, often went to the sacred houses to take part in special ceremonies 'to indicate the right path in their endeavour.'³³ Strength for the fight for independence was thus gained with the support of the ancestors through the ritual authorities as the link. Traditional ceremonies, such as oaths, were held in the mountains to keep soldiers fighting until the end. Some of the guerrilla fighters had sacred and magical powers (*lulik*) to encounter the enemies and their ceremonies gave invisibility to the soldiers to protect them from their enemies.

Practices like the blood oath were also used strategically with the Indonesian Armed Forces:

In 1984, I entered a blood oath with the Indonesian military in Baucau. This was done because the military was too suspicious and killed too many people. I felt sorry and invited the military and the government. The military commanders of Baucau ... came. We killed a goat and drank the blood together. That was conducted so the military would stop killing people. If they had continued to kill people, I myself would have led the people into the mountains. I had also invited the Church for the oath, but the pastor refused because they do not agree with blood oaths.

(Liurai, Baucau)

The Church

During the Indonesian period and the resistance fight, the importance of the Church increased.³⁴ It was less that the Church started to challenge traditional belief systems but more that the Church started to play a very important sociopolitical role. The population was repressed under the Indonesian government and the Armed Forces, and had no power to say things openly. The Church could therefore listen to their concerns and pass them on, thus becoming involved in supporting the fight:

³³ Informant: villager.

³⁴ In 1975 only a third of the population was estimated as Catholics (UN Agencies in East Timor 2000: 21).

We always had close contacts with the political leaders/FRETILIN, as most of them had graduated from our schools. Therefore the people trusted the Church.

(Priest, Baucau)

The Church actively supported and protected FALINTIL fighters, yet on the other hand stayed in a mediation position with the Indonesian government. According to the priests we interviewed, the Church also received empowerment, due to the suppression of traditional ceremonies by the Indonesian government. This brought people to the Church as it replaced something similar in their eyes:

The identification with the *liurai* is still deeply rooted. The Church replaces symbolically some of the traditional powers, therefore people come to us. This happened during the Indonesian period when a leadership was missing.

(Priest, Baucau)

We found that the influence of the Church during Indonesian times was different between the districts. It seemed stronger in centres of the resistance fight. Even in discussions with traditional elders the Christian ideas always played a role and informants tried to overcome the differences between Christianity and their traditional belief systems. In other areas the Church was hardly ever mentioned at the village level.

Perception of the Indonesian Government

Asked about their opinion of Indonesian rule, the villagers delivered positive and negative comments. The positive points mentioned were the opening of many schools, the creation of work for unemployed people, the building-up of infrastructure, shops, markets and other facilities, and the end of forced labour. The negative points were corruption, loss of moral discipline, too many killed and mistreated people, no listening to the villagers and no respect for Timorese customs. Very critical informants pointed out that Timorese people were also part of these foreign systems:

The worst colonisers of Timor are the Timorese people themselves: *liurais*, *datos* and then the pro-autonomy people, integrationists, militias. Then there are the Portuguese and the Indonesians.

(Intellectual, Bobonaro)

Power in the Transitional Period

When the Japanese [World War II] came, everything was normal; in 1975 everything was normal, but now not anymore. There is no more normal. Indonesia wanted to win, we wanted to win. We were afraid they would kill us, we just pretended. I went to the elections. In my heart I wanted *merdeka* [freedom]. I looked for my way.

(Elder, Bobonaro)

Short History

With the resignation of the Indonesian president Soeharto in May 1998, Indonesia entered a new political era of *reformasi* ('reformation'). In January 1999, during this period of change, Soeharto's successor Habibie declared that the people of East Timor would be consulted to decide their future. On 5 May Indonesia, Portugal and the United Nations signed a tripartite agreement on the conditions for a public consultation of the East Timorese people. From the consultation, held on 30 August 1999, a clear outcome favouring the independence of East Timor emerged.

Transitional Powers

The official power in the transitional period, before independence is given to East Timor, is constituted by the United Nations. Shortly after the rampages, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, or UNTAET, was created in October 1999. According to Security Council Resolution 1272 (1999), the Security Council gave the legislative, executive and judicative power to UNTAET. At the same time, a parallel local structure was reestablished as the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT). It recruited mainly through the leaders of the former clandestine and FALINTIL structures.

UNTAET's administrative structure only went as far as the subdistrict level. At lower administrative levels, UNTAET relied on the information exchange with the local levels through the CNRT structure. It took several months after the creation of UNTAET for the population of the rural areas to become aware of UNTAET, as they were only in touch with the CNRT.

UNTAET and CNRT

At the very local level, the understanding of UNTAET's functions was still very limited. After one and a half years of government, the majority of the population has heard about UNTAET but the main ideas about it are that it provides security and gives aid. In the border areas security plays the most important role and many people there are in favour of the PKF (UN Peacekeeping Forces).

Some traditional elders give UNTAET a position in their cosmos:

They are the first children. UNTAET is right as government. They came here, not as leaders, but to fix Timor again, of course we need them. We are brothers. If the younger brother is in difficulties, the elder brother has to come; if the elder brother has difficulties, the younger brother has to come. Last year UNAMET³⁵ came to bring peace, as younger brothers.

(Traditional elder, Bobonaro)

When asked 'who has got the power?', most informants state it is UNTAET and CNRT. For most of the villagers CNRT is the main representative of governmental power, as it is represented down to the village level. UNTAET on the other hand does not reach very far into the local level, and so remains far beyond the daily sphere of the villagers. UNTAET's main link with the local level is through the DFO (District Field Officer), who coordinates governmental matters with the village chiefs. In the universe of the villagers, the village chief is the focal point and the powerful person. UNTAET also empowers the village chiefs, though so far not formally, by inviting them to all the meetings and coordinating all issues with them. Hence, the village chief gains the monopoly on information about government, development and all issues that have to do with life 'outside' of the village life:

The transitional government has only been on for one year now. But there are already results. For example, the people get wood and aluminium for their roofs to build houses again. They also receive money to open a business or to rebuild public facilities that were destroyed, repair roads or school buildings, which were burnt by the TNI³⁶ and militias. All these results are from the hard work of the *nurep*.

(Hamlet chief, Bobonaro)

The DFOs play a crucial role in the perception of UNTAET/ETTA at the local level. They are mostly honoured because of their 'high' position, but in many cases

³⁵ UNAMET (United Nations Mission in East Timor) was established on 11 June 1999 and ended on 25 October 1999.

³⁶ Tentara Nasional Indonesia.

people do not respect them, as they feel that they have no knowledge about local culture and political concepts.³⁷

Subdistrict Chief

Down to the village chief, the power holders are mostly CNRT members, or close to the CNRT. At the level of the subdistrict the power of UNTAET meets the CNRT. The subdistrict chiefs of the transitional period were not elected democratically by the people but appointed by important society leaders, like the CNRT district leaders and others in the clandestine movement.

Even after Indonesian rule had put different kinds of district leaders in place, who were often from other areas, a frequently heard statement at the village level was that 'a leader of people has to be the child of a *raja*.' And in the majority of the cases studied, we found that the subdistrict chief was of a 'royal' descent. When asked, most of them are said to be presently closely connected with the independence fight and the clandestine structure. Many informants claim that their descent was not important anymore, but they had been very active in the clandestine movement.

I am the subdistrict chief. The people have seen the way I work since 1975 with the parties and then for five years in the forest. Then I have an education from Portuguese times and they have seen how I worked in the government and how I cared about the people's ideas. So they appointed me as subdistrict chief.

(Subdistrict chief, Baucau)

Village Chief and Hamlet Chief

At the local level the main powers are without question the village chief, the hamlet chief and the traditional elders. The village chief is a very central figure, as he is the junction point where clandestine powers, traditional political concepts and the modern outside world run together. He is a very crucial point for the relationship between inside and outside, between the local level and the government.

Usually the village chiefs are invited to UNTAET meetings about food, infrastructure and water. They are then supposed to report back to their hamlet leaders. The same process is used for orders from CNRT. All the activities at the hamlet or village level are coordinated with the CNRT, as they come under the CNRT structure. The relationship between the village and the hamlet chief is very close, as the village chief represents the 'exit' to the outside world for the hamlet chief. Everything that comes from the outside goes through him.

The traditional elders and the hamlet chiefs are rather traditional powers that rule at the very local level. The main power or duty of the hamlet chief is in conflict solution, as many of them are from the traditional political powers or at least in close connection with them.

Election and Background

The position of the village chief in Indonesian times was quickly restored after the unrest in September 1999. Shortly after the population started returning to their villages in late 1999, *nureps* were put in place, in accordance with the clandestine structure of 1998. They were appointed by FALINTIL, CNRT and the village elders. There was in most cases an agreement between CNRT and FALINTIL about whom to appoint. In conjunction with this, the village elders gathered to discuss the appointment following a traditional paradigm. Village elders state that the appointment was due to them, akin with CNRT and FALINTIL.

³⁷ In some subdistricts the DFO is called *administrador*, as the subdistrict chief was called in Portuguese times.

I think the selections were not democratic because no elections were performed then. The traditional elders in the village had already agreed to elect the child of the subdistrict chief as the village chief because he is from the *liurai* descent. So there haven't been any elections yet.

(Traditional elder)

From March 2000, a directive of the Frente de Politica Interna (FPI) of CNRT prescribed that the village chief now had to be democratically elected. This had not happened yet in all places at the time the research was conducted. The subdistrict representative was responsible for the campaign and the population was briefed about the process. Candidates were selected through the hamlets. According to our informants, the selection at the hamlet level was conducted by the traditional elders and heads of the Houses. A census of the village population was held to identify the number of voters. Then, for example, three cardboard boxes with the photo of each candidate were displayed and people had to give their vote.

The same procedure is said to have been conducted by the village chiefs for the election of the hamlet chiefs, who were elected in September 2000. Here the election process is perceived as democratic:

The election process in my hamlet was democratic because nobody could be influenced; people came to vote and they felt free to choose the person they wanted to vote for. They all had the same right and there was no intimidation.

(Hamlet chief)

In other areas the actual election was more traditional:

I became hamlet chief through elections, but the election was not a ballot. It happened through a public meeting in the hamlet; the *lia nains* from each *uma kain* chose myself as hamlet chief.

(Hamlet chief, Baucau)

In the traditional system, the elders discuss which person is from the right descent. This is the person they choose and nobody else can occupy the position. Their choice is then offered to other society leaders, who discuss again so a common agreement can be made and everybody accepts the final choice. Traditionally the choice of the elders is not challenged. The system has survived the Portuguese rule and the challenging system of the Indonesians in a great part. Now it seems that for the transitional period the different powers, CNRT, FALINTIL and traditional elders have developed into a conglomerate to appoint the right people for the position of village chief, as can be seen from the criteria that were considered important for the selection of the village or hamlet chiefs:

- being in accordance with their descent;
- activities in the clandestine government;
- former communal activities and possible detainment by TNI;
- capacity as leaders in conflict resolution.

In the selection of the hamlet chiefs not many 'outside powers' seemed to be involved. So most of the hamlet chiefs we found were rather older people who still seemed very traditional. At the hamlet level, life is not too challenged by modernity and remains very traditional. Hamlet chiefs are sometimes school teachers but sometimes uneducated. Their power is strong, as some of the hamlets have to act in great isolation. When informants say that someone was 'elected from the people' there is no contradiction to mention in the same sentence that he is from the appropriate House. This point still seems to be of utmost importance in the choice of hamlet chief:

The head of the hamlet has to go with the history. The House of Kutubu must be the hamlet chief. If the chief dies, he has to be replaced by one of his brothers. Nobody else can become the hamlet chief. Even if there is no male member left, a female can become the hamlet chief.

(Traditional elder)

When we analysed the different cases of village leaderships the following picture was drawn: nowadays, the majority of the village chiefs are still from the 'right' descent, or at least the elders try to find a link to a specific House to justify their position. In these cases it is often mentioned that 'nobody else could become village chief.' The position often had been occupied by the same family since way back in Portuguese times or had been handed over to another 'royal' family.

In the cases where the village chief is not in accordance with the right descent, we found two opposing groups of opinions. The traditional elders and a big part of the village population found several explanations for their 'wrong' leader: he is perceived as 'transitional' only until the right person can be elected again, or the former chiefs worked too closely with the Indonesians and militias, but they still hold 'the meat and the beef' (ceremonial function). So, if for very pragmatic reasons the right family cannot rule anymore, they are at least still given their ritual position.

As for the other group, it rejects the importance of descent and wants to turn to a modern system. The emphasis is rather put on the deeds of a leader in the resistance movement, his personal capacity, or the fact that he is the people's choice:

The hamlet chief actually doesn't fit into this position. But during the clandestine movement he was fighting for the Maubere movement, around 1989. Then the people elected him as *celcom* and then they saw his work and how he coordinated the people and their problems. In his election nobody considered his education, family or *uma lulik*.

(Traditional elder)

Women's Organisations

OPMT (*Organização Popular de Mulheres Timorenses*) was created by FRETILIN in 1975 as a national organisation with antennas in the districts. Its purpose was to bring all the women together and raise political awareness of independence.

In 1985 the clandestine structure, through the FPI, created OMT (*Organização de Mulheres Timorenses*) to organise women and to prepare them to work in the resistance movement and provide support to FALINTIL fighters. It was during a convention in 1998 that CNRT officially established OMT at the district level. The subdistrict antennas were created after the 30 August 1999 ballot. Few instructions were received during the National Congress of Timorese Women that was held in June 2000.

In some districts, soon after the beginning of the transitional period, there was a well-established OMT structure put in place. In other areas, even over a year later, OMT is still not organised but OPMT still exists. Right now OMT is no longer part of the CNRT structure. OMT representatives see the need to reflect on a new role and status for their organisation and to modify the structure in order to respond to the present and future political needs of East Timorese women.

Formerly, FALINTIL chose the OMT representatives, according to their capacity in organising people and their activities in the fight for independence. After the popular consultation, OMT representatives were either appointed by CNRT leaders or democratically elected. The elections were chaired by the *nurep*; hamlet chief and voters could be both men and women. It is said that 'everybody coming to the election has to agree.'³⁸ It seems that here, there was a more traditional system of decision-making put in place, despite the choice of candidates having no connection with a traditional power system:

³⁸ Informant: villager.

I was elected out of two reasons. First of all I have a background in nursing. The second reason, in the times of the independence fight, I was a brave woman that went to the FALINTIL places to treat the guerrilla fighters that were injured.

(OMT representative, Baucau)

Those elected were representatives for the district, subdistrict, village and hamlet levels (see table 17).

Table 17: OMT Organisation

District level	Village level
1. Secretary OMT	1. Chief
2. Vice-secretaries I and II	2. Deputy
3. Assistants (4 people)	3. Finance
4. Sectors (9 people)	4. Members (all females of the hamlet)

The decision-making process within OMT is said to be democratic. They ‘take decisions together and not individually.’³⁹ The leader has no power to make sole decisions except for very important, urgent issues.

Our observations show that the way activities were being conducted at the different levels is very hierarchical. The district-level OMT gives tasks to the lower levels and the OMT in the hamlets must wait for orders from the village level. Some of the comments made by the OMT representatives at the village and hamlet levels also show their state of expectation. In the traditional system as well as in the Indonesian system, people were less challenged to create their own initiatives. They rather expect someone to give orders. The hamlet OMTs are waiting for someone from the village OMT to ‘come down’ and give them orders. The village OMT waits for the OMT from the subdistrict level, and so on. Without a higher authority nothing happens. A hamlet-OMT representative will not often bypass the village and subdistrict OMTs and hand in project proposals to UNTAET or NGOs. Things always have to go the proper way.

Now that support to independence fighters is no longer necessary, OMT representatives see their tasks in all kinds of village functions, ceremonies and church activities where they are responsible for preparing food and drinks. They are also involved in weaving, sewing and dancing. They take care of the school children’s feeding and in Maliana are planting rice fields and gardens as cooperatives.

The OMT in Bobonaro District is very strong and this strength seems to stem from specific personalities. Most activities concentrate on the district level. In Aileu the organisation is quite strong and active in several projects. In Baucau OMT seems to be barely organised. Although a district antenna exists and some projects have received support from CNRT to create a cooperative and a sewing workshop, there is not much coordination and liaising with the subdistrict level, and the training courses are focused in Baucau town.

In some areas, where there is a close working relationship with CNRT and with UNTAET, OMTs receive orders from the village and hamlet chiefs and are a part of the administrative structure. In many districts, OMT representatives join the District Advisory Council. They also work together with the OJT.

³⁹ Informant: OMT.



Traditional elders participating in the ceremony marking the end of FALINTIL, with the CNRT flag in the background, 1 February 2001 in Aileu.

Organização Juventude Timorese (OJT)

OJT was formed during Indonesian times in 1983 by the clandestine movement. The strengths of Timorese youth were channelled to support the guerrilla force. After the popular consultation in 1999 it was reestablished on orders from CNRT.

In the clandestine period FALINTIL leaders appointed OJT representatives. The new OJT leader is selected in different ways:

- appointed by FALINTIL (as in the clandestine times);
- chosen by the young people in the hamlet, village or subdistrict, in discussion;
- via democratic elections with UNTAET and CNRT as witnesses (conducted by the whole society, elders, FALINTIL and youth);
- elected by hamlet chief, village chief and youths (no democratic election);
- appointed by village chief.

It is often stated that the appointment of OJT youths has nothing to do with their education or descent. The main criterion was the candidate's ambitions to fight for independence. It was significant if a candidate had experience and was active in the clandestine movement, and some of the OJT representatives are ex-FALINTIL. They spent the first couple of months after the consultation in Aileu, in the FALINTIL cantonment, and have since returned to their villages. Here they were appointed as OJT leaders and given the opportunity to lead a hamlet. They are said to have the trust of the people, since 'the young people elect someone ... they think ... is capable of the task.'⁴⁰

Nearly all of the OJT leaders refer their position back to their activities in the clandestine movement or FALINTIL involvement. Like OMT, OJT leaders are present at the district, subdistrict, village and hamlet levels. Each young male of the village is a member of OJT. Here the structure consists of a leader, a deputy and a secretary.

During the clandestine times, OJT's main tasks were to support FALINTIL with food or to give them shelter. When the militia violence started they organised the evacuation of people into the forests. In some areas, new tasks for the OJT were not clearly defined yet. Representatives claim that they are still waiting for orders from CNRT. Some say they are coordinated but do not really have a function yet. The main perception nowadays is that they are to help rebuild the country. In the border areas, security is one of their main objectives, but the connection between them and local security organisations is not clear due to continual change. They also organise the manpower for all kinds of village activities, such as working groups for farming in the rice fields and in the common gardens, cleaning the environment, and church activities (preparing ceremonies), and they help in conflict resolution.

Some OJT groups seem better organised and more active than others. They have handed in project proposals to UNTAET to buy tractors and plant rice fields in a joint effort of work with NGOs. Some representatives claim that they do not receive enough attention from CNRT. They suggest activities, like art and sports, but their proposals are not considered. They themselves have no money to conduct activities and no transportation. The relationship with the hamlet and village chiefs seems to be fairly good and their organisation is integrated into the organigramme at the hamlet and village levels. They receive tasks from the hamlet and village chiefs. They also work with OMT and the Church for common activities. Activities are usually checked with the traditional elders as well.

⁴⁰ Informant: OJT.

When the research team conducted its field research, OJT was still in a stage of reorienting itself. Some would still relate back to the times of the clandestine movement and legitimise their organisation through the need for clandestine aid. Thus security seemed a good replacement task, especially in the border districts.

Traditional Elders

The elders that are in charge of ritual authority are still responsible for establishing contact with ancestral powers and to appoint power holders at the local level. As the sphere of village life is widening and traditional elders are the ones that feel responsible for the appointment of political powers, they have thoughts about the presidency of their new nation. In a meeting with the elders in one of Bobonaro's subdistricts, we were informed that the decision regarding the president of this country must come from the traditional elders who speak to the ancestors and to the people and thus can decide on someone who can lead society. They have to find a political representative and according to them Xanana Gusmao will be a good political leader, as he is of 'royal' descent.

The elders do not appear much in the political and civil society context that the government and the NGOs are dealing with. The only elders involved with the outside powers are the ones dealing with conflict resolution. Depending on the areas, their power in conflict resolution is still very strong and they are still respected by the villagers. In conflict resolution the elders have a close working relationship with the hamlet or village chiefs.

We hope that conflict resolution will be returned to the traditional elders again. They should have a position where they are honoured and where they can finish problems before they are brought to the police and to the court.

(Traditional elder, Bobonaro)

In other areas, the younger generation is starting to challenge traditional systems. Here, the elders are less respected in their attempts to 'interfere' in local conflicts. But mostly it is said that all the elders are trusted very much by their people. They receive the reports about problems (fights, thefts, etc.) which they are expected to solve. Only criminal cases are taken to the police.

To be able to conduct conflict resolution, or to advise political figures on the ancestral links with political issues, Councils of Elders were formed. They have existed in the past at different levels. CNRT suggested establishing them formally again in the governmental organigramme as a legislative power known as *Conselhos dos Katuas*. Now in the transitional period the following picture can be drawn:

- In parts of Baucau, the subdistrict chiefs have set up a Council of Elders at the subdistrict level. The council leader represents the 'opinion of the people' to the political leaders and there is a close working relationship when it comes to conflict resolution. In Baguia, we heard of a Justice Commission put in place by FALINTIL that is led by a Council of Elders. In Laga and Quelicai the *Conselho dos Katuas* is composed of *lia nains*, *bararins*, *liurai* descendants and other people democratically elected at the village level by the House chiefs and village chiefs.
- In Bobonaro there exist informal councils of traditional elders up to the subdistrict level. They are mostly working at the hamlet or village level and only in a few cases at the subdistrict level. The members of the hamlet and village councils are sometimes fixed people. In other cases, the elders, representing a House in a specific case, sit on the council. In Kailako we found a council with leaders from different 'big' *uma luliks*. In other places at the village level, the council members represent the hamlets. In Lolotoe, there is a proper Council of Elders within the former kingdom of Lolotoe that comes together whenever they are needed. Amongst them they have a hierarchical relationship, according to the hierarchy of their Houses.

- In Aileu each sacred house has several *lia nains* for conflict resolution. They belong to the same clan and try to solve problems. They also act as a conflict-resolution body and intervene when requested by the village or hamlet chief. A *Conselho dos Katuas* has been established at each level of the administrative structure and serves as a legislative body. Its major task, next to conflict resolution, is to advise the subdistrict chiefs and so *lia nains* represent moral authority at the subdistrict level.

For conflict resolution or the coordination of ceremonies, the elders have a close relationship with the village and hamlet chiefs. With UNTAET there is nearly no contact at all. We were sometimes surprised at how well our research team was perceived by the elders. They felt 'honoured' that finally representatives of UNTAET, or the 'outside world,' had come to ask them about their customs. In their view, it is important that government issues are legitimised by the ancestors:

It has to be in accordance with our ancestral times; at these times not everybody governed, but we would all listen to each other.

(Traditional elder)

The Church

East Timor is considered to be a Catholic nation. At the national level the Church appears very powerful, as it has played an important role in the resistance movement. UNTAET views the Church as a separate power and often invites the priests as representatives of the 'civil society' to their meetings. In Baucau, the Church has a strong influence in the transitional period:

The Church is rebuilding Baucau, UNTAET hasn't done much. The Church is faster. We are not mixing with politics.

(Priest, Baucau)

At the local level, the Church seems to be still respected and honoured as a powerful institution. In local political concepts the Church is never mentioned. In the clandestine system, the Church as an institution gave a structure for the resistance movement to conduct its meetings and tasks. Therefore the Church was very powerful at the local level. But nowadays even some of the priests perceive that this power has declined with the end of the fight. The Church united the people then: they were the only power that could resist the Indonesians and this was why the people came to the Church. Today, the situation for the Church becomes problematic, as there is no more external force to rally the people. People now attend by their own choice and there is no more pressure.

Local power and the influence of the Church also depend very much on the priests. Some of them have been in the areas for a long time and have made a real effort to understand local systems. Other priests seem to have a very minor knowledge of them. In some subdistricts, the priest is called to attend conflict-mediation meetings. In these cases he represents a respected person to witness the process or to make suggestions, but never decisions, regarding a solution.

The Church has less influence in relation to local belief systems and the power of ritual authorities at the local level. Rarely do people see a contradiction between the Church and their local system.

Traditional versus Modern Concepts

Traditional versus Modern Leadership

As becomes clear in the above-described historical development of local political powers, traditional power concepts are still very strong in East Timor and have survived two periods of foreign influence. Yet the continuation of traditional power systems does not mean that the legitimate leaders are liked very much. People with higher education, or people in urban areas, have started to openly criticise them. They advocate a modern system of democracy, in which leaders should be elected in accordance with their capacities. In opposition to this, the majority of the population continues to adhere to the traditional power system. According to this paradigm, if the 'right' leader is put out of place, ancestral sanctions will bring misfortune to the whole community. In many cases we heard that nobody else but the right leader dares to occupy the position 'because people who have done this before died very quickly.'⁴¹

The other candidates didn't want to take the chair. They said that there has been an oath once and this position is not meant to be theirs. I have a nephew that was *sekretaris*, he got crazy because he didn't belong there, he sat on a *cadeira manas* ['hot chair'].

(Village chief, Baucau)

These traditional political concepts form a system in which a traditional society can work without a proper state body. Similar features can be found worldwide in traditional societies. Traditional social systems have a mechanism to prevent themselves from collapsing as there is no formal constitution. The ancestors are the secure link with the past. They are the ones that have established the system and if their descendants disregard it they have to fear ancestral punishment. The traditional system was the most suitable in the stateless environment to guarantee social stability. It is the paradigm in which the majority of East Timorese people have grown up; for them it is the way things have always been. Therefore, we were not surprised to observe that in most places the power holder is still selected in accordance with the traditional social structure. Even in places where informants stated that 'the old system is over, everybody can become village chief' and they have conducted democratic elections, the chiefs of the ruling families are still in place. If this is not the case, the former *liurai* would often still hold an informal power, still speak and be listened to by the people.

Apart from the findings from our observations, people have their own thoughts and perceptions of their rulers. They openly explain their opinions. We found different mainstreams of thoughts amongst the various groups of informants:

There are people at the village level that would like to keep these powers. Like my village in Quelicai. The people there are split in two groups. The first group thinks that the village chief has to be from the descent of the *liurai*. These are old and young people of the village. The second group wants the village chief to be elected by the people. These are mainly people that live in other villages and that live in the city. Because of that there is no real village chief so far that heads the people here.

(Villager, Quelicai)

Traditional Leadership

The conservative view wants to see people of the 'right' descent in place because they are the ones that have the power, legitimised by the ancestors. These leaders are connected with the sacred *lulik* power. There is still immense trust or fear of the sacred

⁴¹ Informant: villager.

power. Someone that comes from the 'right' descent is thought to naturally own abilities as a good leader, with the support of the sacred.

Very conservative voices think that the elders now have to meet again and put all the *liurais* back in place. First the elders have to sit together and make their choice, then they can make requests to the subdistrict government and to the district.

The people that are still very much in favour of the traditional system are the ones that have little knowledge about the state system (which is the case for the majority of the country's population), that are traditional elders or that derive from a royal descent. Amongst them is a partition:

- the ones that want to reestablish the old *liurai* system with all consequences;
- the ones that want a new system but still based on traditional social structures;
- the ones that talk about a new system and do not realise that, at the same time, they are still promoting an old structure.

Modern Leadership

More educated people, people in rather urban environments, people that have no legitimate ancestral power and people in areas where there have been very strict and disliked *liurais*, often see the issue in a very 'modern' way. They want to leave the 'feudal' system, where people lead society only because of their origins. According to these groups, everybody should have the possibility to enter a position in accordance with their abilities.

They also do not want to see the traditional system reestablished because of their bad experiences in Portuguese times:

Although I am the *liurai*, I think in the future the position of the village and the subdistrict chief should be taken by people with education, because the world has already become modern. The power system of the *liurai* doesn't need to be used anymore because it doesn't go with the time of development that we have now.

(*Liurai*, Bobonaro)

For most of these informants, the *liurai* or *dato* only has symbolical power left. In ceremonies such as the building of a new House, they still receive a specific part of the meat and society still conforms to their fixed role in the social structure. According to the modernists, their family names are still important and still many people believe in them – but they have no real power.

In some areas of Baucau, we found a system to choose a well-liked leader that at the same time kept the traditional powers as a symbolically acknowledged power to secure society from ancestral sanctions. The new ruler, if he were not from the right sacred house, would undergo a ceremony in which he goes to the formal *liurai* and asks him for permission to rule on behalf of him. Then the rattan stick, which is in the *uma lulik*, can be given a long age and strength to lead.

The paradigmatic differences between traditional power concepts and modern ideas are massive and the low level of education amongst the rural population ensures that traditional power concepts remain very strong. Even voices that sound modern are often supportive of traditional ideas, though not deliberately. Or, as the Baucau example shows, a modern system is accepted but there are still concessions made to avoid ancestral sanctions.

Many indicators support a new two-fold system:

- *level of power*: local-level powers are still descent-dependent, regardless of whether national politicians are elected within a democratic paradigm;

- *context of power*: the traditional divisions of political and ritual authorities remained intact under the Portuguese and Indonesian influence. Nowadays, structurally, the opposed values stay the same but on the applied level develop as is shown on table 18.

Table 18: Applied Levels of Power

	Local level		Higher level (kingdom, subdistrict, etc.)		
	Ritual authority	Political authority	Ritual authority	Political authority, informal	Political authority, formal
Traditional system	<i>Kuku nains, beis, etc.</i>	<i>Lian nains</i>	<i>Kuku nains, beis, etc.</i>	<i>Liurai, dato</i>	
Portuguese system				<i>Liurai, dato, now renamed regulo and chefe do suco</i>	<i>Liurai, regulo and dato</i> are integrated into the governmental work
Indonesian system				Some <i>liurais</i> and <i>datos</i> become informal powers	Some <i>liurais</i> and <i>datos</i> become formal powers (subdistrict or village chiefs)
Transitional period			<i>Kuku nains</i>	Informal political powers that stay in symbolic positions, <i>liurais</i> that receive guests and take their seats in ceremonies or help in conflict resolution	Political powers (<i>datos</i> or <i>liurais</i>) that are integrated into the government and have formal power. They start being joined by people not of royal descent

Traditional Powers – Clandestine Powers

Looking at the *nurep* and village-chief appointments in the transitional period, it can be seen that in many cases the traditional elders are still involved in the process even though most of them were said to be appointed by FALINTIL and CNRT, in accordance with their achievements in the clandestine fight. The CNRT appoints village leaders but the traditional elders also have to approve them. Therefore, it is likely that the *nureps* had a clandestine background as well as stemming from the right family. People would state that someone has done good work in the clandestine movement, but not mention that he is also from the ‘right’ House to hold power.

The traditional and clandestine systems cannot be perceived as two opposing power systems. The same counts for the FALINTIL guerrillas. They are sometimes extremely honoured by the people for their activities, but if they are not from the ‘right’ descent, they are said to only be honoured as warriors and should never become politicians. This is different with FALINTIL figures that descended from a ‘royal’ family. They are now strongly expected by the people to take over a political role.

Traditional Concepts – The Church

Though the Church gained a powerful position through the history of the country, at the local level it did not interfere much with political authorities. Politics and religion go side by side and the Church sometimes even supports the local authorities in conflict resolution. Another picture can be seen where the Church meets the ritual authorities:

We pray to the rising sun seven times and to the setting sun five times, in accordance with what our ancestors did. Seven times they thank God for giving life. That goes with the doctrine of the Catholics with seven sacraments and five orders of the Church.

(Traditional elder, Baucau)

In many interviews, traditional elders tried to interpret Christianity in a way that fits within their own belief system. From the perception of the majority of locals, Christianity does not form a contradiction with their local systems. The only struggle arises when the Church forbids central aspects of the local social and power structure, such as in the marriage system. As marriage is such an important part of maintaining peace and creating the local social structure, here the Church and the local systems clash most.

One of the main functions of marriage is the creation of fertility by passing on the woman to the Wife Taker and by exchanging marriage goods. So if there is only a wedding ceremony conducted at church, but not a traditional marriage, the life of the whole community is thought to be threatened:

If there were only religion, there wouldn't be many of us. Going to church, marrying, drinking and eating, already finished. There is nothing. When we have our customs, we have cattle, a lot of things. All the exchanged goods, the *osamian* [golden discs].

(Villager, Baucau)

The exchange of goods in the marriage plays such an important role in creating fertility and establishing a wide social system, 'to get tied into two sides to form a new neighbourhood.'⁴² The only concern locals have about the exchange of goods is that the system does not promote economic development:

The price should go down because now people are rather poor after 25 years of war [supporting the war] and also because of the aftermaths of the ballot.

(Village chief in Indonesian times, Baucau)

Still, for the local systems it is the very basis of their social structure and is still practiced in all the rural areas of East Timor. Some families in urban settings do not ask for the exchange of goods anymore, but the agreement between the families to the marriage is still always required. The same counts for the system to marry one's mother's brother's daughter. Most informants state that this is not practiced anymore, but by investigating their family relationships we would often find confirmation for the continuation of the system.

Another concern of the Church is polygamy. Yet, despite the effort of the Church, these practices are still ongoing. A well-known *liurai* and administrator from the Indonesian times told us:

We shouldn't be monogamous. The kings were very rich, who should receive all his goods if there is only one wife? There is a reason why he had many wives. If they are monogamous, they still fight, maybe because their dollar isn't enough. All the wives are like siblings, they have economic freedom and they get treated fairly. Love is only with the first one.'

(*Liurai*, Baucau)

The practice seems to have remained very much alive. According to an UNTAET registration officer, she faced the problem of receiving information about polygamy every day. The person to register is asked to choose only one wife to be recorded in the file system, because the registration system only accepts one wife. Usually one wife is married through the Catholic Church, the others are married through the traditional system. In more urban settings, a couple marries traditionally and some years later they conduct a church wedding as well. This illustrates the fact that people can integrate both their belief systems without causing major problems. Traditional

⁴² Informant: villager.

marriage is still ongoing and can be found all over East Timor, even in urban environments:

The Catholic religion had no influence on the local customs. Most of the people stay with the customs. Only some have turned towards religion. The thoughts of traditional customs and religion have to walk together.

(Villager, Baucau)

How the Church and local customs go together seems to depend largely on the local priest. Sometimes Christian and traditional ceremonies are practised together, while other priests forbid the locals to go to their sacred places and try to tell them their ancestors are evil spirits.

In our observations, for most of the villagers the priests seem to be very respected people. They are given an honoured, high position in society according to the sacred issues they are dealing with. In fact, a lot of activities are conducted together with the Church. Nonetheless, in relation to content, the thoughts of Christianity do not play a major role in the life of the village. Information about the Christian belief system is respected, as it seems to have to do with *lulik*, but it is integrated into the local belief system. All the different Christian stories are listened to and interpreted in such a way that they confirm the local systems rather than contradict them. Christianity is respected but is seen as something 'younger'; the 'old' and therefore more important aspect is the local belief system. The ritual authorities pay the Church respect and go to the masses, but within their Houses and areas they know well that the traditional system is the 'true and old' way of their ancestors. 'God baptised us straightaway but the traditional system goes first. Traditional system, Church, then the government.'⁴³

At the local level, the Church does not even form a contradictory system and locals do not perceive that they have to choose between two differing systems. There is only one system and new thoughts, like the Christian ones, are integrated into the indigenous system.

Here we find a very typical phenomenon, that scholars have written about in the last century and declared to be a typical core structure of the societies of the area: their way of integrating new elements into the local systems (Josselin de Jong 1982). This happens with Christianity at the local level in East Timor.

The priests and intellectuals in most cases perceive this issue differently. Here, the view of the national system of the Church is as a very powerful force, although not in the sense of religious influence at the local level:

... because in the eyes of the people the Church has credibility and influence. The Church has also proved itself in the fight. The Church always paid attention to the suffering of the poor. Another thing that should never be forgotten by the Timorese is that when Bishop Belo received the Nobel Prize, in a political sense it was a point of winning for the fight of freedom.

(Intellectual, Bobonaro)

Civil Society Organisations

Like the Church, that has lost one of its main roles as a supporter of the resistance movement, many civil society organisations are now without objectives. OMT and OJT were created to support the fight, which required heavy involvement and competent organisational skills. Now, in the transitional period, in most areas they

⁴³ Informant: villager.

are reestablished and are structurally functioning. In some areas they have found new tasks but in others seem to be disoriented.

As a lot of the youth now have nothing to do, development programmes should target those that were formerly involved in the clandestine fight much more. There are a lot of fights among youth in the villages and towns throughout East Timor. Few regard them as a vulnerable group and so they are not sufficiently integrated into development projects. Yet the youth have the manpower to achieve a lot and would be good recipients for income-generating projects. They could be used for many of the communal projects as a way to rebuild the system of communal labour.⁴⁴

In Indonesian times, women were given the possibility of taking part in the government but only in a limited fashion. At the local level there were also women's organisations established in this period. However, they only acted within their typical role model framework. The first important roles that women performed were in the clandestine movement. FALINTIL appointed two women per village for the female organisation. Their main task was to organise the women in the village for the support of FALINTIL fighters in their attempts to hide and with the provision of food. When FALINTIL had meetings in the forest, women always came to take care of the food. They, and their families, were always ready to give shelter and aid to the FALINTIL members who were sick or wounded. Although female organisation was there during the independence fight, they never had much influence on the decision-making processes. Decisions were only made by the men, especially in relation to strategic and war matters.

An often-heard complaint from the female side is that in the clandestine time the women of the villages were given the possibility to help in the fight but now that the situation is different again, they are expected to go back to the kitchen and to their family issues:

The men of Timor need the help of the women only in conflicts. If everything is quiet they just need a wife and kids to stay in the house.

(OMT representative, Bobonaro)

Now under the transitional government, women at the local level still do not take part in governmental decisions, or in a large part of the meetings. They are also still weak in the CNRT.

The majority of urban informants have heard about the request for gender equality. However, they also believe that men are the exclusive contributors in meetings, even when women are present. Most of the intellectuals interviewed think that the involvement of women in the government is very important. The fact that the administrator of Aileu is a woman seems to impress many people. They think that women have started the war in the government sectors and while things will not happen very quickly, the important thing is that they have started.

Most women in rural areas are not even aware of their inferior position.⁴⁵ That is why most of our informants at the village level would say that women are already very

⁴⁴ Which was destroyed through projects like 'Food for Work' run by WFP (UN World Food Programme). This is a criticism which we heard very often from the village chiefs.

⁴⁵ It is difficult to assess the amount of physical violence conducted against women, but it is certainly very present. The usual way to reconcile violent action is through the *lia nain* at the village level. A goat is killed and its blood used to conduct a ceremony in the man's *uma lulik* with the participation of the extended families of both sides. The man and the woman have to drink the blood, promising that the problem is not going to happen again. Then it is said that the aggressor fears ancestral sanctions if he commits the deed again.

active and equal to men (within their traditional roles). Further, it seems that for many rural women the idea of having to leave their roles is a rather frightening concept.

The main contradiction and difficulty for gender balance and female leadership is said to be in traditional values. The more conservative informants think that gender equality has to happen in accordance with the traditional conditions, otherwise balance will disappear. It is a very new concept for women to force themselves into sharing power with the men.

The more modern view from informants is that the traditional system has always put women in a marginal role. Now women have to fight for their rights with rational arguments so as to challenge the traditional system of gender. Some informants want to see a combination of traditional values and new conditions:

Our traditions tell them [the women] to stay in the kitchen, as it is at the moment. Women now have to overtake part of the development, but they also still have to take care of the house. If we stay with the conservative values we cannot develop. The same the other way round, if we suspend the traditional values we will lose our identity.

(Intellectual, Bobonaro)

Female informants have suggested the following:

- we need more education first to fulfil these positions;
- we hope that the gender balance will be recognised strongly in our law;
- we have to be empowered in the development of village life.

Our main principle is to be independent from our husbands; we want to be dependent on what we earned with our own sweat.

(Female villager, Baucau)

Democracy

Confusion in relation to power structures is created by the introduction of the term 'democracy.' By now everybody has heard this expression, even in the very rural areas of East Timor. The local perception of what democracy is varies, in a wide range of interpretations, depending on a person's education and on the challenge of integrating something new into local concepts.

When speaking to younger informants it is often mentioned that traditional values should be modified but not disappear. They are seen as the identity of the Timorese people. None has ever suggested that they should neglect all traditional values and become modern; they always seek a combination. This sounds very reasonable and sensitive. The question of how this combination between traditional and modern values should look like specifically is a very difficult one. Yet we have hardly received any detailed strategies as to the way to combine these different concepts of political legitimacy.

A *liurai* who has worked for many years with the Indonesian government told us how he perceives himself in a double role:

At home we wear the *cawat* [traditional clothing], outside we wear the tie. Our culture is our identity. We have to study our culture and we have to pay attention to it. In our hearts there are still traditional customs. If we want democracy, everybody has to be educated. They have to go to school. But later they still will remember traditions. Traditional systems and democracy cannot destroy each other. They have to go on one road. Their objective is the same: the happiness of the people. They have two ways, but their ideas are the same. Only if they start to play power it is wrong. That they cannot do. The traditions are always there, but if they start playing power, we do not want democracy.

(*Liurai*, Baucau)

Multi-Party Systems

The interesting question at this time is, how far can a democratic system be introduced to societies that are hierarchically ordered and that strongly reject the notion of opposition in their system?

How problematic this is can be seen in the present establishment of a multi-party system. The local paradigm is now challenged to integrate the idea of an opposition. As this new notion is very strange to the local system, it is ordered into a category where it seems to fit best: the idea of an enemy and a violent relationship. Therefore violent actions against members of other parties can be explained by local systems.

Many informants who desire democracy react with rejection when we mention the multi-party system that comes with a western-based democracy. Asking about multi-party systems, the answers we continuously faced were:

- the humanitarian situation is still too bad for people to start thinking about politics;
- people are still in trauma about the war in 1975. This was the first time they experienced 'multi-party,' so now they do not want to hear about it;
- 'we all have to walk one way' and there can only be 'one party' to create unity in the state.

The people of Timor have still too many needs, we do not need to establish political parties yet. People are still hungry and do not have houses. The people of Bobonaro are not going to receive political parties.

(Village chief, Bobonaro)

I do not mind a multi-party system. But with the parties we have so far, it is better they would all disappear. Better we go back to the *raja*. What is that at the moment?

(Hamlet chief, Baucau)

These points show that there is so far a lack of understanding of a multi-party system. The context in which parties appeared first in the eyes of the people was after the Portuguese released the country into independence. This period is closely connected with the experience of civil war that broke out shortly after.⁴⁶

The argument about people still being hungry and not having shelter points to similar conclusions of a lack of knowledge about party systems and that politics at the national level is too far beyond people's sphere of daily action. Already, shortly after the consultation, when people started returning to their villages, local political issues seemed to be very important. Within the first months of the transition period, there were already land conflicts appearing on the surface that had been quiet for the years of the Indonesian occupation. Fights about forming new villages and administrative boundaries go on in a very urgent fashion. The population does not connect these problems with political parties. There is no understanding that parties could be channels for exactly these problems and could prevent the problems from turning into violence.

Another point concerns 'unity.' During the independence fight unity was one of the most important notions; even more so because before then there was no common East Timorese identity. 'Multi-party' has to become a symbol for democracy and not for animosity.

Hierarchy versus Equality

The main difference, if we compare certain features of the traditional paradigm with Western democracy, is *hierarchy versus equality*.

⁴⁶ In Baucau we even heard that people are afraid to be registered, because they are scared of elections.

Traditionally, the idea of hierarchy is a core element in the local social structure. People identify people through their descent, their Houses. These Houses are hierarchically ordered. The highest Houses are seen as 'royal.' Here the idea of precedence is important. Whoever was first on the ground is the 'Lord of the Land' and therefore politically and ritually more important than others. Leaders can only come from certain Houses, or the people do not trust their rule, as they are not connected to the ancestor's legitimacy. Apart from this, values are exchanged between the social groups, for example in marriage, which defines a very sophisticated system of social ranking.

Individualism

The traditional system is opposed to a Western-based democracy where every individual has an equal value: *individualism*. There is no relationship between the party system and the traditional system of families. Thus, the idea of parties is very new and closely connected to individualism:

Two or three parties will be enough to elect the parliament since people will make their selection based on individuals, not on political parties.

(OMT leader, Baucau)

Decision-making Concepts

The traditional decision-making process is very much characterised by the notion of discussion and agreement by everybody. All the power holders sit together and speak (sometimes for days) about a topic. At the end when they split, everybody has to agree to the decision made and to be content with it. In this way nobody 'loses face.' The powerless people accept the result and do not question it. The democratic concept is based on the idea of an opposition. One part has to be the loser, which comes very close to the concept of an enemy.

State Identity

The idea of a state and state bodies is not inherent in the traditional systems. There is low trust towards leaders that are not connected with sacred items and ancestral legitimacy. That is why elders try to connect leaders like Xanana to their royal descent to justify their position. Next to this there is no state identity. In Portuguese times the country was not unified, with all its separate kingdoms. There were agreements between different kingdoms, but no common identity of all kingdoms. In Indonesian times, there was the attempt to integrate the Timorese into a unified Indonesian state. The resistance movement promoted the first creation of an East Timorese identity.

There was no common identity, because of bad roads and the lack of communication. Therefore, people didn't know each other and couldn't have a common identity. No understanding of identity was taught in the formal education. Also through the different languages there couldn't be an understanding. So we had to intermarry our children. We also established an identity through the independence fight. We had the same enemy.

(Intellectual, Bobonaro)

Where Do We Go from Here?

Most of the above mentioned paradigmatic differences cannot be changed in a short period. If we are to promote democracy, what is important is that there is awareness at the national and international levels that these differences exist.

To promote an approach between the two paradigms, education and information are of absolute necessity. Civic education in the short term and school education in the long term are crucial starting points. Power holders should also be one of the main targets for education, and this education should use traditional paradigms as a starting point to explain differences.

The process will take a long time, a fact which education and information campaigns should be aware of. Out of this long process a society can develop in which traditional values are maintained as identity but where democratic values are also appreciated. 'We can have a written system and an unwritten system (*lisan*).'

This is the difference from Western democracy. This system is very strong and it couldn't be destroyed under the Indonesian system. The modern system has to be introduced and raised. Then the two systems will mix and the local paradigm can be challenged.

(*Liurai*, Baucau)

4

Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project (CEP)

The second and third chapters of this report address traditional power structures and their functioning at the local levels before and during the colonial and other external administrations. This part presents the major findings of the anthropological research team concerning CEP, and its attempt to establish foundations for a local governance structure during the United Nations Administration of East Timor.⁴⁷

The CEP has been criticized by some international stakeholders in East Timor as a parallel structure undermining traditional powers, as traditional leaders were not eligible to be part of the CEP Village Development Councils. The principal aim of the research was therefore to look at the interaction between local power structures and the operating of the councils set up by CEP and to provide recommendations to CEP policy makers and implementers that would improve the social impact and the functioning of the programme at local levels.

The research was carried out between October 2000 and March 2001 in three districts: Aileu, Baucau and Bobonaro. Although it does not necessarily represent the situation of the programme in the whole of East Timor, it is believed that many of the findings could be shared by other districts. Different actors at the district, subdistrict, village and hamlet levels were consulted about the programme. Those included representatives of government structures at all levels, *Conselho dos Katuas* (Council of Elders), OMT, OJT, Catholic groups and other existing civil society organisations; CEP staff members as well as council members and ordinary people at the hamlet level were also consulted.

This chapter focuses on the following topics: council elections, the background of CEP council members, local perceptions of CEP, the decision-making processes, conflict resolution, CEP's relationship with other stakeholders, and gender issues. Although each of these topics is treated separately, the reader may have the impression of a general overlapping between the different subjects addressed. This is largely unavoidable due to the interconnectedness of the topics. All are relevant to power relations and decision-making at the community level because all are political issues.

The research findings describe what actually happened based on the perceptions of the different people interviewed. However, some context to these perceptions is provided here by a description of the intended functioning of the programme based on its documents and on reports from its staff.

Background

The CEP is an UNTAET programme, funded by the World Bank administered Trust Fund for East Timor through a grant agreement signed on 21 February 2000. The project received the support of the CNRT structure at national and local levels.

⁴⁷ The CEP has three project components: component one concerns community grants and subgrants; component two concerns cultural heritage, and component three focuses on a civil society support fund. This report concerns only CEP component one. The total amount of CEP is US \$17.5 million.

CEP intends to provide a model for a democratic, participative and transparent forum to increase community participation in the planning and decision-making process of development issues at the hamlet and village levels. The programme supported the creation of the Village Development Councils as a mechanism at the community level responsible for the allocation and management of development funds provided by CEP and other potential donors. They are injected into the villages or hamlets to alleviate the most pressing development issues identified by community members.

The UNTAET Regulation No. 2000/13⁴⁸ on the 'Establishment of Village and Subdistrict Development Councils for the Disbursement of Funds for Development of Activities' (UNTAET 2000) provides the legal framework for the establishment and functioning of the councils.

The councils are composed of an equal number of men and women who have been democratically elected at the hamlet level. By the time this research was conducted more than 416 Village Development Councils (*Conselhos do Suco*) have been formed across the country, encompassing over 6,400 Village Development Council members (CEP 2000b). Around 3,000 separate elections were held at the hamlet level (CEP 2000h).

CEP Objectives

The general aim of CEP is poverty alleviation and to support inclusive patterns of growth and development. The phrase 'community empowerment' is based on the principle that projects will be produced *by* communities *for* communities. The project is intended to strengthen the capacity of community institutions, which requires the development of interventions aiming at

- increasing community participation in the planning, implementation and maintenance of the community's assets and economic activities;
- increasing business activity and income generation, and expanding employment opportunities;
- providing infrastructure and facilities at the local level;
- increasing the capacity of community institutions and their elected representatives in order to facilitate the process of community empowerment in the implementation of development programmes.

CEP Community Grants

The main purpose of CEP is to allow villagers to make their own development choices, via the mediation and accountability ensured by Village Development Councils. CEP component one consists of grants allocated to each subdistrict distributed in four cycles. By the time of the fieldwork, the first (emergency) and second cycles of grants had been implemented or were in the process of implementation. In a few areas the third cycle was being prepared.

⁴⁸ 10 March 2000.

Emergency Cycle

During the emergency cycle, CEP grants were distributed in equal amounts to each village once the election of council members and the formal establishment of the Village Development Council were achieved. In the CEP emergency cycle, grants focused on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of social infrastructure, such as public meeting halls, schools and clinics, roads and water supply, and on economic recovery through, for example, the purchase of agricultural tools, seeds and livestock. Each village (*suco*) received the same amount of money within a subdistrict (*posto*). The grant was to be distributed between the constituent hamlets according to the proposals agreed by the Village Development Council. Each subdistrict received US \$10,000–20,000 according to the subdistrict population.

Second Cycle

For the second cycle the amount of money to be allocated at the subdistrict level was from US \$25,000 to 75,000 according to the population. There is no standard amount of money to be distributed by village. The Subdistrict Development Councils decide how to use the money by prioritising proposals submitted from villages. Money was allocated through a competitive selection process between villages, and between the hamlets within a village.

A maximum of four proposals could be submitted from each village and half of them must be from women's groups. Suggestions for activities come from hamlets and the villages decide together about a negative list of items which cannot be funded. The second-cycle grants use an open-menu principle, with three types of activities that can be funded:

- social infrastructure activities;
- productive economic activities;
- social welfare activities.

The CEP Team

CEP is composed of senior staff members at the central level in Dili, who decide on the policies and provide the necessary follow-up and inputs to a team at the district level. The CEP team at the district level is composed by different members whose major role is to serve and assist the Village Development Councils in developing their role as development planning and management bodies. These members are:

- the district monitor, who coordinates the team of facilitators and reports to the national level;
- district technical facilitators, who mobilise and provide technical advice for proposals;
- the district project accountant, who ensures the transfer of funds and trains financial management units and village treasurers in book-keeping and accountability;
- subdistrict facilitators (*posto* facilitators);
- two village facilitators.

In March 2000 CEP started being implemented by Community Aid Abroad/Oxfam (CAA/OXFAM), an Australian international NGO mandated by UNTAET. On 23 November 2000 the general management of the project was totally

‘Timorised.’ The CEP became integrated into the organigram of the Department of Internal Administration of UNTAET.

Council Elections

The UNTAET Regulation

UNTAET Regulation 2000/13 provides the legal framework for the establishment of Village Development Councils. It gives clear instructions regarding the way elections should be conducted. It states that ‘the selection of hamlet representatives to the Village Development Council shall be organised by a selection committee consisting of the hamlet chief and two trusted members, one male and one female, of the hamlet community’ (UNTAET 2000).

The selection committee is required to organise a democratic process: asking community members to identify male and female potential candidates for positions as hamlet representatives. They must fulfil the following criteria:

- be more than 18 years old;
- be residents in the hamlet;
- not be traditional or local leaders;
- have time to work in the Village Development Council.

Every hamlet resident, male and female, more than 17 years of age or married, is eligible to vote and it is required that at least 50% of the hamlet residents eligible to vote participate in the election.

The elections for Village Development Council members at the hamlet (*aldeia*) level were conducted during the first half of 2000 in more than 400 villages. Table 19 shows the rate of community participation in the election process for the three districts where this anthropological study was conducted.⁴⁹

**Table 19: Reported Average Participation Rate of Eligible Voters
in Election of Aldeia Representatives
(%)**

District	Female	Male	Total
Aileu	78.5	81.5	80.0
Baucau	68.5	75.0	72.8
Bobonaro	85.3	82.3	83.5

Election of Hamlet Representatives

The majority of the informants consulted in the three districts described the selection of the Village Development Council members as democratic since all the members were elected at the hamlet level. The election process was usually described as starting with the visit of the CEP subdistrict facilitator or the village facilitator, who briefed the hamlet chief on the CEP project and the voting mechanisms.

⁴⁹ Quantitative results of such elections were collected by CEP subdistrict facilitators. For a detailed description on Village Development Council elections a document is available at CEP.

Following the initial visit of the CEP facilitator a list of four people was proposed and the population was invited to select two among them, a man and a woman, that in their view would be the best people to represent the interests of the community and bring its aspirations to the top level.

(Council member, Aileu)

Although most of the interviewees stated that a list of candidates was set up, some variations were identified in the manner of the establishment of the list. The most common modality mentioned was that a selection committee was created by the hamlet chief (as required by UNTAET regulation) to register the names of candidates among the population. Then the villagers were invited to choose a man and a woman amongst the candidates. In a second modality, the hamlet chief himself proposed four names and asked the community whether they had other candidates to add to the list. In a third modality, the Council of Elders and the hamlet chief, with the participation of the whole community, selected the two representatives. An example of this modality is from Er Hetu:

The CEP *suco* facilitator came here and explained about CEP and told the elder people and the hamlet chief to choose two representatives for the Village Development Council. Afterwards a meeting was organized by the hamlet chief and the Council of Elders to explain to the population. We didn't vote but made a discussion and chose the two candidates. We used this way because people are illiterate so they do not write; therefore we couldn't organise a proper election.

(Village Development Council member, Aileu)

The idea of 'discussing' the candidates seems to be very important. In Bobonaro some informants mentioned that

... it was discussed who should be elected.

The traditional elders sat together with the people and elected the candidates.

In a fourth modality no list of candidates was made. Instead, people from the different hamlets met at the village level and through a discussion meeting elected their two respective representatives for each hamlet to the Village Development Council.

In only one account, from a subdistrict in Aileu, it was stated that the village facilitator came and asked the hamlet chief 'to try to find a member of your family, your son or daughter with some education to be part of the *Conselho Popular*,⁵⁰ or Popular Council, as the Village Development Council is called in this area. In some other hamlets the hamlet chief directly appointed the council members, without election.

In the three research areas, the elections at the hamlet level were conducted using two different voting procedures:

- *acclamation*, in which the community chose directly by raising their hands or applauding the person considered best to be the hamlet delegate;
- *secret vote*, in which the names of the candidates (with or without a picture) were displayed on different boxes into which people, in private, put their vote. In a variation of this, maize seeds were put into a basket, or glass, with the name of the candidate. Afterwards the subdistrict and village facilitators took the box, basket or glass and the ballots or maize seeds were counted in front of the whole population.

In the first approach people would be more likely to be influenced by others. The second approach complies better with the requirement of a democratic election, as understood in the Western paradigm, and the possibility to freely express an opinion:

⁵⁰ Subdistrict Development Council member, Aileu.

particularly taking into account that a preselection of candidates had been made by a selection committee.

The quantitative data gathered by CEP through their subdistrict field officers, some of whom are presented in table 20, show the procedures used in the elections in the three study districts.

Table 20: Selected Voting Procedures by District
(Percentage of All Hamlet Elections)

District	Secret ballot	Acclamation	
		<i>Show of hands</i>	<i>Applause</i>
Aileu	47.5	26.7	25.8
Baucau	2.0	2.0	96.0
Bobonaro	51.5	34.2	14.3

This data supports the hypothesis that traditional leaders are more likely to be selected when voting is by acclamation. This procedure was the most common form used in the Baucau District, where a higher proportion of village elders were elected as council members. In Bobonaro, where acclamation was least often used, a higher proportion of council members were relatively young and educated.

It is clear that in many instances the selection of candidates involved ‘traditional’ ways of decision-making. Traditionally, candidates for important positions are never selected by secret vote; potential candidates, who must be from the ‘right’ descent, are chosen by village elders through discussion (as in the election of the village or hamlet chiefs) and afterwards the constituency is invited to vote.

Whatever the modality of selection of candidates and voting used, the majority of council members interviewed were emphatic that it was the community who nominated the candidates and elected the members. This was not only stated by village and hamlet chiefs and elected members themselves but also by ordinary villagers. In the perception of most respondents, in either approach the choice is made by the people themselves. However, the research shows that secret vote is more likely to select people other than traditional leaders.

Formation of the Village and Subdistrict Development Councils

Once the representatives of each hamlet had been elected, the CEP subdistrict facilitator organised the first meeting of the Village Development Council to elect the council head or coordinator, a deputy, a secretary and a treasurer. Usually in the same meeting two representatives (a man and a woman) were also elected to sit in the Subdistrict Development Council. In most cases the head of the Village Development Council was one of those elected, as proposed in UNTAET Regulation 2000/13.

Following the election of subdistrict representatives within each of the Village Development Councils, a first meeting of the Subdistrict Development Council was organised by the CEP subdistrict facilitator. Once again the council members elected a head of council, a deputy, a secretary and a treasurer. It seems that sometimes the CEP subdistrict facilitator played a significant role in the election of the head of council:

I do not know how I was elected as head of the Subdistrict Development Council ... They elected me to sit there but the facilitator had already made the decision and all the people agreed. I didn’t want to accept because I do not have enough experience but the facilitator said to me he cannot change my position. Only the people from the hamlet can change it.
(CEP Subdistrict Development Council chief, Aileu)

In Bobonaro it was mentioned that power holders, such as traditional elders and subdistrict chiefs, were invited to witness the meeting but were not involved in the nominations at this level. In the other districts, in general, only the CEP team and council members attended the first Subdistrict Development Council meeting.

The 'Extra Election'

UNTAET Regulation 2000/13 stipulates that the number of council members at the village level must be more than 10 and no more than 60. Taking into account the requirement of gender balance the minimal membership was decided to be 12 members (6 men and 6 women). Although this requirement existed from the outset of the project, it was not well disseminated to the different players at the local level. Once the first elections were concluded and comparisons between different districts made, it was clear that some of the villages did not comply with the minimum membership requirement. Therefore it was necessary to organize a new election to complete the membership. The extra elections were organised in June and July 2000.

The need for the extra election highlighted the deficiencies in the flow of information between CEP staff members at the national and the district level and the difficulties that a project of this scope may face due to time-frame constraints and the emergency of the situation. Many staff in the field thought that a second regulation had been issued, though this was not the case:

Previously, according to the manual from CEP national, the numbers of the CEP Village Development Council constituents depend on the numbers of hamlets with two representatives each. But it was not written, regarding the number of CEP council members for each village, that there must be a minimum of 12 people.

(Subdistrict facilitator, Baucau)

We explained to the community that what is written in the manual from CEP national is our platform. Some villages/subvillages had already conducted the election to choose the CEP council members. All of a sudden the CEP national sends a new regulation, saying that for each village, there should be a minimum of 12 council members. Those villages who have less than 6 hamlets must conduct an extra election to complete the target.

(Subdistrict facilitator, Baucau)

It was not easy for the CEP field staff to face people's reactions at the village level. As some facilitators explained to the research team this extra election created some difficulties. First, the 'new' policy orientation stated that the number of people to be elected at the hamlet level depends on the number of hamlets within each village. For instance, if the number of hamlets are six or over, two representatives should be elected per hamlet. If the number of hamlets is three they should nominate four representatives (two men and two women), and so on. This meant that the number of people to be added to the former elected Village Development Council varied according to the number of the village's constituent hamlets. This created some confusion. Secondly, some hamlets felt that they were adequately represented and had no need for more representatives. Thirdly, some communities had already submitted their proposals for the emergency cycle but the funds could not be disbursed until the council membership process had been completed, which created delays in meeting the community's expectations:

As facilitator it was a problem, because people asked, 'Why must we make an extra election while the proposal has not yet been implemented?' Some hamlets didn't want to conduct elections because they said they didn't have time. As facilitator we can't use force to say you must do this or that.

(Subdistrict facilitator, Baucau)

As one CEP report states, the second round of election had a lower participation rate, due in part to the demands of the communities' economic activities (coffee plantations, rice harvesting, gardens, etc), but also to a certain degree to fatigue with

the election process. A subdistrict facilitator stated that in Baucau there were too many elections going on at that time: village chief, hamlet chief, and then the CEP extra election. People were confused.

CEP Council Members' Backgrounds

One of the major reasons for polemic and criticism concerning CEP, from different international stakeholders in East Timor, is that traditional leaders were not eligible to be part of the Village Development Councils. Some consider that the parallel structure set up by CEP is undermining traditional powers. The non-eligibility of traditional leaders for election in this community structure is very clearly stated by section 4C of UNTAET Regulation 2000/13. The rationale behind it is to promote a more horizontal and democratic system, based on a Western paradigm, to encourage community-based organisations. It was intended also to balance the influence of power holders in the allocation of funds and reduce elite-capture and corruption that seem to be part of the history of East Timor during Indonesian rule.

The first part of this report discussed traditional systems of power. These are found to be still very much alive in the three study districts, despite 450 years of colonialism and occupation. The research team was interested in exploring the background of council members, the possible linkages with the traditional power structure in the villages, and the extent to which criteria established by the UNTAET Regulation had been respected. Our initial hypothesis was that it was very likely that people coming from the 'right' descent in rural areas would be more likely to be nominated in the 'new' power structure: the Village Development Council.

Factors Influencing Election of Council Members

The constitution of the Village Development Councils and the factors influencing it differed from area to area within each of the study districts. Some general statements can, however, be made, based on the respondents' comments.

The majority of informants stated that the most important criterion for the election of the council members was the capacity to do the job, meaning they should be literate, intelligent, good speakers, know the community well and be able to coordinate CEP activities in their hamlets, villages and subdistricts. Education and former experience were both ranked as important criteria. This was confirmed by the negative comments of some informants concerning some of the elected people, saying that they were just charismatic speakers without sufficient knowledge and education. Also mentioned as important were age and marital status.

It is important to note that across the three study districts the selection for the position was perceived as a duty that cannot be rejected.

I was elected, I didn't become the deputy of the CEP council of the hamlet because I wanted it myself.

(Village Development Council member, Bobonaro)

I became council member because they chose myself to represent them in the Subdistrict Development Council, but actually I do not want to sit as member, people forced me to do it.

(Subdistrict Development Council, female member, Baucau)

Importance of Descent and Ethnic Background

Preferences for a specific ethnic group or a specific descent were not mentioned as important criteria. Nearly all informants stated that the House of council members did not play any role in the Village Development Council elections. 'This becomes important when we elect a *liurai*.'⁵¹ In Bobonaro, the research team systematically asked for the Houses of the council members and compared them with the Houses that traditionally hold political authority. The results showed that Village Development Council members do not follow any pattern of traditional House divisions.

Some informants in Aileu confirmed that the choice of council members is not based on traditional power structures. They stated that if someone from the descent holding political authority came up as council chief it was not because of his/her status in the power structure but simply because he/she was chosen as the best person by community members:

All council members are not from the *liurai* descent, they are only appointed by elections. If someone from the *liurai* descent becomes chief of the Village Development Council or Subdistrict Development Council, this is pure accident. People do not think about background, people think whether the person represents the aspirations of people on the ground.

(Subdistrict Development Council chief, Aileu)

In Bobonaro, there are also some locations where there are 'ethnic' differences⁵² within one village. The 'minorities' state that they are seen as 'newcomers' and not given as much power in the councils. They joined the councils as representatives of their hamlets (which are from one origin) but complain that in the Village Development Councils their voice does not count as much and their opinions are not considered to be important. In these cases there is usually a wider ethnic conflict existing in the villages, not only within the Village Development Councils.

Education

As has been stated, education is an important criterion for the election of council members, particularly for the selection of the head of the council, whom people consider should be literate. The more council members live close to, or come from, urban areas, the higher their level of education.⁵³ In Bobonaro District over 90% of the council members have at least primary-school education, which is significant in an area with an approximate illiteracy rate of 80–90%. The percentage of higher education amongst council members increases the more urban the environment is, whereas in rural areas hardly any of the council members have a higher education than primary school, since for the attainment of a higher education degree people have to move to the subdistrict capitals and deal with all the economic and family implications of such a move. Findings were similar in Aileu and Baucau Districts, where a relatively high proportion of council members near to urban settings have finished their primary schooling and some have junior or senior education. In Baucau town, a few of the subdistrict development councillors have been educated at university.

In contrast, in the rural areas, particularly the most remote hamlets, council members have hardly any primary education and are mostly functionally illiterate. This appeared to be the situation in Baguia and Laga Subdistricts:

⁵¹ Informant: villager.

⁵² Originating from different areas or different languages.

⁵³ Schools, in particular junior and senior high schools, are usually located in urban areas.

People have the right to decide whom they want to choose but regarding educational background of council members the majority of them are illiterate. Nevertheless they have constructive ideas for development.

(Subdistrict facilitator, Baguia)

Perhaps the capacity considered most important in relation to education is the ability to read and write:

Council members should have a maximum education; in Remexio most of the council members never graduated from primary school but they know how to write and read.

(Subdistrict Development Council member, Aileu)

Experience

Most informants stated the importance of experience for the role of village development councillor. This could mean experience in leadership, in projects or in working as a civil servant. The most important fact seems to be that a person has proven to be a good leader by being involved in hamlet activities and has the capacity to organise social matters.

Across the districts differences can be seen between urban and rural areas. The majority of people in rural areas have experience mostly as farmers. Therefore, a person's capacity seems to be evaluated by his/her behaviour in society or by his/her involvement in FALINTIL, OJT, OMT or the clandestine movement during Indonesian times. Very few council members in rural areas had previous experience with the Indonesian government as civil servants.

Other council members have experience in 'project work.' In most cases this means their labour involvement in Indonesian road projects that were conducted in their areas. Although it has not much to do with the work of the Village Development Council, the villagers seem to perceive it as useful 'experience' in dealing with the 'outside' world.

In urban areas, a certain number of council members have previous experience working as civil servants with the Indonesian government. Here this seems to be one of the important criteria for the nomination of the heads of Village and Subdistrict Development Councils:

In the whole Subdistrict Development Council myself [*secretário*] and the council chief are the elders and we also have previous experience from the Indonesian time. We are transparent and are respected by all the members of the council.

(Subdistrict Development Council member, Aileu)

In addition, there seem to be a number of young people active in the Village Development Councils that have a high- and middle-school degree but are unemployed. Some have experience with work in former councils that had been formed by the Indonesian government.

Political/Military Background

In Bobonaro District, activity as a FALINTIL or in the clandestine movement might be considered to prove a person to be a good leader. As they have no other working experience and therefore have not been employed by other agencies, it seems that this military involvement accounts for their election in the CEP councils:

I fought hard for the big fight, that is why people chose me. They say I am a candidate for leadership in the future. My task is to develop and rebuild this village and to give the aspiration of the people to the bank and I am responsible towards the CNRT.

(Subdistrict Development Council member, Bobonaro)

In the troubled locations, where society is split between CPD-RDTL and FRETILIN, it is said that no Village Development Council members are members of RDTL. Therefore CEP is rejected by the RDTL part of the village.⁵⁴

In Aileu District, the majority of council members, both men and women, in the four subdistricts have been involved in the clandestine movement and this seems to be the most important criterion for their selection. The link between council members and the clandestine movement was not so clear in Baucau District. Although the militancy of the Baucau population in backing up the freedom movement is well known no mention was made of previously belonging to the FALINTIL in the selection of council members.

Age

Age seems a very important variable for the selection of council members. Most of the informants consulted in Bobonaro stated that council members are young people. While some council members in rural areas in Bobonaro District are younger than in the urban areas, overall the proportion of people less than 30 years old is higher in urban areas.

In Aileu District the great majority of council members are aged between 25 and 45 years. The research team learned of one female council member aged 16 years. This was in a village where the majority of the population, militia followers, are still in West Timor and the remainder of the eligible population filled other positions. In Remexio and Laulara Subdistricts, however, traditional power holders considered the council members as being rather young.

The composition of council members in Baucau District is mixed, with both young and senior people. There is, however, variation within the district: in Quelicai the councillors are rather young, whereas in Laga they are older:

All of the council members are only elders; none of them is young. The members are elders who have the power to influence inside the community of the hamlet and village. I do not know how they were elected ... only one to two people were involved.

(Youth leader, Baucau)

It is interesting to observe the rather higher representation of youth in these community bodies as traditionally in East Timorese societies, the youth are not invited to participate in decision-making processes and are considered powerless. The high proportion of youth in some councils seems to be explained by the requirement of the CEP Regulation of having literate people. On the other hand, despite the fact that CEP regulations proscribe traditional leaders as candidates for the Village Development Councils, some elders are members in a few cases. They seem, however, to be represented in the councils of more remote areas and villages where the traditional paradigm is embodied in daily community life.

Perceptions of CEP

One of the topics explored by the research team was the perception of the programme by local communities. The general perception of CEP by the population is predominantly positive. Still, a significant proportion of people do not know about CEP and there is a need for a clearer information campaign, with concise clear messages, to overcome this barrier. Negative perception of CEP will be discussed in

⁵⁴ See box 7 (p. 96).

relation to the programme's constraints and limitations. Some of the positive perceptions of CEP are presented below.

General Perceptions of the Programme

An overwhelming majority of the people consulted in the different research sites categorically described CEP as a good project and made comments such as 'it helps the community to develop'; 'it is participative'; 'it is inclusive'; 'it is transparent'; and 'it is democratic, council members were selected by the community itself.'

In the perception of most respondents there is no doubt that the programme is making a major contribution in terms of democratisation as well as changes in the living conditions of people. Some of the positive feedback on CEP is summarized below in relation to its influence on several major aspects of community life.

Economic and Social Conditions

The majority of respondents acknowledged the social and economic contribution of CEP in the life conditions of East Timorese people. Statements like the following were registered in the different research locations:

The CEP is a good programme to assist people in progress; we hope the programme will still be on in the future.

(Village chief, Aileu)

It helps the people of East Timor, money is given to people, the programme promotes economic stability, and the programme has good and concrete results, like clean water.

(Village Development Council member, Bobonaro)

What we can see is that the people here are working well on the CEP programme. I think CEP is really a good programme because for the first cycle CEP has already helped to build the roads in our hamlets.

(Village Development Council member, Baucau)

Democratisation

It is clear for the majority of the respondents consulted in the areas where the programme is running well that council members have been democratically elected. People feel free to vote for their council members and it is stated that the programme has a good impact on the community in terms of democratisation because it teaches community members about the democratic process.

The programme provides a democratic space where people's wishes are taken into consideration: their voices, their concerns and suffering are passed on to the top levels through council members.

Ordinary people are involved in the decision-making process: all decisions must come from people at the basic level. People in power positions make suggestions but do not decide.

(Village Development Council member, Bobonaro)

Inclusiveness, Participatory Process and Transparency

The CEP is perceived as supporting women. The balance between men and women has been emphasized; 50% of council members are women. Other women also participate in meetings and give their opinion.

The CEP is viewed as an open process by which people participate in their community's development. People are very active in the programme and work together. There is good participation of community members.

It involves everybody, not only council members like in Indonesian times.

(Council member, Bobonaro)

The programme is different from those existing in Indonesian times as the villagers are asked for their needs before the project starts, and the money is not only used for the families in power.

(Catholic catechist, Baucau)

Before, in Indonesian times, the development programmes were planned by the government but now people are planning themselves. Like us now, the CEP programme was planned by the people and then the government was asked for support.

(Hamlet chief, Baucau)

The programme benefits villages and hamlets. It is not a top-down programme; people on the ground make decisions.

(Council members, Bobonaro)

The programme is considered by most respondents to be transparent:

There are no suspicions, and people know what has to be done.

(Village Development Council member, Aileu)

The programme differs from all other programmes: people do not argue for salaries but look for the cheapest solution in their own interest.

(Village Development Council member, Aileu)

People get trained in working together in the programme, council members received training in organising and leading people, the programme trains people in discussing.

(Village Development Council member, Baucau)

The above statements show that in general the programme is well perceived by local communities in the three study areas. The projects are considered as making a difference on the ground; community members are involved in decision-making and contribute to the implementation of the projects. There is a sense of ownership of the project. The funds allocated for the projects are managed in a transparent way. The common people have a say in development issues; an opportunity to be empowered is given to them, not only to the leaders. Women have an important role and gender balance has been enforced to allow the formal participation of women in decision-making processes.

Perception of Council Tasks

The majority of informants at the village and hamlet levels, including elders and civil society members, were not really clear about the tasks of the Village Development Council members. Most of the village and hamlet chiefs, as well as the council members themselves, perceive the councillors' tasks as follows:

- to organise meetings in hamlets with village and hamlet chiefs to make decisions on projects;⁵⁵
- to look for possible projects and gather ideas from the population; to make suggestions and to make sure that people's ideas go forward by defending their ideas or projects as necessary;
- to pass on information about the programme from the centre to the villages and from the bottom to the top, to transmit instructions from the monitors and facilitators to the people and people's ideas to the village level, and to support people in their decisions;

⁵⁵ It is important to note that council members do not have the power to call people for meetings because people usually only follow village and hamlet chiefs' instructions.

- for the chief, to hand the reports to the subdistrict level and be responsible for the outcome of the work of the people;
- to organise, implement and monitor projects;
- to prevent decision-making solely by people in power positions.

The councillors themselves perceive their role as a facilitator or a bridge between community members and decision-makers:

The role of the council is like a street or bridge, it is a facility. The council does not hold power, the council just helps the community to bring information from the basic level to the top level and to inform leaders about what is important for the people in remote areas, or what they want to do in the village or hamlet. For example, if in one hamlet they want to have a project like this or that, the facility at the hamlet level (council member) reports this to the Village Development Council and then to the subdistrict, and so on.

(Village Development Council member, Aileu)

Some council members stated that they should collaborate with village chiefs about the programme and have to know what are the core problems and how to collaborate with community members:

The council should be 'people's eyes, people's ears and people's feet' [*povo nia matan, povo nia tilun no povo nia ain*]. That means people cannot touch the top level but they have to pass by the council and the head of council will inform the above level about people's problems and what they need.

(Subdistrict Development Council chief, Aileu)

Some council members perceived that they are not working alone because they have the full support of the people, and the community is supervising their role. Both community and government are supporting the idea because a consensus has been achieved.

The Role of the Village and Subdistrict Facilitators

Another important CEP agent at the local level is the Village Facilitator. Usually there are two village facilitators, a man and a woman, in each village. They are not members of the Village Development Council but part of the CEP staff.

According to one CEP subdistrict facilitator, the mechanism for electing the village facilitator depends on council members. Some of the council members, however, stated that the village chief selects the village facilitator and that this position had often been established before the council. The latter case seems to be true for the initial cycle of implementation of the project, before the election of the council and just after, or overlapping, the process of socialisation. According to council members the major roles of the village facilitators are:

- to act as an assistant for the subdistrict facilitator;
- to help announce the programme of activities at the village level;
- to prepare the election for CEP council.

According to subdistrict facilitators, the tasks of village facilitators are similar to their own, that is:

- to replace him/her when s/he is not able to attend a meeting;
- to pass on information from Subdistrict to Village Development Councils;
- to promote the CEP programme among community members.

However some council members mentioned that the major role of village facilitators is to deliver meeting invitations to council members and to provide material for the meetings.

Village facilitators receive an honorarium of 150,000 rupiahs per month and usually have a three-month contract. This is a very contentious issue since the council members do not receive any stipend for their work and perceive this as unequal treatment. In addition, village facilitators are very often perceived by council members as not performing their duties. In some cases they are seen as an unwelcome 'supervisor' of council members:

People chose us as their foot and their hand, and the village facilitator acts as a watchdog for the CEP Council.

(Subdistrict Development Council member, Aileu)

Council members and village facilitators perceive the tasks of the subdistrict facilitator as follows:

- to coordinate with CNRT leaders from subdistrict to hamlet level, UNTAET (DFO and CEP focal point) and NGOs representatives;
- to visit the hamlets and prepare the election process;
- to consult with all concerned in order to resolve the problems in the community;
- to attend the Village Development Council meeting, if invited;
- to send invitations to all council members if s/he organises a meeting;
- to maintain good relations between the Subdistrict and all Village Development Councils;
- to establish work timetables with the village facilitators;
- to hear and support the decisions of the council;
- to promote the CEP programme among the community.

The subdistrict facilitators themselves perceive their function as 'a bridge to the people, like a car passes across a river.' They see themselves as not having any power or influence in the decision-making process because 'all the power is within the council.'

Box 5: A Positive Example of Community Development: Afaloikai, Baguia Subdistrict, Baucau

Afaloikai (*afa* = stone, *loikai* = herdsmen), the most remote village in Baguia Subdistrict, is located on the slopes of Matebean Mountain (*Matebean Mane*). Its 1,048 inhabitants live in four hamlets: Oqilari, Waimata, Buibela, and Lena'a, the last two high in the mountains, a three-hour walk from Afaloikai town. The majority of the population speaks Naueti, an Austronesian language. The population of Afaloikai was exiled to Baguia and Watecarbau (Viqueque) for more than ten years during the Indonesian occupation; in two hamlets resettlement was not allowed until 1994. During those years only guerrilla fighters and the Indonesian army were in the area.

The people of Afaloikai have a very positive perception of CEP. They are unanimous about its positive impact and about the fact that the community participated actively in it for the development of their village. The village chief confirmed that community members expressed satisfaction with the programme's achievements during both cycles.

The programme has been very inclusive without distinction to gender or religion – men and women, Catholics, Protestants and animists worked together for the welfare of the village. Although those who worked received a modest stipend this was not their prime motivation, as stated by a Catholic catechist:

The community is involved in this process, people come to work on a self-supporting basis but at the end we receive a small honorarium but it is not so much. For us the important thing is that we must do something for our village, especially as development is already a commitment for Afaloikai people.

The grant for the Emergency Cycle (20,000,000 rupiahs) was mainly used to rehabilitate 4.5 kilometres of road from Disoe to Afaloikai. The four hamlets agreed to use the funds in the reconstruction of the village road and people from all four hamlets worked on the project, receiving 23,000 rupiahs per day.

In first cycle the money from the World Bank was finished and we did self-supporting to finish our programme. We had to do that because the programme is for the community, not something else that only makes one person rich, but we do it for all the people.

(OJT leader, Afaloikai)

According to the villagers CEP would have a major impact if the authorities at the subdistrict level, such as the CNRT subdistrict chief and the ETTA/UNTAET administrator (DFO), made a serious effort to rehabilitate the road between Osso Huna and Haikoni.

In the second cycle of CEP the people chose another infrastructure project – water supply. Again, the four hamlets agreed to work together, using half of the 40-million-rupiah grant to the village. The money was controlled by the Village Development Council and each person working received 20,000 rupiahs per day (around US \$2). Local leaders and the hamlet chiefs supervised the work and the CEP Village Facilitator kept a daily checklist of the workers. The CEP notice board displayed all expenditures on materials and wages.

The project had been finished three days before the visit of the research team and was changing the daily life of the people, particularly of women and children who previously carried water at over least one kilometre. Now each hamlet has a tank and each compound its own tap. With the other half of the grant it was proposed that the OMT would buy a sewing machine or, if there is enough money, one for each hamlet.

Village Development Council members are proud of their position and believe the programme makes a difference in people's lives. Their major motivation and satisfaction is working for their people and seeing progress in the area. The community trusts the programme and supports it, even if the work is hard and they have to go to each hamlet on foot, sometimes returning very late.

The relationship between the Village Development Council and the other major actors in the village is outstanding. Council members discuss and consult with the *chefe do suco*, the *chefes do aldeia* and the elders about their projects. This good relationship is in part the result of the election process to select council members. All the population from the four hamlets came to the *suco* and elected the members by a show of hands. Village facilitators (one female and one male) were also selected through a public meeting attended by the people of all hamlets.

In Afaloikai, gender balance is not an issue for the people. Men and women on the Village Development Council participate equally in providing ideas and, with equal numbers and pay, in project implementation. This was underlined by the OMT leader:

In our village no one has come to say, why just men come to work or why just men get paid because we have a good coordination amongst each other: if men come to work women also come to help, this is the reality in Afaloikai.

... and confirmed by the village chief:

In other areas women do not work as carpenters, only men. Here women know how to build houses and make other things. For instance to build houses: men have their one concept but women also have their own ideas and contribute to it. ... Women are working side by side with men for the development of their village.

Men and women have the same right to participate in meetings:

Because now the situation is changing so women and men have the same right to be involved in the decision-making process.

The consultation and decision-making process takes place through public meetings organised by the Village Development Council. Everyone participates and gives their opinion. Ideas are noted during the public meeting and, on the ground of these notes, the council writes proposals to the Subdistrict Development Council where the final decision is taken.

Decision-making power is with the people. The community decides what to do in its hamlet. Afterwards the decisions are passed to the Village Development Council and then to the Subdistrict Development Council.

(Village chief)

Decision-making by discussing at the village level provides the opportunity for all community members to be involved in the activity and strengthens the moral responsibility to participate and to help decide.

(OMT representative)

Decision-making Processes

The Intended Process

The CEP programme was planned as a bottom-up structure for community consultation and decision-making at the lowest level of society. The elected Village Development Councils are responsible for the planning, managing and implementation of village development activities using funds allocated for that purpose.

Council members work together with hamlet community members on the identification of development needs and the possible solutions to address them. They facilitate the discussions with the collaboration of CEP facilitators and once the ideas are identified they make decisions on which to support.

According to UNTAET Regulation 2000/13, these decisions shall be made only in meetings where all hamlet representatives have been invited and where at least 60% of the Village Development Council members are present. The decisions are taken by consensus or, if this is not possible, by majority vote. But only Village Development Council members are eligible to participate in the decision-making. All the decisions taken by the Village Development Council should be written and disseminated to the public.

For the funds allocated at the subdistrict level, the two Village Development Council representatives who sit in the Subdistrict Development Council will present and defend the project proposals coming from community groups within their respective villages. The decisions about which projects will have priority in the villages during the second cycle will eventually be taken by the Subdistrict Development Council.

Variations in the Process: Who Makes the Decisions?

CEP subdistrict facilitators and council members insisted vehemently that the decision-making on proposals is not a top-down process. It does not come from the subdistrict facilitator or from the Village Development Council, but directly from the community at the hamlet level. The majority of informants have confirmed this statement by saying that decisions for CEP are made by people on the ground with the facilitation of council members:

- first the community discusses ideas about the projects they want at the hamlet level and then council members communicate their decisions to the Village Development Council who, in the emergency cycle, decided directly the allocation of funds;
- in the second cycle of CEP the proposals are taken to the subdistrict level where the final decisions are made by the Subdistrict Development Council members.

Although this is the case in some of the locations, as acknowledged by a few informants, there seems to be variations in the decision-making process. In certain regions traditional leaders and other power holders still play a major role in this process.

In one of the research locations in Bobonaro, it was said that prior to a meeting people were divided into the social organisations of the village:

- traditional elders;
- village chief/governmental powers;
- OJT;
- OMT.

These groups discuss and plan projects at the hamlet level first and then present their ideas in a meeting to which everybody is invited. The final decision is taken by all the participants, but especially by these four groups that represent the whole society.

One informant explained the way of decision-making clearly:

First we received explanations about the programme, then we come up with many alternatives, after discussing we have some alternatives left, and we finally end with one alternative.

(Village Development Council member, Bobonaro)

This statement shows the Timorese idea of decision-making: through discussion every member of the group gets convinced of a specific proposal. This local, traditional way of decision-making contradicts with the concept of Western democracy. In the latter system, a number of alternatives are named and each member of society decides, with an equally valued vote, on his/her favourite alternative. The idea that has won the majority of votes is then accepted. The local, traditional way excludes the notion of opposition in its process when deciding on a single proposal.

In other modalities mentioned, the Village Development Council head gathers all the people from the different hamlets, disregarding their social status. The objective is to discuss some ideas and to offer people the possibility of coming to agreement and provide some criticisms.

It has been observed in most of the meetings that it was the local powers, such as village chiefs, teachers (mostly the older and educated people in the village) and Church representatives, that spoke the most and discussed the ideas that came up for the people. In most cases, council members only took notes but hardly ever actively took part in the discussion, nor did they facilitate it. They were implementing rather than leading the decision-making instances.

One example of the dynamics of the decision-making process came from Quelicai, in Baucau District:

In the village Lelaia a community meeting was organised to explain UNTAET directives. Problems with school tools arose, an elder mentioned kitchen utensils and another tools for agriculture. These three main problems were identified and the Village Development Council decided to buy these items. Afterwards the community argued that most of the money was going to be used in transportation and therefore they would end with less money.

The facilitators discussed the issue with the village chief and decided to divide the money between community members. The money was divided according to *uma kain* and the number of people in each *uma kain*. Each person received 15,000 rupiahs. The distribution of money was supervised by the village chief and hamlet chief.

(Subdistrict facilitator, Baucau)

In Kailako Subdistrict the research team was informed of the formal involvement of the traditional elders in the decision-making process. All people are said to be free to make suggestions for the programme, but traditional elders have to ensure that the programme works in accordance with the local traditional customs.

There seems to be a difference between the reporting of how decisions are made and the actual process. Most informants insist that the decision-making is up to the people, but in reality it still seems to be the people in old power positions that make decisions.

In some of the studied areas, the bulk of the grants for the emergency cycle⁵⁶ was invested in the reconstruction of village meeting halls or offices. This is the case in the districts of Aileu and Baucau. Although in most of the cases it seemed that the constituent hamlet representatives had discussed the decision, it appeared that very often the village chief had influenced the decision-making process in that direction.

From some of the interviews with different actors in the constituent hamlets, it could be inferred that decisions were not necessarily well accepted by all the hamlets within a village. Their opinion seems to depend on the geographical distance to the facility established; the closer ones would look at the project with good eyes, whereas those living further away were unsatisfied with the decision because they could not enjoy the advantages of the facility.

In one of the subdistricts of Baucau, some power holders and Village Development Council members from the more remote areas argued that the subdistrict facilitator had told them that money was going to be distributed equally between the different hamlets. Yet when it eventually turned up, the money was used to rehabilitate the village office. They feel that their views were not taken into consideration and blame the subdistrict facilitator for changing the initial position.

Another example, in which the decision-making process seems to have been driven by the village chief, is the construction of a primary school in one of the districts. The research team explored the issue with different actors in the field.⁵⁷

It is intended in Regulation 13/2000 that the Village Development Council members should make the decision by themselves; however, as has been discussed above, the discussions were mostly dominated by traditional power holders or people who had important positions in the community, with the rest of the community members agreeing on what had been discussed. Then the council members approved what had been agreed by 'consensus'.⁵⁸

This is still a very traditional way of decision-making, and the transfer of decision-making power to council members has not happened yet. It will take more effort, more education of the community as a whole to accept new changes of roles.

The Role of the Verification Team

The Verification Team is a body nominated during the second meeting of the Subdistrict Development Council during the second cycle of CEP. Its objectives are to look at the different proposals submitted by the villages and to provide written advice to Subdistrict Development Council members as to whether the proposals are viable and technically correct.

The task of the Verification Team are perceived by the community as

- check all village proposals;
- make field observations in every village to evaluate the possibility of success of the proposals;

⁵⁶ During the fieldwork the majority of implemented activities were funded from the emergency cycle. The process of the second cycle was ongoing in Aileu and Baucau; only in a few areas were second-cycle projects implemented.

⁵⁷ Some of the examples of problems related to a disregard of the hamlet representatives in the decision-making process are discussed below under 'CEP Conflicts and Their Resolution' (pp. 95-99).

⁵⁸ The precedence of the village chief and other power holders is discussed under 'Relationship of CEP with Other Stakeholders' (pp. 99-108).

- give written recommendations to the CEP Subdistrict Development Council.

In Bobonaro District, the Verification Teams were formed at the end of the year 2000. Each village nominated candidates and the Subdistrict Development Council appointed the members. The teams in Bobonaro have between 10 and 15 members.

The candidates had to fill the following criteria:

- not to be a member of the Village or Subdistrict Development Councils;
- to have experience and education in technical issues, finance, and economy;
- to be neutral and not corrupt.

In Maliana, a public meeting was held with the participation of UNTAET, CNRT and NGOs. The Verification Team in Maliana included one academic, various ex-civil servants and one CNRT representative appointed by CNRT leaders at the subdistrict level. This last appointment was a specific measure taken by the Subdistrict Development Council to make the work of the Verification Team more transparent to CNRT. In other subdistricts, some CNRT representatives were involved in the teams. In general the Verification Team members in Bobonaro were mainly older and well-respected people.

During the second meeting of the Subdistrict Development Council in Laulara, Aileu District, where the Verification Team was to be elected, it was observed that the Subdistrict Development Council members were consulted about the candidates but there was neither a proper election nor any significant discussion since all the participants in the meeting accepted the proposed candidates. The Verification Team nominated was composed of young, high school graduates and had a good gender balance.

In principle the Verification Team does not have the right to make any decisions, only recommendations. Once the Subdistrict Development Council receives the Verification Team's recommendations, a meeting is convened and all the proposals are reviewed. Subdistrict Development Council members make a decision on which proposals will be supported.

The question is whether the young members of the Subdistrict Development Councils will actually use their 'power' to make decisions against the village and subdistrict authorities recommendations. The idea that the Verification Team, as was claimed by a CNRT representative in Bobonaro, is to judge the work of the Subdistrict Development Councils matches traditional power structures again. The usual power players (village chief, subdistrict chief, CNRT members or at least highly respected society members) are finally involved in CEP.

In summary, although the mechanisms have been created to provide a forum in which all citizens are invited to express their major concerns and ideas on development issues, the different examples collected in this subchapter show that the decision-making process is still very much dominated by traditional decision-makers.

So far, Village and Subdistrict Development Council members who, according to UNTAET Regulation 2000/13, are the only people eligible to make decisions had little room in the decision-making process. They were instead adopting ideas agreed by consensus, once the more vocal people in the meetings had advocated for them. Local powers, even in the CEP process, were still in place and were not challenged by the councils as new power.

Such a process of transfer of ability takes time, and the results of this active citizen participation in local governance cannot be viewed in a short time frame. It needs a permanent, ongoing process of changing attitudes, and increasing knowledge of the local constituency, to increase active participation in decision-making at the local level. Civic education campaigns would be crucial and would need to use local

concepts and metaphors, and should target as a starting point traditional power holders and then community members as a whole.

CEP Conflicts and Their Resolution

The Approach to Conflict Resolution

Traditional approaches to conflict resolution were discussed in chapter 2 and 3 of this report. Traditional elders are still very respected and listened to, as their capacities in conflict resolution are widely acknowledged by the whole population and their methods have proven to be more efficient than other ones. Traditional leaders play a crucial role at the level of each House, which is the first resort of conflict resolution. When this is unsuccessful, the next step is to involve the Council of Elders and hamlet chiefs. If still unresolved, the problem is passed on to the village level and afterwards to the subdistrict level.

The approaches used in conflict resolution, in the framework of CEP, are not so different from those found at the community level. When problems are not directly solved by the council members themselves with the support of the CEP subdistrict facilitator, traditional leaders are called in to mediate. The strategies used and the level of conflict resolution depend on the severity of the problem. When the hamlet and/or village chief are unable to resolve the issue because of its dimensions, the subdistrict-level leaders, the subdistrict chief and the Council of Elders (if available) are invited to mediate.

Sometimes, according to the nature of the problem an UNTAET representative, usually a district field officer, was invited to become involved. In some situations, when a conflict had acquired such a dimension that it could not be resolved at the subdistrict level, district and national power holders had to intervene.

A number of conflicts have arisen in the implementation of CEP, some of them related to the decision-making process or the social dynamics of the villages and, in a few cases, to unilateral actions taken by individual council members. Traditional conflict-resolution approaches involving traditional leaders were used to address most of these conflicts. Boxes 6, 7 and 8 present some examples of conflicts and the approaches used to tackle them.

Box 6: A Clash of Generations

The Conflict

The Village Development Council disagreed with the population of two hamlets over a decision of what to do with 10,240,000 rupiahs remaining from a water-supply project implemented during the Emergency Cycle of CEP. The majority of the people wanted to use the money to buy chairs but a certain group wanted the money to be distributed to the people. This group threatened the Village Development Council and took the money to distribute it. Most informants stated that the problem occurred because people did not trust the Village Development Council members as these were all young people. It was said that the council did not work together with the CNRT, who gives orders to the people:

If everybody gives his own orders, a system cannot work. If they do not want to work with the *nurep* [village chief], the subdistrict chief and the district chief, the people do not want them anymore. CNRT is the face, CEP has to work with the local authorities. Then things can work. The local leadership has to be behind it. From top down.
(Village chief)

The young have to work with the old. The council did not work with the traditional elders, but I told them they have to do so. They have to coordinate.

(Village chief)

Conflict Resolution

The council members invited all the important people of the village for a meeting in which the traditional elders took up a special place as witnesses. First the council members read out all the activities conducted and all financial receipts were given to the traditional elders. Following discussion, the head of the council handed the remaining money to the elders to be distributed between the two hamlet chiefs. They eventually used the money to buy utensils for public use, like chairs and kitchen tools for ceremonies and public meetings.

Lessons Learned

This case was clearly a clash between generations. The young council members seemed to want to use their position to oppose the traditional powers but they were eventually overruled.

Box 7: A Reconciliation Ceremony

The Conflict

A Village Development Council head was accused of taking some of the money left over from a project. Underlying this incident was political tension in the village between RDTL and CNRT supporters. The CEP was used to express political divisions. One of the two hamlets of the village had been one of the district's first RDTL strongholds. The RDTL at that time did not recognize UNTAET authority, rejected foreign development efforts and did not take part in the CEP meetings.

When the CEP project money disappeared the village tensions came to the surface. The council members admitted that they had illegally taken money after people from the village had sent written complaints to UNTAET, CIVPOL and the Human Rights Office in Dili, asking them to replace the Village Development Council.

Conflict Resolution

To solve the problem a reconciliation ceremony was held in the compound of the sacred houses* and sacred stones to reintegrate the council members into society and to alleviate the existing political tensions. UNTAET officials and community leaders, including RDTL members, were present. The meeting started with the traditional elders and a 'judge' (an elder from a specific House that has a judicial function) discussing the fine which the council members would have to pay. Finally it was decided that they had to give the stolen money back, pay the elders for their duties and sacrifice a buffalo, the meat of which would be distributed among the participants to be eaten immediately. After this a new Village Development Council was elected.

Lessons Learned

This case was a conflict about money introduced from external powers and was brought to the attention of such powers (UNTAET, CIVPOL). Although the 'outsiders' were invited to witness the process, and perhaps contributed to its validity, resolution of the conflict was achieved 'internally' following traditional methods. This traditional reconciliation ceremony allowed council members to be reintegrated into society.

* All mud houses as former *uma luliks* were burnt and could not be rebuilt so far due to immense ritual costs.

Box 8: A Land Tenure Conflict

The Conflict

A Village Development Council decided to build a primary school in a hamlet, given the large number of children in the hamlet and the long distance to the nearest school, unreachable in the rainy season. The Council of Elders, village chief and hamlet chief were charged with choosing the site for building the school and decided to build it in a coffee plantation belonging to the *dom (regulo)*, who had escaped from the area with the arrival of the Indonesians and since then lived in Dili.

According to some council members of the two other hamlets of the village, they were not involved in the decision-making and the village chief used his power to influence a few council members, including the treasurer.

We do not have good relations with the village chief because he did not respect the council members; perhaps he thinks that the council will change his position as village chief. We knew that this land has an owner and they never consulted with the owner. The problem continues and so far a solution has not been found.

(Village Development Council member)

This viewpoint was confirmed by an ordinary person from one of the two hamlets:

Personally what I found very bad is that the village chief used his position as chief to influence the community to do something but the idea is not from the community but from himself. This is a real case in our *suco*; for that reason when they start to work they didn't have people from *aldeia* 2 and 3 to participate.

(Hamlet inhabitant)

According to the elders of the village and the village chief the property belonged, since many generations, to people descending from the Damata House but because nobody spoke Portuguese in the area, the Portuguese called another person from Balibar to sit as *liurai* (*dom*). They considered that the land belonged to all people and was therefore a suitable place for the school:

The decision to build the school here is our decision, people decided through a meeting. People want to open the school that will be used by our children. Even if we had known that this land belongs to someone, it would not have been a problem because we are still a family. Also, this school is for our grandchildren who are the future of this nation.

(Village chief)

According to the *dom* the CEP project occupied his property and built a school on the graves of his ancestors without consulting him. He believed that the money should have been used to rehabilitate destroyed schools. He said that if he had been consulted first he would have indicated an appropriate location for the construction of the school. When the villagers started to build the foundations of the school with CEP grants he claimed his rights to the property. According to him the village chief stated that he was not going to continue the construction but it continued and the school was finished. In his view those responsible for this conflict were the World Bank, the person living on his property, the village chief, and the CNRT.

A CEP staff member recommended that the Village Development Council members solve the problem and announced that the money for the second cycle would not be disbursed until the problem was solved. According to the CEP monitor, those responsible for the conflict were the village chief and the Village Development Council. The subdistrict chief was not involved in CEP, was not consulted, and was only informed when the problem arose. The CNRT representative was not involved when the problems started but only when the situation deteriorated.

Conflict Resolution

Because the land dispute continued, the CEP subdistrict facilitator requested the intervention of the subdistrict chief and the traditional elders, and called the owner of the land to discuss how to solve this problem.

Community representatives argued that if the school was taken off the land, the landowner would have to pay for the material already used. According to the District Administration records, half of the 18,000,000 rupiahs provided by CEP for the project had been spent. The owner of the land offered 3,000,000 rupiahs as compensation, leaving a six-million shortfall for the village who wanted to rebuild the school in another site to be provided by the landowner. The case was raised by the CNRT subdistrict representative in the District Advisory Committee, asking for the additional funds from CEP. The district administrator tried to obtain funding from the education department but the location was not in their list of priorities as the nearest school was going to be opened three kilometres from that location.

In the end, the problem was not resolved and the community finished the school in the original location. A new claim was sent by the landowner to the District Administration requesting a tribunal. The conflict was still ongoing and CEP money from the second cycle had not been disbursed when this report was written.

Lessons Learned

It is clear from this case that traditional leaders had influenced the decision-making process and that the decision did not involve all council members. It is another example of the limited power of the Village Development Council; the real power remains in the hands of traditional leaders. This case also underlines the ongoing rejection of the imposition of decisions, in this case on land ownership, during the Portuguese rule after the Manufahi War.

The case also suggests that the CEP subdistrict facilitator was insufficiently trained and empowered and/or insufficiently involved to prevent the situation from arising.

The Special Problem of 'New' Villages

One of the major difficulties with some of the recently established Village Development Councils is the refusal of their members to work together as a single council because they believe that their hamlets deserve the status of an independent village. This is often based on the history of the village before and during the Portuguese rule in contrast to the administrative changes made during the Indonesian occupation.

UNTAET adopted the village definitions recognized during Indonesian rule and it was agreed with the national Timorese leadership that boundaries should not be altered during the term of the transitional government. These village boundaries were used for planning and policy development by CEP. They are often referred to as the 'old villages.'

Some villages established during Portuguese times were merged with other hamlets or villages during the Indonesian rule for security and administrative reasons. Some are now reclaiming their status as separate villages. In addition, during the resistance period some hamlets were treated by the parallel clandestine administrative structure as separate villages since they were in the charge of a *nurep*. After the popular consultation in 1999, some of these hamlets continued to claim their 'independence,' or village status, and started to report directly to the subdistrict level. Both of these cases are often referred to as 'new villages.'

During the CEP emergency cycle some of the 'new' villages did not want to sit together in a council or receive CEP grants as part of an 'old' village. Some conflicts have arisen as the consequence of this desire to be treated as an autonomous entity (see box 9).

Box 9: The Problem of Old – New Villages: A Desire for Autonomy

Hohulo – Liurai, Aileu

The 'new' village of Hohulo* and the 'old' village of Liurai did not want to share the money but each of them wanted to receive the total amount of 18,000,000 rupiahs. The CEP subdistrict facilitator and the monitor explained to them why the communities had to submit proposals through the administratively recognized village of Liurai.

To resolve the problem different approaches were considered, involving the council members, traditional leaders, CNRT and elders at the village and subdistrict levels. Hohulo, however, was reluctant to accept the solution of sharing money. Discussions to try to solve the situation continued and eventually in December 2000 an agreement was reached, according to which the emergency cycle would share the money once the Village Development Council was elected with representatives of both 'villages.' By the end of April 2001, however, this problem was not totally solved.

Abofalu – Waetame, Baucau

A similar problem occurred in Quelicai Subdistrict between the 'new' village Abofalu and 'old' Waetame. It was resolved in the middle of March 2001 after months of disagreement and conflicts.

Shortly after CEP started in May 2000 it was realised that Abofalu was not recognized as a village, so it was agreed that it would form a Village Development Council with Waetame. After the first meeting the people from Abofalu did not participate in further meetings. For the third meeting, the subdistrict chief was invited as mediator but the Abofalu council representatives still did not come.

The CEP emergency cycle funding was implemented very fast in all the villages of the subdistrict, except in Abofalu and Waetame. Abofalu had been treated as a village during the clandestine period, had its own village structure and was respected as such by some NGOs and the subdistrict chief.

The CEP subdistrict facilitator continued his efforts to solve the conflict by inviting the subdistrict chief to mediate and raised the case with CNRT and CEP in Dili. In January 2001 a meeting organised with the participation of CEP and CNRT national levels advised the villages to share the money according to the number of hamlets within each village. Abofalu did not accept this solution and in March its village and hamlet chiefs came to ETTA Baucau with a delegation of community members to protest because they had not received any money.

The situation deteriorated and appeared at the national level. A meeting was held in Dili in late March with the participation of CEP senior staff, the Baucau District administrator, the DFO Quelicai, the subdistrict chief, the traditional elders and the village chief of Abofalu. A solution was finally agreed: the ETTA Cabinet Member for Internal Affairs and CNRT at the national level recognised Abofalu as a village and therefore CEP could implement the programme in this new village. It was decided that the two villages should share the money for the CEP emergency cycle; however, for the CEP second cycle each village was to receive its own allocation of money once it would have completed the process of council membership. In Quelicai Subdistrict, the money for CEP second-cycle projects was pending until a resolution for this case was found.

In this case it is important to highlight two aspects: the persistence of the CEP subdistrict facilitator to work through the case with the different stakeholders, and the tenacity of the community to keep fighting for the recognition of its perceived rights.

* Despite the fact that it is considered as village *rai moris*: existing since the beginning of the world, and was an ancient kingdom before the Portuguese changed the capital to Bandera hun (village of Liurai) in 1947.

Relationships of CEP with Other Stakeholders

The CEP was set up as a local governance structure to provide a forum for community consultation and bottom-up decision-making regarding development needs identified at the hamlet level. Mechanisms were established at different levels of the administrative structure: hamlet representatives form the Village Development Council which in turn provides two representatives to the Subdistrict Development Council. This local governance structure is strengthened by the grants that enable it to plan, select and implement its own development activities in its villages. In doing so the councils are supported by a number of CEP staff members at the local level.⁵⁹

In conducting their functions the council members and CEP staff have to interact with different stakeholders, including those who hold positions of power at all levels of the politico-administrative structure. Table 21 shows the administrative structure below district level for the locations where the CEP staff and Village and Subdistrict Development Councils operate.

The research team examined the relationship that Village Development Councils and CEP staff have established at the local level with other powers and found that these relationships differ from location to location.

CNRT and the Local Administration⁶⁰

The CNRT assumed an overarching role in East Timorese political power and made the link with the transitional administration of UNTAET. All respondents consulted by the research team were very categorical mentioning CNRT as 'the government of East Timor in coordination with UNTAET.'

As mentioned earlier⁶¹ the local administrative structure operated under the CNRT. This structure was composed of the subdistrict chief (*chefe do posto* or *secretário da zona*, as he was usually called), village chief (*chefe do suco*, *liurai* or *nurep*), and hamlet chief (*chefe do aldeia* or *celcom*), who were the major political power holders at each level of the transitional administrative structure (see table 21).

⁵⁹ District monitor, technical facilitator, subdistrict facilitator and village facilitator.

⁶⁰ Shortly after completing the final draft of the report in June 2001 the CNRT was officially disbanded.

⁶¹ See pp. 54-55.

During the CEP socialisation campaign, conducted in the first semester of 2000, a partnership was established between the CNRT subdistrict chief and the CEP subdistrict facilitator in the different subdistricts all over the country. Together they undertook the major task of informing the local populations about CEP and its electoral process for the establishment of Village Development Councils. In general, the socialisation campaign was qualified by CNRT representatives as establishing a good working relationship with CEP staff. However, once the councils were set up at the village and subdistrict levels, the working relationship between these actors has varied from one area to the next.

In a number of villages covered by the research, the Village Development Council is integrated into the village administrative structure (as was seen in its organigramme displayed in the village office), having in some cases a coordination or advisory role. In a few, the Village Development Council is fully incorporated into the rural development section.

Table 21: Transitional Administrative Structure in Relation to CEP Activities

Administrative Division	ETTA/UNTAET	CNRT	CEP
District	District administrator + team of international and local staff	Secretary and vice-secretaries + Committee of Sectoral Representatives	District monitor
	District Advisory Council		
Subdistrict (posto)	District field officer (called <i>administrador</i>)	<i>Chefe do posto</i> + 2 deputies and persons for education, health, agriculture and security <i>Conselho dos Katuas</i> OMT – OJT	<i>Posto</i> facilitators <i>Conselho do Posto</i>
Village (suco)		<i>Chefe do suco</i> + 2 deputies <i>Conselho dos Katuas</i> OMT – OJT	<i>Suco</i> facilitators <i>Conselho do Suco</i>
Hamlet (aldeia)		<i>Chefe do aldeia</i> + 2 deputies <i>Conselho dos Katuas</i> OMT – OJT	<i>Aldeia</i> representatives

In certain locations in Bobonaro, some CNRT leaders feel that the Village Development Councils do not want to work together with them.⁶² When asked, council members in Bobonaro reported coordinating their work with CNRT but they made it clear that they do not receive orders from CNRT. They perceive themselves as an independent body.

In Aileu District, the general opinion of CNRT leaders regarding CEP staff was rather negative. None of the CEP staff was originally from the area and they did not live there. Three subdistrict chiefs, out of four, reported a lack of communication and knowledge about CEP activities. In Laulara Subdistrict, the CNRT subdistrict chief mentioned three changes of CEP Subdistrict facilitators within a period of six months

⁶² See box 6 above (pp. 95-96).

and that no information was given to him prior to their departure. In his opinion, there were no proper handover procedures from one facilitator to the next. In Liquidoe Subdistrict, the CNRT representative was not invited to witness the distribution of money at the Subdistrict Development Council during the emergency cycle. Such witnessing is considered important for the transparency of the process. In Remexio, the subdistrict chief was not aware of CEP projects at their beginning and it was only afterwards, when problems started, that he was called on to be actively involved in conflict resolution.

Nevertheless, most CNRT subdistrict chiefs considered CEP as a good programme and would have liked to participate more actively in it. They did not, however, have the power to intervene:

There is no regulation that the CEP subdistrict facilitator and the council have to work with the subdistrict chief. So they didn't inform me. As subdistrict chief I am responsible for my people so when there are problems I have to go and see the facilitator to consult with him. But the facilitator never comes here to discuss with me.

(Subdistrict chief, Aileu)

From the perspective of the CEP Subdistrict facilitators the situation is very different; they report good coordination with CNRT representatives.

In Aileu Kota, the subdistrict chief was invited to address the Subdistrict Development Council when the money was distributed. Subdistrict chiefs and village chiefs are consulted and invited to mediate in conflict resolution related to 'new' villages.

In Baucau District, the relationship between CNRT and CEP seemed good. CEP subdistrict facilitators and the council members have good coordination with CNRT representatives; they are always consulted before the start of the projects and information is shared with them regularly.

The CEP subdistrict facilitator's relationship with the CNRT was critical in the early stages because of CNRT's power in the communities. The subdistrict chief was an essential channel to pass the information on to all levels. The importance of good relations with CNRT officials was, however, not limited to the subdistrict level; when CEP staff went to the villages to meet with CEP village facilitators or Village Development Council members, they also needed to meet with the village chief. Council members also needed to have good relationships with local leaders in each village or hamlet.

Most of the village chiefs interviewed by the research team acknowledged that they worked together with Village Development Councils. They were invited to the meetings and became involved in conflict resolution. In their perception the roles of Village Development Councils and CNRT cannot be divided because they are responsible to all the people. Although local populations respect council members, in some areas people will not participate in meetings convened by the Village Development Council unless the village chief calls them and is present. As stated by a CEP subdistrict facilitator:

The local leader has power and influence over the community; so when we want to visit a village we must go with some local leaders (village chief or hamlet chief); if we don't, people do not want to come. This does not mean that because local leaders have influence people do not listen to council members. But it just shows the traditional mentality of the community, which is still loyal to the leader in the area.

(Subdistrict facilitator, Baucau)

Cases of poor relations were also reported by Village Development Councils. In one of the research locations, the head of the council complained that there was a problem with the village chief. This was perceived to be because CEP achieved more for the village at that time than the chief.

This kind of situation created a gap between village chiefs and councils. Conflicts could arise because a parallel power was challenging the traditional power of village chiefs, who are supposed to be in charge of public issues and relationships with the outside world. Their power is enhanced when they are the ones responsible for distributing shelter and food aid from international NGOs, and they attend the meetings with UNTAET.

Subdistrict, village, and hamlet chiefs are very important power holders at the local level and have the respect and credibility of the local population. Therefore, they had the capacity to mobilise major involvement of community members in the assessment, design and implementation of projects promoted by Village Development Councils. Subdistrict and village chiefs have an overall view of what is going on in their respective areas and have privileged information regarding the development projects to be undertaken by the government and other potential donors.

Involvement of the political leaders could result in better coordination of planned activities. Such coordination would eliminate the overlapping of projects implemented directly by the stakeholders active in the area and those proposed by the population through Village Development Councils. This would allow for a more comprehensive long-term vision of development needs; projects could fit into a general development framework summarising what it is really needed, who will do what, when, and with what resources.

UNTAET/ETTA

UNTAET was the governmental structure exercising the power at national and district level in consultation with CNRT. In contrast with the CNRT and CEP structures, that of UNTAET extend only to the subdistrict level with the presence of a district field officer (DFO) often called by the local people *administrador* (see table 21).⁶³ Although CEP was an UNTAET project, it was not fully integrated into the UNTAET administrative structure; in most cases it functioned rather independently.

During the emergency cycle of CEP, UNTAET had no place in its implementation nor in its follow-up. Despite having an international official as the CEP focal point, in charge of guaranteeing the coordination between CEP staff and UNTAET administration, information dissemination across the sectors of the district administration was often poor. Some DFOs did not realise that CEP was an UNTAET programme, thinking of it as a World Bank programme. Sometimes, there was duplication of initiatives and no joint planning at all at the local levels. Still, the relationship between UNTAET and CEP varied between the districts studied.

Overlapping of projects was addressed very rapidly in Bobonaro. UNTAET approached CEP and raised the issue of a lack of communication. A monthly meeting was put in place between the CEP monitor, facilitators and UNTAET staff to overcome this problem. In the first meeting it became clear that there was also a lack of understanding of the project from the side of some UNTAET staff. The idea of a bottom-up method was not well understood and UNTAET staff complained about the lack of sustainability in the projects conducted.

At the subdistrict level in Bobonaro, the working relationships were very different. In some areas, the facilitators sought advice from the DFOs. In one subdistrict, the DFO frequently joined the CEP meetings at the subdistrict and village

⁶³ As the *posto* administrator was called during Portuguese times.

levels. He would speak first and pass on information about future governmental development plans for the village to the villagers. Then the meeting would start and ideas for project proposals were gathered. In this way, good coordination between UNTAET and CEP occurred and the projects were conducted in a more sustainable way.

In Aileu District, the coordination between the UNTAET CEP focal point and the CEP district monitor was qualified as good by both sides, but the same could not be said at the subdistrict level. One of the major constraints identified was the lack of communication between UNTAET DFOs in charge of the implementation of the projects at the subdistrict level and the CEP subdistrict facilitators. A monthly evaluation meeting was organised by the district monitor but it was not often attended by the DFOs. The latter complained of not seeing the CEP subdistrict facilitators when they visited their assigned subdistrict. This problem was tackled in a meeting at the end of 2000 and it seems that the relationship in some of the subdistricts improved.

During the fieldwork in Aileu the District Administration expressed the intention to set up Subdistrict Development Committees with the participation of major stakeholders: subdistrict chiefs, Councils of Elders, Subdistrict Development Council representatives, NGOs, UNTAET DFOs, CEP facilitators, and cooperation agencies with the aim of better coordinating projects and resources. Although the idea was good, it seems not to have been implemented by the date this report was written.

In Baucau, at the district level, UNTAET reported that no mechanism exists to involve the CEP team in the administrative structure. The flow of information is not so good; UNTAET requested a list of the different proposals to be funded by CEP during the second cycle. Integration of CEP staff into the district administration structure was being considered.

At the subdistrict level in Baucau, CEP facilitators reported inviting DFOs to their meetings conducted with the Subdistrict Development Council. The relationship between the CEP team and DFOs is often limited by the lack of a common language. Another difficulty highlighted by CEP facilitators has been the lack of coordination and the negative effect of UNTAET implemented TEP (temporary employment projects) and QIP (quick impact projects), which have introduced the notion of 'working for three dollars a day.'⁶⁴ This practice disrupted the traditional system of community work and nowadays the community does not want to work on a voluntary basis, creating some difficulties for the implementation of CEP.

To sum up, there was a need to increase the communication between UNTAET and CEP staff and the councils. More efficient mechanisms of coordination to synergise the impact of the councils at the local level would have been beneficial. ETTA/UNTAET could have played a major role, by stimulating NGOs to involve the Village Development Councils in their work. Councils know what are the major problems and priorities and have elaborated development plans at the village level. In many cases they have a good coordination system, with village chief, hamlet chief and Council of Elders involved in the development plan; any problems are also discussed and solved with these actors.

ETTA/UNTAET could have benefited more from this strategic alliance since working with the Village Development Councils would have highlighted its presence and visibility whereas on the ground it was often perceived as being almost absent.

⁶⁴ TEP is funded by USAID and QIP through the Consolidated Fund for East Timor. Both projects are implemented through the UNTAET district field officers.

Other Donor Projects

According to some CEP subdistrict facilitators, UNTAET Regulation 2000/13 states that NGOs should work with the Village Development Councils but so far this did not happen across all the districts. It was expected that NGOs establish contact with them and work together in their respective projects. UNTAET was supposed to raise awareness amongst NGOs to involve the councils in their work.

In all the districts covered by the research, it was pointed out that UNTAET had invited NGOs to join the meetings between CEP and UNTAET for information sharing about ongoing projects and future development plans. The need to strengthen coordination at the local level and to avoid overlapping in order to maximise impact was highlighted at these meetings.

The intended collaboration was, however, far from being a reality, as reported in the different districts. It seemed that only in Bobonaro did such fruitful coordination exist. In some subdistricts international NGOs started to make use of the Village Development Councils as advisors on developmental issues in the villages. Council members also reported that they had written proposals for other NGOs that come into town:

They have the money and we have the society and the data.

(Village Development Council member, Bobonaro)

The NGOs could contact Village Development Councils because they are official community bodies. Through the councils, NGOs could go straight to the hamlet level. Normally, NGOs only come as far as the subdistrict level. The involvement of the councils in NGOs' projects is very positive as this can help them develop into real development councils. Yet, in most areas, council members felt powerless because NGOs had not yet started to acknowledge them. To empower them, good training is needed on community development issues. It is also important to sensitise NGOs to work with the councils in order to strengthen the latter's role in their communities.

In the long term, the councils could turn into development focal points for their villages and act as advisors not only for CEP but also for NGOs and intersectoral governmental programmes such as agriculture, health and civic education. A country-wide system could be established in which NGO's, bilateral and multilateral agencies also contribute to support a bottom-up method.

Traditional Elders

The traditional elders or *Conselhos dos Katuas* act as a legislative body and are integrated into the administrative structure at hamlet, village and subdistrict levels (see table 21). The Council of Elders is usually composed of the senior members of social groups (*uma kains*) and is invested with a moral authority over the extended family (lineage, clan, House) and community members.

None of the informants consulted in Bobonaro mentioned the exclusion of traditional elders in CEP discussions on development issues. In their perception they always had to be involved. Traditional elders were seen as an important group. The majority of informants in Bobonaro mentioned that Village Development Councils should always coordinate with the elders; the younger generation does not know much about the traditions and therefore needs the elders for direction. After the council had gathered the ideas of the people, they sat together with the village chief and the elders to discuss the ideas. Some informants even thought that the CEP subdistrict facilitators and district monitors should have been more in touch with the elders as coordinators. Other informants saw the role of the elders as contributors of

ideas and as witnesses in the process and as sources of suggestions for the resolution of problems.

However, the views about the relationships of Village Development Councils with the elders varied depending on the informants (see table 22).

Table 22: CEP Councils' Relationship with Elders

Younger informants		Traditional elders
<i>In urban areas</i>	<i>In rural areas</i>	
The elders can only give advice but cannot stop the council decisions.	The elders have to agree on the election of the council members as well as on the proposals handed in. Without their agreement, nothing can proceed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything is still passed through the elders, that is why things are still running well and people are not suspicious about each other. • The Village Development Council has to listen to and to receive advice from the elders.

For the majority of people from rural areas the respect and involvement of the elders were still very strong; the idea of making a decision without consideration of the elders was unthinkable and could have negative consequences as wrong decisions could later be sanctioned by the ancestors. The position of the traditional elders in the village is to ensure that everything in the village life runs in accordance with the traditions.

In observed CEP meetings, the elders present would give their opinion on projects, especially when it came to their area of duty. For example, when the talk turned to water projects, there would be an elder involved that descended from the sacred house that traditionally guards the water sources. He then had to conduct a ceremony and fix the time when the project could be conducted. To take water from springs is no simple matter, especially if other villages get involved.

In Kailako Subdistrict, the first money from CEP was put on the table with betel nuts, then a chicken was killed and the blood spilled on it so everything would work well.

Nevertheless, some of the elders asked about CEP had never heard of it. In fact they could be the last recipients in the chain of information concerning the 'outside' world, especially as they might only speak the local languages and are very often illiterate.

As has been discussed earlier,⁶⁵ the elders definitely had a crucial role when conflicts arose. They were the first to be proposed by the Village Development Councils themselves or by formal political powers at the local level to resolve conflict. The CEP staff acknowledged their role as essential figures to judge and and solve problems related to CEP.

⁶⁵ See 'CEP Conflicts and Their Resolution' (pp. 95-99).

OMT

The East Timorese Women's Organisation (OMT) is a national organisation under the umbrella of CNRT with antennae at the district, subdistrict, village and hamlet levels (see table 21).

The most widespread OMT comments regarding CEP were that it is a good project that provides an opportunity for women to be involved in the decision-making process on development issues and that both men and women are equally represented. Some of the female council members in Aileu District were also part of the OMT and a few OMT proposals were supported by CEP.

In Baucau, OMT leaders at the district level claimed that they were not involved nor invited to participate in CEP meetings; at the subdistrict level, the situation was quite different, as a number of female leaders were involved as village facilitators or took part in the development of proposals.

In summary, some OMT members have taken part in meetings and provided ideas while others have never heard about the project and claim not to be involved.

OJT

The East Timorese Youth Organisation (OJT) under the umbrella of CNRT has branches in all the districts with antennae at the subdistrict, village and hamlet levels (see table 21). Although there was no formal relationship between OJT and CEP, many OJT members were members of the Village Development Council. In some locations a working relationship was established, as OJT often organised the communal labour in the villages on orders from CNRT. If manpower for the CEP project was needed OJT would organise it.

The relationship between OJT and CEP varied in the different areas. Some OJT leaders reported that CEP had no working relationship or coordination at all with the youth. At the district level in Aileu the OJT leader had first heard about the project a few days before the research team contacted him. In other locations OJT leaders were waiting for a formal invitation to participate in CEP meetings. This was the case in Laga Subdistrict in Baucau, where the youth wanted to be involved but had not been invited to the council meetings or to coordinate with the implementation of the programme.

In eastern Baucau (Baguia, Afaloikai, Quelicai), the general opinion of OJT leaders on CEP was good but they regretted that their organisations could not submit their own proposals through the Village Development Council. There was a need for more information about how the programme works and a wish that community groups could submit proposals for the CEP second and third cycles. In contrast, in Venilale the youth participation in the programme was considered very important down to the hamlet level. OJT, as an organisation, had nothing to do with it but the youth as community members gave ideas and some OJT members were project leaders in their villages.

In Bobonaro, the involvement of OJT in CEP was outstanding. In most of the locations OJT representatives spoke very highly about CEP, which was perceived as a good training for the youth of the villages to start making decisions for themselves. It was hoped that more organizations including NGOs were going to conduct projects like CEP.

The Church

The Catholic Church was mentioned by many respondents as a key power. The Church administrative structure is quite different from that of UNTAET and CNRT. It is composed of two dioceses, one in Dili, one in Baucau, embracing different parishes covering more than two subdistricts. At the local level each village has a catechist.

Hardly any working relationships between the Church and the Village Development Councils were found in the three studied districts. Some of the Church representatives at the district and local levels had heard very little, or nothing, about CEP.

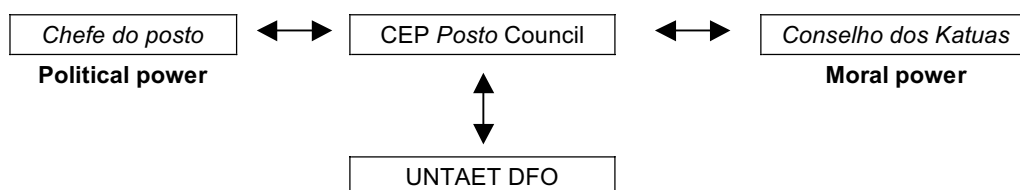
In Laga, where the parish covers the eastern region of Baucau District (Laga, Quelicai, Baguia), the question raised by the priest was, Where had the CEP money been invested? In Baucau Subdistrict, the situation was very different with the priest reporting a good relationship with the Village Development Council that consulted him and asked for help. In Venilale, the CEP subdistrict facilitator reported solid support from the Church. It had provided them with a safer place to keep the project money before being distributed and advice was given when the council needed to buy a rice-grinding machine for a project.

Box 10: An Example: Working Relationships of CEP in Laga

A recurring issue, in discussions with traditional leaders, was how to integrate the traditional power structure within the process of the Village Development Council without jeopardizing its democratic nature. The following example, discussed with traditional authorities in Laga Subdistrict, illustrates deficiencies that could be found in CEP at the subdistrict level and suggests possible solutions to make the programme more reliable and transparent to the traditional authorities.

In Laga, the councils worked as independent structures separate from the political power, represented by the subdistrict chief, and from the customary power of the Councils of Elders. During the CEP emergency cycle there was no real coordination between these three institutions as the Development Council did not invite the others to participate in the process. When a problem related to CEP arose in the hamlets, the villagers brought the case to the subdistrict chief to be resolved but he was not in a position to intervene.

To remedy this lack of inclusion and to improve communication, it was suggested that during the second cycle of CEP these much-trusted actors be involved through better coordination mechanisms. In this way the functioning of the programme would also benefit in terms of transparency. The following diagram shows the proposed lines of coordination between the three structures:



From the viewpoint of the Laga authorities, the participation of these traditional powers in the CEP process is crucial because

- the subdistrict chiefs know the scope of the different projects and the NGO activities in the area and could help ensure synergy between these and CEP activities;
- the Council of Elders has the moral authority, is familiar with the problems that can arise, and can prevent mistakes committed in the past; in addition it has conflict resolution skills. It has strong authority at the local level and can judge if projects are in accordance with traditions;
- UNTAET could also benefit from a more active involvement in the functioning of the council: it would gain more visibility at the local level by interacting with the key actors.

Another point addressed by Laga authorities, and based on previous experience, was the need for a monitoring or control body at the village level for all projects conducted by the councils. The leaders argued that CEP should better supervise how the money is invested and exercise some control at the

village level; to do so a monitoring team is needed. This team should have an independent status and be composed of a representative of the Village Development Council, a Church and/or a civil society representative (e.g. teacher) and an elder. The political authorities, such as the subdistrict, village or hamlet chiefs, should not be involved in this supervising body to avoid any questions of political influence or conflict of interest.

In addition, it was suggested that the elders could also be involved in the Village Development Council as elected members. According to Timorese tradition, people still listen to the *katuas*:

If someone misused the money and the *katuas* say he has to pay it back, the person has to do it.
(Subdistrict chief)

This proposal from the Laga authorities corresponded to the point stated by UNTAET Regulation 2000/13, Section 9 concerning the Village Monitoring Team.* However, it seemed that this body had not been implemented in Laga and in other locations visited during the research.

The above example is a proposal, from the local perspective, of a way to integrate traditional structures into the functioning of CEP. This addresses the most fundamental question for CEP identified by our research: should it accommodate traditional power structures or remain independent from them?

* The regulation states that this body consists of the village head, the representative of the Village Development Council and a traditional leader. If poor or bad practice is identified in village-level development activity the Village Monitoring Team shall attempt to correct it. This team should report to the Subdistrict Development Council and the ETDA District Administration.

Gender Issues

One of the major contributions of CEP towards gender equality in East Timor has been the introduction of a quota of 50% women in the election of Village Development Council members. As UNTAET Regulation 2001/13 states, 'each Village Development Council shall, in principle, consist of an equal number of women and men.'

This requirement seemed to have been accepted without problems in all the localities where the research was conducted. In these places, a man and a woman have been elected in each hamlet to be part of the Village Development Council. The research team explored the extent to which women were participating as equal partners with men in this new decision-making body.

Women in the Councils

In the experience of the research team during the fieldwork, the female council members seemed to be sidelined. No head of a Village or Subdistrict Development Council in the study areas was female. When the female representatives were present in interviews with male council members they would not make any comments, unless directly asked. Even then, the male member would often reply because women councillors usually took some time before replying. In addition, in interviews with some female council members, the team found that their knowledge about the programme was insufficient.

In CEP village meetings, female council members could mostly be observed taking care of food and drinks for the people in traditional power positions who attended the meeting. Sometimes they would take notes of the suggestions made, but they were never seen actively encouraging people to speak or discussing matters themselves. This may be partly due to the fact that they are not in the more vocal positions within the council. In internal CEP meetings women participated, but usually men dominated the meetings.

There are, however, differences between regions and localities and, according to their male peers, women councillors were quite active, particularly the elder ones. They proposed ideas, raised important issues and sometimes even criticised their male

partners. The following comment from a female member of the CEP Subdistrict Development Council in Aileu Kota summarises these points:

The participation of women in meetings has the respect of men. When elders finished debating about the programme, they say that now women and men have equal rights. For example, if we have a meeting, the women also criticise the men, 'Why did you [man] come to the meeting but your wife didn't come to participate?

However, according to the same informant, younger women seemed shyer:

Young women sometimes do not have the strength and are afraid to speak. When we have a meeting we give them the motivation to speak but they are shy. Perhaps another reason is because, during Indonesian times, the women didn't have the opportunity to participate in organizations and didn't receive any training.

Male councillors were promoting the active participation of women as equal partners within council bodies, as a consequence of the informed choices made during the ballot period:

Actually, women are very active in the council, not like before when women's rights were constrained, because we chose that we decided to start to respect women's rights. Democratisation is not only for men but also for women.

(Subdistrict Development Council member, Aileu)

In another subdistrict, the research team was told:

Until now there are no problems about the discussion. In the meetings everyone has the right to speak but the older people (*katuas*) speak first ... Women also actively speak and specifically speak out the women's needs. When a woman speaks the men have to listen to her ... Women are active in the meetings ... They give ideas how to do with the programme.

(Subdistrict Development Council chief, Aileu)

In Aileu, the majority of female Village Development Council members were active during the resistance movement. In Remexio and Liquidoe Subdistricts, women council members were acknowledged as being active and outspoken by the different stakeholders. They were also very much involved in the decision-making processes. Good examples of this, in Aileu District, are the villages of Malere and Aisirimou where women councillors undertook consultation with women at the hamlet level. In contrast most of the male informants in Bobonaro felt strange about the gender balance in the councils. Nevertheless they did not feel threatened, as the women in the council remained within their traditional paradigms. When asked, OMT representatives or female council members perceived themselves as very vocal already. They said that they have the same rights now as men and perceive that they already overtake part of the CEP meetings. Still, they realized that they had no power in decision-making because men are still too dominant.

In Baucau Subdistrict, women described themselves as being very active in the programme. They took part in the meetings and had the right to speak. Facilitators in the same area thought that the women's contributions were good but that they were not active yet in the meetings. The men are still making the decisions and therefore ruling the meetings.

Male councillors usually state that everybody has the same rights and if women know how to work they should do it. The way to reach gender balance is proposed by one informant:

If we cannot have equal rights between men and women we have to strengthen women's activities. If the women are successful the men will start appreciating their wives.

(Village Development Council member, Baucau)

In Afaloikai, Baucau, the general perception was that women are actively contributing with ideas and are hardworking in the implementation of CEP projects. There were no distinctions between men and women:

I can't give the correct information because perhaps you will think that I'm wrong, but please ask the women, they will give you the correct information. If you want my opinion, I

can say that Afaloikai is different from other villages. The reason is, when we have a programme in the village or subvillage, not only men come to work but all the women come as well, they are working like the men; this is the reality in our village.

(Catholic catechist, Baucau)

Major Constraints to Women's Participation

The research team often heard from CEP staff and other outside stakeholders about the poor attendance and lack of active involvement of female Village Development Council members in the meetings. Women's participation in CEP decision-making bodies was constrained by the demands of their traditional role in society and also by the lack of transportation and training.

Women's Position in Society

Traditionally, in East Timorese societies the decision-making process is the domain of the senior male of the existing social groups within the hamlets. Rural women are not supposed to be outspoken and to take the floor in public meetings. However, the *feriks* (senior women) have an important role in social exchanges and rituals. In economic activities some aspects of East Timorese traditions reinforce gender balance. There is a fair distribution of tasks between men and women in agricultural labour. Both participate in the different steps, from planting to harvesting. Women are also responsible for selling cash crops in the market, produced by their vegetable gardens. Men sometimes care for children while women are undertaking these duties.

Family Constraints

Another major constraint to women's participation is family-related problems. Some council members stated that their female peers have difficulties with their husbands. This issue was highlighted by the Subdistrict Development Council chief in Liquido:

Sometimes the discussions with the community take hours and when they go back home their husbands are fighting with them, saying she should receive money for that job.

Husbands also complained because when their wives attend council meetings, they have to do their wives' chores. This was explained by a female representative of the CEP Subdistrict Development Council in Laga:

Some women are married and when they come to the meeting their husbands argue, 'Who will stay at home and pay attention to the children and who will cook for them?' Some men support their wives to participate in the activity or programme in the village but some men do not want their wives to go anywhere.

Social Conditions

Another problem mentioned is the lack of employment opportunities for women, and some discouraged female councillors want to be paid for their tasks as council members. A female Subdistrict Development Council member of Quelicai said:

The women in the council participated only during the first time; many of them then did not want to participate anymore because they are living far away from town and also there is no payment for them. They do not want to participate anymore. Sometimes we have meetings here but only a few people come.

Especially in the more urban setting of Baucau town, where there is more employment opportunities for women, some women councillors stated that they do not want to work voluntarily anymore, neither in the councils or for an organisation like OMT, because they have jobs and go to work.

Transportation was another issue raised by council members, but not only for women. Council members lived in different villages and had to walk many kilometres to participate in the meetings, or to go to villages to explain about the CEP programme to community members.

Need for Training

Some female councillors spoke of their desire to receive more training. In some of the areas women had not received any training by the subdistrict facilitators nor at the district level. Aileu District Administration had organised several workshops to strengthen women's role in council meetings.

Women's Project Proposals

In Aileu, in the first round of CEP fund allocation, women's proposals centred on vegetable gardens, handicrafts, sewing workshops and water supply. In three different villages in Aileu Kota, women's participation is considered exemplary with initiatives that benefit the whole population, but specifically alleviate women and children's chores. In terms of a 'practical gender approach' such initiatives can make a great difference in their daily lives.

The three projects are related to water supply implemented in different locations. In the hamlet Kabasfatin, in the village of Malere, women conducted a water supply project to relieve the lack of water. The decision was taken by all the women and the proposal submitted through the local women's organisation (OMT) to the Village Development Council. All the community participated in the rehabilitation of the water supply.

In the village of Aisirimou, women submitted a proposal on water supply and agriculture. When the money was received, a meeting was organised by the council and women decided to use the money for three different projects: water supply, communal plantation, and the rest of the money was used to buy chairs for the village office.

In another village, women were involved in the construction of a water point and a laundry. They worked very actively, carrying the rocks and helping the men to connect the pipes.

In Bobonaro, the women's CEP projects have been oriented to weaving mats and hats and planting rice fields and gardens. The major difficulty for them has been where to sell their weavings. They have no marketing strategy and the market is saturated with *tais* production since several development agencies are orienting women's micro-entrepreneur projects towards fabric making. A few voices critical of women's proposals stated that women only ask for what they need for today. They felt that project proposals from the men are much better as they work together with CNRT and UNTAET.

Opportunities to Improve Women's Participation

With the above-mentioned quota of 50% female representation, CEP offers a policy framework in which women are allowed to participate as equal partners in the decision-making process in the Village Development Council. However, as has been discussed, women are still only playing a minor role in the overall CEP structure. There are structural constraints that prevent them from taking a more pro-active role. To achieve the status of equal partners with men in the decision-making process, a

long process of change of mentality in both men and women is needed, particularly in rural areas. The team thought that social changes should not be too strongly enforced on society, but happen through society itself.

Nevertheless, some steps forward could be undertaken to facilitate this process. CEP subdistrict facilitators can play an important role by encouraging women to participate in an environment where they feel free.

Some of the points discussed above could also be remedied if a real capacity-building strategy was designed to overcome some of the gaps identified. Such a strategy should have different components, including communication techniques to increase women's confidence so that they would be more outspoken about their own concerns in council meetings within their own cultural framework.

Another component that should be addressed relates to more practical matters such as basic accountancy and management skills. This would help people to use and administer CEP projects and funds; to prepare proposals and address potential donors; to undertake participatory rapid assessment; and to gain basic notions of community development.

As one interviewee said,

East Timor is a new nation and women, more than half of the population, need more training to participate actively in the construction of the country and to increase women's conditions.

Since one of the aims of CEP is to alleviate poverty and develop the entrepreneurial spirit, CEP could offer specific training in income-generating projects and microcredit schemes, including marketing strategies for their products, using interactive techniques and practical exercises in the field with basic accountancy and managerial skills. Different experiences around the world have shown that women are good administrators and invest their money in the family, not in drinks or cockfighting.

These training components within a package will give female councillors the confidence and competence to advise their peers towards better development choices at the local level and will reinforce their competence to be equal partners with men.

Conclusions

On 20 May 2002 East Timor became the newest country of the twenty-first century. During more than 450 years this half-island in the Timor Sea was under the domination of foreign rule, first as a neglected Portuguese colony, then during 24 years under a harsh Indonesian occupation. After the popular consultation of 30 August 1999 and the aftermath of pro-Indonesian violence, the territory was administered by the United Nations for 31 months until its independence.

Despite all these years of foreign rule, the traditional power structures at the local level, particularly in the rural areas that form more than 80% of the territory, have remained almost unchanged. The division between ritual and political authority, in accordance with the hierarchical system of extended families, is still an important concept in rural areas. At the higher levels (subdistricts and above) the ritual authorities are still acknowledged but the political authorities seem to split into two groups: over time, in accommodation to the ruling authorities, some traditional political power holders have retained symbolic and informal power, while others were actually integrated into the prevailing formal power structure.

Nowadays, these concepts are starting to be challenged by international influences and the introduction of modern ideas. One core difference between the traditional and modern paradigms is the hierarchy of the former, compared with the idea of equality of the latter. The other main difference lies in the form of decision-making. While 'democracy' may have come to be associated with peace and freedom it is not seen, so far, as challenging the local hierarchical system of decision-making.

Following the overwhelming results of the popular consultation, a unique opportunity was offered to rebuild local governance structures in this new nation. The Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project was set up in March 2000 with the objective to provide a model for a democratic, participative and transparent forum to increase community participation in the planning and decision-making processes concerning development issues at the hamlet and village levels.

The programme supported the creation of Village Development Councils as structures of local governance. After a socialisation campaign, each hamlet elected representatives, with equal participation of men and women, to sit in these councils. Local leaders, such as village and hamlet chiefs as well as members of the Councils of Elders, were not eligible to be candidates for the councils. This measure was undertaken to work towards a division of executive and legislative powers between the already existing village chief and the councils. The Village Development Councils were supposed to provide a local structure to deal with development issues and an opportunity for people other than the normal power holders to be involved in decision-making. The new structure made it possible for the community to choose council members by using the Western democratic paradigm, in which every villager had an equal voice and anybody, irrespective of their origins, could be elected.

The hypothesis of the anthropological research team was that such a process would lead predominantly to the election of descendants of a particular lineage or 'House,' which still holds traditional political authority. The hypothesis proved to be wrong. Instead, mainly young literate people who either had some kind of 'project experience' or had proven themselves to be good leaders in the clandestine movement were elected into the councils. In contrast to many of the elders who are illiterate, the elected young people were able to fulfil the CEP requirement of literacy. They were not chosen in accordance with traditional political concepts; most were not descendants

from the Houses that hold the traditional political authority, or were coincidentally so. Local communities did not consider the Village Development Councils as belonging to either the traditional political or ritual spheres of their world. Therefore, anybody could be elected to the councils; council members are perceived as 'commoners' without political power. The council members' position is seen as purely functional, without the traditional political tasks of conflict resolution and decision-making. They are seen solely as implementers of projects and, therefore, their position in the local sociocosmos does not necessarily clash with the traditional powers. This, added to the lack of seniority of their members, means that most of the councils have not yet developed any real power. Political and ritual authority are strongly connected to age.

The exclusion of the traditional power holders from the process and the consequent lack of power of council members have caused some tension at the village level, perhaps more so because in Indonesian times development projects were always closely connected to the village chief. In the eyes of the community the council members may have been empowered by their potential to influence the use of CEP development funds but they were not acknowledged as holders of power positions, despite their elected status. The majority of the population at the local level perceive that power holders have to descend from the family sanctioned by the supernatural power of the ancestors. Therefore, the idea of a local democratically elected 'development agency' with decision-making authority has not yet fully taken root.

Concerning the future development and functioning of CEP in relation to traditional power structures, there are two lines of thought. The first argues that there is benefit in continuing with the process of democratic election of Village Development Councils and the deliberate exclusion of traditional power holders from this body. This, it is argued, is more likely to lead to an equitable use of development resources and economical empowerment of underprivileged groups. This option would place traditional power holders in a redefined position; Houses could become rather symbolic, while new powers would deal with developmental and political issues.

The opposing perspective is that the economic development process at the local level, and thus the rebuilding of the country, can be made more efficient, in the short term, through the deliberate involvement of traditional power holders in the councils. This approach would take advantage of a well-established structure that has the power and very often the trust of the whole population within the village. This option may be more easily understood by the local population. Some power holders, for example the village and subdistrict chiefs, are also knowledgeable in development issues due to their links with the 'outside' world.

It is clear that only through long-term education in development issues can the council members become credible and acknowledged as legitimate power holders. The Village Development Councils have not challenged 'old' local powers so far, but a system is now in place that gives new people the framework and support to establish themselves in a new power position. If this were to happen, the traditional power structure could be confined to its more traditional roles. However, it is in reality impossible to separate local political power from the use of resources and local development. Whatever process for development evolves it will need to provide a framework in which the councils and the traditional powers work together and complement each other.

It will be up to the people and political leaders to decide whether to use the opportunity given through CEP to create a more 'democratic' society with equal participation at the local level. To have an impact on the sociopolitical structure of East Timor, it is likely that CEP and the processes it promotes, accompanied by civic education, would have to continue for some time. The issues raised here will need to be carefully addressed by the CEP policy decision-makers in consultation with the Timorese leadership.

Appendices

Appendix A: Reflections of a Research Assistant

By Fernando A. da Costa⁶⁶

An Interesting Research

As a Timorese, I was always feeling proud of my identity, but this is not enough if I do not even know what my culture is about. Now, after having conducted the research I feel more confident. I do not know all the cultural systems of my country, but I know part of them.

For a long time it seemed as if the intellectuals had abandoned this nation's culture; they always referred to examples from outside when they talked about values. Sometimes they also took some development models from outside, thinking that they would be good for implementation in East Timor. I think that every model of development must be based on the reality of the life of the Timorese people and that it can be dangerous to run a development programme without knowing the culture of the country. The experience in other countries tells us how development models that come from the outside are not necessarily appropriate for Timor.

Through the research, I was made aware of the values of East Timorese cultures, and these values must be kept until the end of the world.

Colonialism's Destruction of Cultural Systems

In the Portuguese times, cultural systems were destroyed by integrating traditional structures into the government structure. Nevertheless, because several hamlets in Laga did not agree to pay taxes to the Portuguese government, the Portuguese reorganised the traditional structure by putting other people into power positions.

Another strategy to take control of the traditional king was by applying *divide e impera*. This political strategy was very useful at that time; kingdoms that had war relationships were overtaken by Portuguese power. They put Portuguese-loyal leaders in place. This strategy was used by the Portuguese to organise the war against Dom Boaventura, which is known as the War of Manufahi; this strategy was successful. After the Manufahi War, the Portuguese imposed more kings in several places in East Timor.

The other strategy was to integrate the traditional structure into the government structure, so the traditional power could be controlled by the Portuguese. The *liurai* became *regulo*. After the Portuguese had integrated traditional systems into the government bit by bit, the *regulo* became less powerful. The Portuguese established the subdistrict chief, who was taking control over the administration at the subdistrict

⁶⁶ Fernando A. da Costa, one of the Timorese members of the research team, wrote the following text based on the knowledge and understanding gained through the research.

level. After the Portuguese people had integrated the *liurai boot* or *regulos* into the colonial system and given them military ranks, as *coronel* (colonel), these colonels had the right to lead people and large areas. The second power holder, who was integrated, was the *liurai* or *chefe do suco* (village chief) as *major*. The *major* had the right to organise people in several hamlets. At the hamlet level, traditional powers, like *chefes do povoação*, became *captains*.

The other power holder in Portuguese times, who is not mentioned in most of the literature about East Timor, is the *lia nain*. This power holder played a very important role inside the community because this person was in charge of problem solving and sometimes acted also as a worship leader. However, in several places they have a distinction between two powers, the *lia nain* and the worship leader or *kuku nain*. These power holders are very important actors inside the community because they are always in contact with the people at the time of major events in their life cycle.

The Timorese population settled within groups of Houses, called *uma knuas*, which descend from the same clan. Several *knuas* form a hamlet, several hamlets form a village and several villages form a subdistrict.

In Indonesian times, the government strongly suspected the traditional houses and their leaders of being involved in the resistance movement. The sacred houses were a hiding place for people from the clandestine movement and the guerrilla fighters received their power from the sacred house; therefore, they were burnt by Indonesian soldiers. Not only that, the Indonesian military also resettled Timorese people from the mountains down to the places close to the main roads. When people had to move, their sacred houses were abandoned because no one came back to conduct ceremonies again, since they were afraid of the military. If they left their new village they were suspected to be in contact with the guerrillas.

Some Timorese are separated from their traditional life since the Indonesian occupation. At the current time, people are returning to their original life by building their sacred houses again. They celebrate again traditional ceremonies in public, without being afraid of the military.

The Indonesians had used the traditional leaders by putting them as *tokoh masyarakat* (members of society). Here they had a function as problem solvers.

Rural communities are strongly organised through the traditional structures. People still trust the old structure of the *liurai* system because the *liurai* structure is also based on the way of life of the traditional system. Because of this, people in the rural areas believe that the person in the *liurai* position has to have a relationship with the former *liurai*. Some say that the 'hot chair' has to be passed on through the *liurai* descendance. The 'hot chair' means the position of *liurai*. Even when democratic elections were launched by CNRT, they did not change the traditional structures. The democratic election looked as if it destroyed the traditional power inside the community. Nevertheless, even in the election people knew whom they had to vote for. In other places things changed, because the criterion to be *liurai* was to be literate. Some *liurais* therefore could not become candidates. People would still go to the old *chefe do suco*. They believed in him, because he was appointed by the ancestors. That is what the 'hot chair' means; only *liurai* descendants can be in this position, or misfortune will happen.

The Timorese People

The two largest language groups in East Timor are Mambai and Makassae. The Mambai people occupy most of the mountain areas in central East Timor. The language used most is Tetum.

The Mambai people are in Aileu, Ermera, Ainaro, part of Liquiça, Dili and Manufahi. All of them are Mambai but they have different dialects among them. In our observations, we found that Mambai people in Aileu are very different from the people in the east. Mambai people were easy to meet and easy to work with. They are still very traditional. We were able to attend a ceremony that they have each harvest time in each *uma lulik*; they also had a big ceremony in the big *uma lulik*, such as Hohulo and Raimansu.

Makassae people are different from Mambai. In terms of behaviour, Makassae people are known as rugged people. Their environment is also not the same; Makassae people live in upland areas. They are also known to solve problems by fighting rather than through negotiating. Many Makassae nowadays are in power positions.

In terms of traditional issues, Makassae people also still believe in their sacred items and respect their traditional leaders. Laga is a good example of Makassae people in the eastern side. Here the UNTAET structure exists and does not influence the traditional powers. Because of the people's trust in traditional structures, they pass on their protests in the same way. When people have issues to be addressed, they put them straight through to the DAC (District Advisory Council), and the *regulo* of Laga was in charge of that.

CEP Council: A New Structure

Generally people are happy with the CEP programme and wish that it will be continued. We often heard positive comments, but I think that people change their minds easily; if the CEP money does not arrive fast enough, they immediately speak negatively. The important point that should be passed on through the CEP programme is to see the needs inside the community and to plan sustainable programmes.

What I want to suggest is that the CEP programme should look to the community needs and should have social awareness. Community needs also imply that the products of the projects need a market. People often complain that their agricultural products cannot be sold. The CEP council should become a sector to handle rural development. They just need the skills to run programmes.

Appendix B: Resumee of Researchers

David Alves Lopes is originally from Los Palos, *uma lulik* Tailuro-rato, *uma kain* Titilari. He conducted studies in social anthropology at the University of Udayana in Bali, Indonesia. He interrupted his studies following the results of the popular consultation and his final dissertation is pending. He had work experience with civil society organisations in Bali and in Los Palos. He speaks Fataluku, Tetum, Indonesian and English. After completing this research he went back to Bali to finish his training.

Estanislau Babo Soares is originally from Ermera. He studied political sciences at the East Timor University. He finished his studies but has not yet graduated. He worked for five years as a civil servant in Dili and was hamlet chief in Dili. He speaks Mambai, Tetum, Indonesian and Portuguese. After completing this research he joined the UNTAET/OCPI (Office of Communication and Public Information) Television Unit.

Fernando da Costa was born in Dili and is originally from *uma lulik* Uaikana in Viqueque. He conducted four years of study in statistics at ISTP (Institute for Science and Technology Policy) in Java (Indonesia) but could not finish following the popular consultation. He has completed several courses in journalism. He has work experience with different civil society organisations in Dili, Liquiça and Baucau, and worked with the UN Resident Coordinator Office as NGO liason officer for the Common Country Assessment. He speaks Tetum, Indonesian and English. After completing this research he joined UNDP.

Cesar Melito dos Santos Martines is originally from Aileu, *uma lulik* Hohul, *uma lisan* Dilbaku. He conducted three years of agricultural studies in Udayana University in Bali (Indonesia) but was obliged to interrupt them after the popular consultation. He has work experience in a human rights civil society organisation in Aileu and has recently worked as an interpreter in the Aileu District Administration. He has also worked as a teacher in a junior high school in Aileu. He speaks Mambai, Tetum, Indonesian and English. After completing this research he went to the East Timor University in Dili to complete his studies.

Tanja Hohe is a German anthropologist with a masters degree in Indonesian studies, social anthropology and sociology from the University of Frankfurt. She has conducted anthropological field research on local value systems in the Moluccan Islands (Eastern Indonesia). In East Timor she worked with UNAMET and UNTAET as district officer and political affairs officer. She is presently a visiting fellow at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University, USA. She can be contacted by e-mail: <thohe99@gmx.de>.

Sofi Ospina is a Colombian anthropologist with a masters degree in social and cultural anthropology at the Sorbonne University in Paris and in development studies at the Graduate Institute of Development Studies in Geneva. She has conducted anthropological applied research in Colombia and Switzerland in the areas of development, public health and migration. In East Timor she worked with the UN Resident Coordinator Office in the Common Country Assessment. After this research she joined UNTAET/ETTA Gender Affairs Unit. She is currently working as a freelance anthropologist and development consultant dividing her time between Switzerland and Cambodia. She can be contacted by e-mail: <ospinasofi@hotmail.com>.

Glossary and Abbreviations

Ahimatan (Tetum)	Literally, 'hearth'; used to denote people of one descent
Aldeia (Port.)	Hamlet in the transitional period; name given by the clandestine structure immediately after the ballot
Ata (Tetum)	Slave
Bararin (Makassae)	Ritual leader
Bei (Kemaq)	Ritual leader
Bosop (Kemaq)	Sacred Stone place
Bunaq	Language group in western districts of Bobonaro and Suai
Bupati (Ind.)	District administrator in the Indonesian administrative system
Cadeira manas (Tetum)	Literally, 'hot chair'; used for the position of the political leaders that exclusively follow the descent
Camat (Ind.)	Subdistrict chief in the Indonesian administrative system
Celcom (Port.)	'Cell of communication': hamlet leader in the clandestine structure
CEP	Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project
Chefe do povoação (Port.)	Hamlet chief under the Portuguese rule
Chefe do suco (Port.)	Village chief in the UN transitional administration
Chefe de uma kain (Tetum)	Chief of <i>uma kain</i> , traditional powerholder in the lineage, usually the senior male member of the group
CNRT (Port.)	National Council of Timorese Resistance
Conselho dos Katuas (Tetum)	Council of Elders
Conselho do Suco (Port.)	CEP Village Development Council
Dato (Port.)	Term for different kinds of power positions. Mostly used in Portuguese times for village or hamlet chiefs
Desa (Ind.)	Village in the Indonesian administrative system
DFO	District field officer in the UN transitional administration
Dom (Port.)	Portuguese term for the chief or king of a kingdom (also known as <i>regulo</i> , <i>rei</i> , <i>liurai</i>)
Dusun (Ind.)	Hamlet in the Indonesian administrative system
ETTA (Eng.)	East Timor Transitional Administration
FALINTIL (Port.)	East Timor National Liberation Army
Ferik (Tetum)	Senior woman
FPI: Frente de Política Interna (Port.)	Internal Political Front (of CNRT)
FRETILIN (Port.)	Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor
Galoli	Language group in the districts of Manatutu, Baucau and part of Aileu

Kabupaten (Ind.)	District in the Indonesian administrative system
Kecamatan (Ind.)	Subdistrict in the Indonesian administrative system
Kemaq	Language group in the districts Bobonaro and Ermera
Kepala desa (Ind.)	Village chief in the Indonesian administrative system
Kepala dusun (Ind.)	Hamlet chief in the Indonesian administrative system
Kepala RT/rukun tetangga (Ind.)	Neighbourhood chief in the Indonesian administrative system
Kuku nain (Mambai)	Ritual leader
La'ir atar (Makassae)	Ritual leader
Lia nain (Mambai)	Traditional authority for conflict resolution
Lisan (Tetum)	Traditional costumes
Liurai (Tetum)	Chief of a kingdom or village
Liurai boot (Tetum)	King (also known as <i>rei</i> , <i>liurai</i> , <i>regulo</i> or <i>dom</i>)
Lulik (Tetum)	Sacred. It refers to the animistic practices
Makassae	Language group in the districts of Baucau and Los Palos
Mambai	Language group in Aileu
Mane foun (Tetum)	Wife Taker
Mediki	Language group in the districts of Baucau and Viqueque
Naueti	Language group in the districts of Viqueque and Baucau
Nureps: Núcleos Representativos (Port.)	Village leader in the clandestine structure
OJT: Organização Juventude Timorense (Port.)	East Timorese Youth Organisation under the umbrella of CNRT
OMT: Organização de Mulheres Timorenses (Port.)	East Timorese Women' Organisation under the umbrella of CNRT
Posto (Port.)	Subdistrict in the Portuguese administrative structure and in the UN transitional structure
Povoação (Port.)	Hamlet in the Portuguese administrative structure
Raja (Ind.)	King
RDTL: Republica Democratica do Timor Leste (Port.)	Democratic Republic of East Timor
Regulo/Reglo (Port.)	King, <i>liurai</i> , <i>dom</i>
RT: Rukun tettanga (Ind.)	Neighbourhood, unit in the Indonesian administrative system
Secretário da zona (Port.)	Subdistrict chief in the clandestine structure
Sobu/soru (Makassae)	King, <i>liurai</i> , traditional political authority
Sonebait	Important kingdom in Central Timor at Portuguese arrival
Suco (Port.)	Village in the Portuguese administrative structure; also in the current transitional administrative structure.
Tais (Tetum)	Traditional weavings
Tata (Kemaq)	Traditional political authority in Kemaq societies, term also used for other positions
UDT	Timorese Democratic Union
Uma kain (Tetum)	Unilineal kinship group (lineage); also refers to the nuclear family in modern government

Uma knua (Tetum)	Kinship group that resides in a common settlement where the original House is
Uma lisan (Tetum)	Sacred house
Uma lulik (Tetum)	Sacred house
Uma mane (Tetum)	Wife Giver
Uma metan (Galoli)	Literally 'black house'; specific sacred house in Galoli area
Uma mutin (Galoli)	Literally 'white house'; specific sacred house in Galoli area
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
Upacara (Ind.)	Ceremony
Waimua	Language group in the districts of Baucau and Viqueque
Wehale	Important kingdom in Central Timor at Portuguese arrival

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