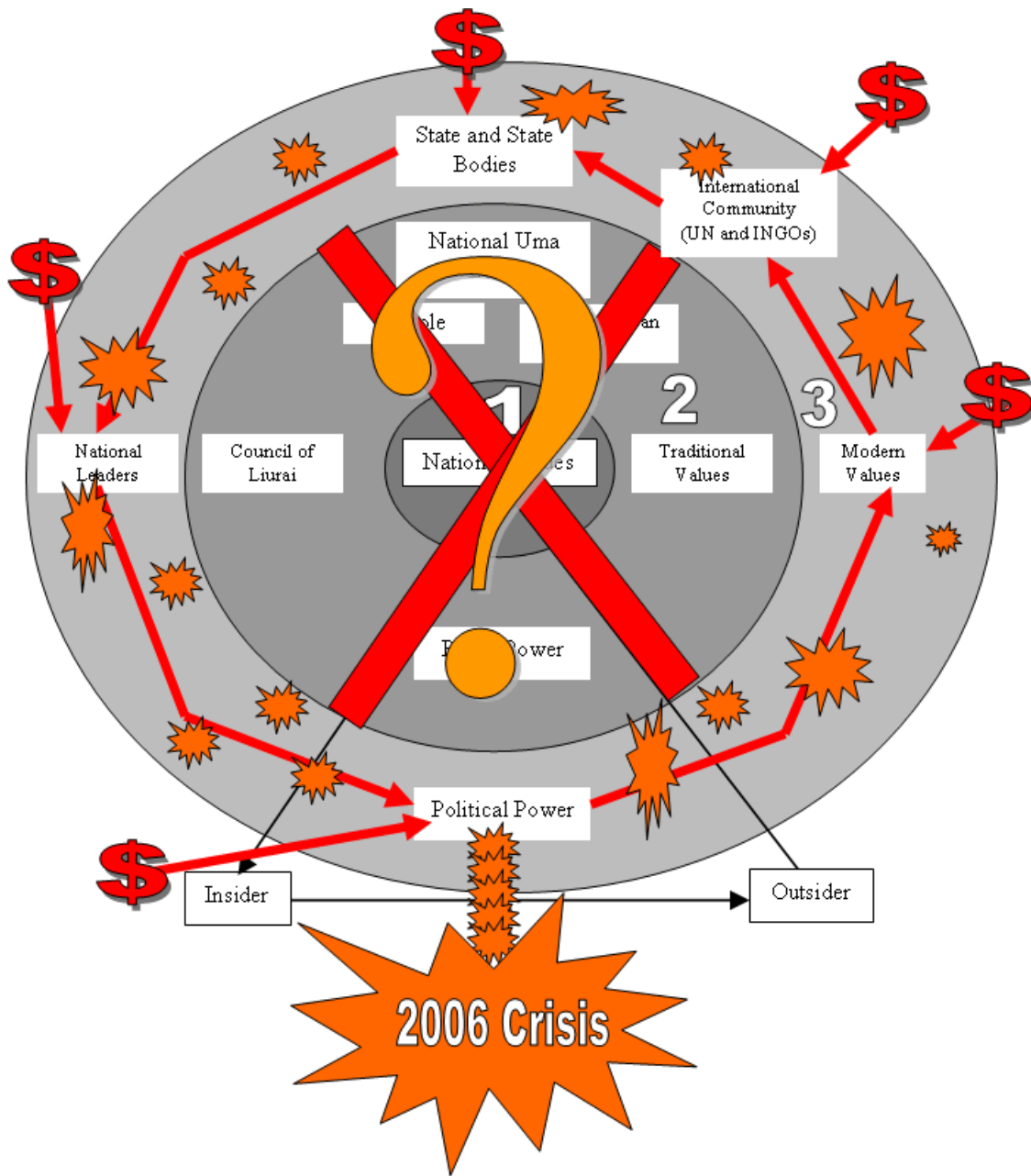


An Ideal State for East Timor:
Reconciling the Conflicting Paradigms



By:
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Introduction

“The upsurge of ethnic conflict means that we need to reassess our understanding of nationalism. It had been widely assumed that the capacity of nation state was strong enough to resist the ethnic challenges, but it suddenly become conventional wisdom to assert the impending demise, or at least the crisis, of the nation-state” (David Brown, 1998) ¹

Before 1999 East Timor was a ‘nation without state’ (Borgerhoff 2006: 102)². Twenty-four years of resistance to the Indonesian occupation unified the country’s diverse population. This sense of unity through struggle and being historically distinct from Indonesia, contributed to achieving Independence in 2002. As of 2006, East Timor looked very much like a “state without a nation.” The Timorese sense of nation and state appeared to fragment, being replaced by competing and divisive narratives about the past, and a strong sense of exclusion and frustration. In the process of nation-building, key groups in society felt excluded and were looking for a sense of belonging elsewhere than the state. Prior to Independence, a national identity was build and based on resistance to occupation (Scanteam 2007) and colonialism. Evidence shows that this constructed identity has divided Timorese society and triggered the 2006 crisis.

This paper will argue that, in order to make the state work for the people, it is not too late to develop and introduce new concepts and ideas that facilitate the population to have shared values, common identity and understandings based on existing culture,³ traditions, history and social structure.

This paper will discuss how the formation of the nation-state in 2002 ignored some of the vital elements of Timorese social structure, culture and traditions that still influence the daily life of contemporary Timorese citizens. This paper also put forward the argument that the manner in which East Timor is building a state is like that of a house being built on sand. The country has no spirit or soul and is like a walking corpse; inanimate, yet alive.⁴ As a state, East Timor remains fragile and what is needed is a strong foundation that is rooted deeply in its people’s common beliefs and shared cultural values, which will enable the population to remain cohesive and live together under one nation. Therefore, in the context of

¹ Quoted from Brown, David (1998): Why is nation-state so vulnerable to ethnic nationalism? *Nation and Nationalism* 4(1), 1998, 1-15, © ASSEN 1998 (p. 1)

² Quoted from Scanteam (2007): Review of Development Cooperation in Timor Leste. *Final Report for the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Jakarta* (p. 12)

³ Culture in this paper refers to the whole repertoire of action, language and styles which enables a person to recognize their belonging to a given social group and to identify with the group in question, without necessarily being confined by it. [...] Culture and tradition, however, are not frozen or stagnant; the individuals and groups partaking of any culture actively shape and reshape it in their daily endeavors. (Nyamnjoh 2002: 114) Culture is adaptable

⁴ See Trindade, Josh (2006) – *An Open Letter to the Prime Minister and to the Timorese People*, ETAN Mailing List, August 2006.

East Timor, *we may need to reassess our understanding of nationalism and the wide assumption that the capacity of this nation-state was strong enough to resist internal and external challenges.*

The first part of this paper will discuss the Timorese understanding of nationalism using Anderson's (1991) 'Imagined Communities'. Part two will analyze conflicting paradigms between modern versus traditional concepts of political power and legitimacy. It will also discuss the flaws within the nation-state formation process from 1999 – 2002. Part three will question 'East Timor's national identity', and final part four put forward action on how to reconcile the conflicting paradigms between the modern idea of a nation-state and traditional structures and its belief systems, including how the state of East Timor would look like after the reconciliation process is completed.

1. The “Imagined Communities” of East Timor – What Went Wrong?

If Anderson's (1991) 'Imagined Communities'⁵ is used to analyze nationalism in East Timor then, there is still an inability amongst the Timorese to imagine themselves as one nation. The majority of Timorese perceive that the size of the state as being equal to their village, their region, their language groups or their institutions. They can not imagine themselves as citizen of one country. They can not imagine the idea of nation-state⁶ beyond the immediate groups or entities they belong to and available around them. In other occasions, they imagine that the state is equal to (or even less) than the political party they support. This, of course, undermines national interest and national unity.

⁵ Anderson argues that, the community is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (1991: 6).

⁶ Nation-state in this paper refers to the definition by Anthony Smith, where he described that “Nation-State” is relatively modern concept, it is an institution that has legitimate monopoly over use of force within prescribed territory and an aim to unite the people within that territory via cultural homogenization. It bases this legitimacy upon an assumption that it represents the nation (Smith, 131 -321) – Quoted from Guibernau (2004)

Shared Cultural Values and Commonalities: The Missing Part from Anderson's "Imagined Communities"

Benedict Anderson (1993:1), a leading writer on nationalism in his 'Imagining East Timor' puts forth that:

"My theoretical writings on nationalism have focused on the importance of the spread of print and its relationship to capitalism, yet in East Timor there has been very little capitalism, and illiteracy was widespread. Moreover, East Timor is ethnically very complicated, with many different language groups. What was it then that made it possible to 'think East Timor'?"¹

Looking back at East Timor in 1993 during Indonesian occupation, when capitalism was very little and illiteracy was widespread, it made almost impossible to imagine East Timor as community. After almost 15 years in between (now 2008, and East Timor has separated from Indonesia in 1999 and became an Independent country from 2002), where capitalism and literacy may have increased, yet the condition of imagining East Timor as community is the same or it may have decreased for the following reasons:

- No significant progress been made in printing capitalism in East Timor during the last 15 years from 1993 – 2008.
- Poor interest in reading books in Timorese society; and even if there is a culture of reading existed; there is no reading materials available focusing on real East Timorese related issues.
- No improvement been made in East Timor education system in the last 15 years, as a result of Indonesian withdrawal and the slow response to address educational-gap issues between late 1997 – 2008 - leaving behind a huge number of youth who only knew how to read and write.
- No significant progress been made in media development and few local media in the country focusing its reports on political conflict and violence or information on western driven development.
- Telecommunication facilities in terms of internet access and telephone were too expensive for the local to afford.

What was it then that made it possible to 'think East Timor'? (Anderson 1993:1). This paper notes that, during Indonesian occupation, the lack of 'printing capitalism' in East Timor has been replaced by the defined common enemy against Indonesian occupation or being exclusive as ex-colony of Portuguese not the Dutch, has served to facilitate the Timorese to imagine themselves as a community. However, the 2006 turmoil in East Timor proved that, 'struggle against colonial rule' has divided the Timorese society further rather than unifying them.

What was it then that made it possible to 'think East Timor'? This paper support Anderson's argument that '*the community is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion*' (1991: 6). This paper put forth that, Anderson's Imagined Communities rely heavily on 'writing nationalism focused on the importance of the spread of print and its relationship to capitalism' does not apply in East Timor (refer to the above mentioned reasons). Therefore, this paper will seek other alternatives to facilitate the East Timorese to imagine their communities via "*shared common values and other commonalities in the context of culture and traditions that existed in East Timor for generations and survived until today*" (refer to section 4). Can one imagined, what kind of 'imagined communities' will be like, if 'Papua Island' both east and west suddenly decide to become one new nation?

This paper again argues against, Anderson's position that 'East Timor is ethnically very complicated, with many different language groups'. If we analyze Timorese culture further, there are more commonalities than differences, even though the Timorese belong to many different ethno-linguistic groups. Contemporary Timorese communities nationwide, retain strong traditional beliefs; they have *fetosan – uma mane* (marriage exchange relationship) relationships, all have *Uma Lulik* (sacred house), *mamah bua malus* (chew betel nut) by the elders, all have *Tais* (traditional cloth), all have traditional dancing of *tebe-tebe*, or *kore-metan* (celebration of one year of someone's death) and many more. Within these different ethno-linguistic groups, common shared values exist and survive until now. To facilitate the East Timorese to imagine their communities wholly independent of 'printing capitalism and Timorese resistance history' can be done by exploring and examining these shared common values (see section 2, 3 and 4).

The UN Report (2006) investigating the recent civil crisis notes that the 2006 crisis, was caused by the frailty of state institutions.⁷ There is no sense of imagining the state and its institutions as being inclusive for all members of the state. The clash between state institutions, such as the conflict between F-FDTL (East Timor Defense Force) and the PNTL (East Timor National Police) in the 2006 crisis was the result of the inability of F-FDTL and PNTL members to imagine themselves as different state institutions belonging to one East Timor. On the surface or on a theoretical level, all the state institutions in East Timor seem to have a clear agenda which is to work for the betterment of the country and its people.

⁷ Report of United Nations Independent Special Commission for Inquiry for Timor Leste (2006). Ch 2, Para 18, p. 16

However, on a practical level, regarding day to day activities, each of the institution seems to work separately, each for themselves, with an unclear agenda and goal. The lack of cooperation between institutions, and competition among them is the apparent evidence.⁸ In addition, the presence of international community with different agendas of certain individuals or institutions involved, contributed to the already chaotic situation within the local institutions. As a result, Timorese are misguided, confused, disempowered, disillusioned, and disoriented.

The idea of state and state bodies is not inherent in Timorese society where modern social contract⁹ did not exist (Hohe and Ospina 2001:82); therefore it is difficult for Timorese to imagine themselves as citizen under one state. The CAVR (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation) Report (2005) noted that, during the seventies, people from Turiscai (Manufahi district) considered themselves as members of the Mambai ethno-linguistic group, rather than as an East Timorese person. They viewed outsiders, even people from Dili, as foreigners (*malae*).¹⁰ Da Silva (2006) also describes how contemporary Timorese people identify themselves locally, as opposed to nationally.¹¹ Anderson (1993) in *Imagining East Timor* describes that, in 1974-75 true East Timor nationalism was still quite thin on the ground; perhaps only a small percentage of the population could then really imagine the future nation-state of East Timor. East Timor unity during 24 years of struggle against Indonesia is more of an 'instinct' or expression against oppression of colonial rule. The sudden independence in 2002 has left no opportunity for Timorese to discuss about the idea of an ideal state for the nation.

The inability of the Timorese to imagine themselves as citizen of a state has hindered the development of national unity. The Lack of a strong sense of nation and nationhood has aggravated the situation, especially since independence in 2002, there is no evidence of efforts in engaging the Timorese in the nation-state building processes to strengthen national unity. The conflict between eastern (*Lorosa'e*) and western (*loromonu*) regions in Dili during 2006 crisis is clear evidence of two regions perceiving themselves as distinct and separate social groups. This is a new phenomenon in East Timor's history, because during Portuguese occupation, 74-75 civil-war and Indonesian occupation, the distinction between the two regions never existed.

⁸ Personal observation from 2000 - 2008

⁹ Modern (western) social contract only engages agreements between individuals and the state, while traditional social contract in Timorese society is multi-layers. First layer of social cohesion involves agreement between individuals with their family, clan, and domain or kingdom. Second layer involves agreement between families and their clans and the domain. Third layer involves agreement between clans and their domain.

¹⁰ See CAVR Report (2005):Part 5, Para 60 (p.96)

¹¹ Da Silva, Antero (2006): Community and the current crisis in Timor-Leste. Paper presented at: One-day seminar: Beyond the Crisis in Timor-Leste: Options for future stability and development, Coombs Lecture Theatre, Australian National University, June 9

After more than five years of independence, East Timor seems to be devolving towards social-division and the destruction of its people, its development and its future.

To understand the current situation in East Timor, we need to assess how East Timor was constructed as a nation-state. Additionally it is crucial we try to understand Timorese society, its social dynamics, values, beliefs, culture and traditions, so as to provide a complete picture and set an appropriate context for the future development and progress of this nation.

2. Paradigmatic Differences and Flaws Within East Timor Nation-State Formation

“[In East Timor] the paradigmatic differences between traditional power concepts and modern ideas are so massive, and the low level of education amongst the rural population ensures that traditional power concepts are remaining very strong. Even voices that sound modern are often supportive of traditional ideas, though not deliberately” (Hohe and Ospina 2001: 73)

Until today, East Timor remains a fragile nation. The 2006 crisis shows that all the efforts invested during almost a decade were wiped out overnight. What went wrong?

From 1999 – 2006, East Timor was very much like a ‘successful experimental story’ that turned out to be ‘unsuccessful’ for the UN (United Nations) and the international community. The country was like a ‘social laboratory’ and the lives of almost a million people were the object of experiment. A possible contributing factor to this, from 1999 – 2002, was that the UN absolute sovereignty in East Timor, failed to carry out a Timorisation program. Chopra (2000) argues that, during this period the UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor) was comparable with that of a pre-constitutional monarch in a sovereign kingdom,¹² in which “Timorese were turned into the servants of foreigners in their own land”. Chopra further describes that, the defensive brand of bureaucratic ‘force protection’ employed by the UN was not an effective approach in preparing the Timorese for full independence. Comparisons of UN with colonial administrations were unavoidable.¹³ Timorese are often (not deliberately) forced to swallow different modern ideas and concepts without giving them appropriate time to digest properly. If one sees East Timor as a new born baby, it seems that the Timorese leaders with the support of international community and the UN expect the baby to first run as soon as it was born without learning how to sit, crawl or standing up properly. If the baby can run fast without having to go through the process of sitting, crawling and standing firmly, the Timorese leaders and the international community will be credited for their miracle works. What happen in the end was that the baby get sick and can not even move, because it got stomach pain or food-poisoning as a result of swallowing too many different

¹² See Chopra, Jarat (2000): *The UNs Kingdom in East Timor. Survival*, vol. 42, no. 3 Autum 2000, pp. 27-39 © The International Institute for Strategic Studies (p.30)

¹³ Ibid (p.33)

foreign foods (or different foreign ideas and concepts) without questioning where the food is coming from, how it was processed and what were the ingredients.¹⁴ These conditions provided almost no opportunity for the Timorese to incorporate their past, their cultural values and commonalities with the nation constructed under the UN.

In an open letter to Ramos Horta as Prime Minister in August 2006, the author of this paper put forward that:

“Our nation is too fragile; its foundations are like that of a house being built on sand. We have denied ourselves [...] by denying our roots and [...] the traditional values that have existed in our society for generations [...] The foundations for East Timor to form a solid, national, post-independence identity have not yet been laid. The country has no spirit or soul. The country is a stand alone thing with no values or principals attached to it. The country is like a walking corpse; alive, yet inanimate. So far, we have been building the country by imitating values and beliefs from other countries without taking into consideration to our local traditions and culture”¹⁵

Lack of consideration towards Timorese culture and traditions from the contemporary processes, has disconnected the people from their historic and cultural roots, which in turn have disempowered the national identity and the country’s unity. It has also disconnected the people from their own state, and the state then often considered as an ‘alien’ institution by the population.

Looking back at processes involved in 1999 – 2002, there are flaws in the process of nation-state formation in East Timor. Some of the flaws can be identified as follows:

A. *Lack of Local Legitimacy in the Nation-State Processes*

Suara Timor Lorosa’e, on 28 November 2007 reported the following:

“[...] A group of students called National Liberty Movement for Maubere People (MOLNAPOM), were carrying FRETILIN flags in a demonstration to “rebel” against 28 November Independence Day celebrations. They proceeded to the Government Palace where the Government and the public were celebrating. [...] The objective of this [demonstration], was to protest against the AMP Government because they don’t deserve to stand in front of the Government Palace to celebrate Independence Day. [...] According to MOLANPOM’s principle, they will organize the demonstration until the AMP Government falls down. They will give six months duration to the AMP Government to fall because they consider [the AMP Government] is illegally to carrying out their work [...]”¹⁶

¹⁴ Bear in mind that, the Timorese always eat rice. If we assume rice equal to Timorese culture and traditional structure, then how uncomfortable it is when we (not deliberately) forced them to eat bread and cheese (the foreign concepts of society). To satisfy the foreigners who have provided them the bread and the cheese, the Timorese will eat the meal with a big smile on their face; even though they are uncomfortable with it and might get stomach pain in the end.

¹⁵ See Trindade, Josh (2006)

¹⁶ See *Suara Timor Lorosae (STL)*, 29 November 2007: *Bandeira Fretilin Sai "Rebelde"Hasoru Loron Independensia* (English Translation by Author)

Post-election 2007 created confusion amongst the Timorese population about who should form the new Government. FRETILIN (Revolutionary Front for East Timor Independence) won the election with only 31% voters; however, some argue that they did not have enough seats in the Parliament to form a government according to the constitution. After the results were announced, other smaller parties, including CNRT (National Commission for East Timor Reconstruction) formed a political alliance called AMP (Majority of Parliamentary Alliance) led by Xanana Gusmao aimed at forming a new Government. Many argued that, FRETILIN who won the majority of the primary vote should have been given the opportunity to set up the new Government. Others argued that it was AMP who had won the right to do so. Collectively, AMP had more than enough of the vote to form a Government. The Timorese national constitution, which was originally written in Portuguese, did not help to clarify the confusion.

In August 2007, the President decreed that AMP would form the new Government. In Timor, the decision from the President is final, if it is to be contested, a Supreme Court Judge will provide a ruling. In East Timor, the case is different. FRETILIN members still don't accept this decision from grassroots to national level, and refused to file a formal complaint against the President's decision. Until today they viewed the decision as unconstitutional and the AMP Government as illegal. The decision made by the president resulted in political violence across the country where thousands of houses were burnt down as a protest from FRETILIN members against the President's decision.

The above illustration described how legitimate democratic election results, without proper local legitimacy created long standing disagreements or controversy amongst political parties, state institutions and the local population. The problem in this case lay within the conflicting paradigms on understanding power and legitimacy between local and modern or hierarchy versus equality that co-exist in Timorese society.

There is a fundamental difference in understanding legitimacy between the international community and the East Timorese in relation to 'political power'. Tanja Hohe (2002:83), a leading expert on East Timor described that, "*in international eyes, election gives legitimacy to assume mandate for governing the country and exerting power. To create a legitimate government for international purposes, elections are often conducted as single events and followed by the withdrawal of the international community, leaving behind an internationally-recognized new or old regime without local legitimacy*"¹⁷ Further, Hohe

¹⁷ See Hohe, Tanja (2002): Totem Polls: Indigenous Concepts and 'Free and Fair' Elections in East Timor. *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.9, No.4, Winter 2002, pp.69-88. Publish by Frank Cass, London (p.83)

described that, political legitimacy in traditional Timorese societies derives from appointment through ritual authorities, the leaders that are connected to the ancestor. These ritual leaders know the origins of all families and which family is 'royal' and is therefore entitled to be a political leader. Only through this status is the new political leader ancestrally legitimized and capable of successful rule with the full acknowledgement of the population¹⁸.

Some Timorese expressed that, those who were involved in East Timor's nation-state formation from 1999 – 2002 may have been experts and elite politicians, but they did not understand the Timorese, their society, the culture and traditional values. Scanteam (2007:1) noted that, understanding of Timorese society, its diversity and the historical basis between different social or ethno-linguistic groups was limited. The process of nation-state formation led by elite few Timorese Diasporas and the United Nations rely heavily on elements of foreign cultures and values and undermined the cultural identity of the Timorese.¹⁹ This disconnected the people from each other and their state - and the people are not able to see the state as a legitimate institution in cultural, traditional and spiritual sense from their own world view. There are no cultural elements included in the creation of East Timor.

Hohe and Ospina (2001) described how in the past, the Portuguese, the Church, and the Indonesians incorporated elements of traditional structure in order to gain local legitimacy from the Timorese for their own benefit.

Hohe and Ospina further noted that, the Portuguese strategic approach utilized respect for the traditional customs because they 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* (local king who holds the political power) were so strong. So the Portuguese used a local method to establish peace: entering blood oaths (*hemu ran, juramentu*) with *Liurais*, to create agreements that they would no longer fight war. Hohe and Ospina also described that, 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 (*Rota*, the symbol of political power in Timorese tradition), 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 (*Uma Lulik*, the very heart of Timorese culture) (Hohe and Ospina 2001: 50). Back then the Portuguese were viewed

¹⁸ Ibid (p. 81)

¹⁹ See Evers, Georg (2001:25): Human Rights Office: Human Rights IN East Timor - The difficult Road of Statehood, 4 2001

as a legitimate body by the local (arguably, until their departure in 1974); partly because of their ability in manipulating and incorporating local believe system and structure in their administration.

Other foreign institution that accepted, survived until today and viewed as legitimate by the local is the Church. According to Hohe and Ospina (2001: 76-77) the Christian belief system is respected, as it seems to have to do with '*lulik*' (sacred, holy), but it is integrated into the local belief system. All the different Christian stories are listened to and interpreted in a way that they confirm the local systems rather than contradict with 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 sacred houses and areas, they know that the traditional system is the 'true and old' way of their ancestors. Population always says: "First the traditional system, then the Church, and then the government"

During 24 years of Indonesian occupation, some elements of cultural practices and traditional values were used when it was necessary for the Indonesians. For example, the Indonesians entered blood oaths (*hemu ran, juramentu*) to stop the resistance against Indonesian rule (Hohe and Ospina 2001: 59-60). As with the Portuguese administration, the Indonesians also recognize the importance of putting the right leaders in the right position. Some of the 'royal' descendants were included in the formal power structures, while others were recognized and held informal or symbolic power. In 1982, the first five-yearly election for village chiefs was held. What looked like democratic elections on the surface was a confirmation of the traditional powers, since after a decision was made by the elders people knew for whom they had to vote for on the local level was often a continuation of traditional power structures. The traditional elders still had a strong influence on the nomination of candidates. The village chief nevertheless represented the core of the struggle between modernity and traditions where as the hamlet chief's traditional legitimacy was hardly ever challenged.²⁰

B. Constituent Assembly (CA)²¹ and the creation of East Timor National Constitution

²⁰ Hohe and Ospina (2001): Traditional Power Structures and the Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project - *Final Report. Dili, 2001*(p. 52-61)

²¹ The Constituent Assembly put in place by an election process, participated by political parties and sponsored by the UN in 2001. Their main duty is to create the first East Timor constitution. After the constitution created, they included an article in the constitution to turn the current Constituent Assembly into the first National Parliament; even in the election campaign process no such thing mentioned. The official explanation from the UN during this time was that, no time for another Parliamnetary election and budget was limited

“Promoting the Rule of Law involves ... changing culture as much as it does creating new institutions ... Without a widely shared cultural commitment to the idea of the Rule of Law, courts are just buildings, judges just public employees, and constitutions just pieces of paper”²²

Indeed, the Timorese viewed the constitution as ‘just pieces of paper’. For the few elite and the international community, the East Timor constitution might be accepted and viewed as an important component in the new East Timor nation-state processes. However, as described above, many still viewed the constitution as not a legitimate one for the country. Regarding the constitution’s legitimacy, a Lia Nain (traditional elder) from Viqueque, described:

“[...] our constitution is not strong here, it (the constitution) must be accepted by all and be blessed by elders – converted into a sacred object (*Sasan Lulik*) and be part of our culture”²³

There are flaws in the constitution creation in 2001, as described below:

- The constitution was drafted not by Timorese experts and academics (who might consider common cultural values and traditions), but by some international experts working for the UN. They were unaware and lacked knowledge of East Timorese society, its dynamics, culture and traditions.
- The constitution was decided and approved by the CA who were put in place by the elections in 2001. Many weaknesses can be found as a result of this process. For example, the majority of the ruling party voted in as CA members, incorporated their own short and long term political agenda into the constitution which undermined the national unity and the national interest.²⁴
- The majority of the CA members were unqualified; therefore, instead of having a real discussion for each issue presented, they just ‘raise their hands’ to approve articles in the constitution without often knowing the definition of key concepts or implications for future.²⁵

C. Democracy, Human Rights and Multiparty System

²² Quoted from (ABA/ROLI) and Freedom House (2007) - *Rule of Law in Timor Leste*, (p. 2) originated from: James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane & Beth Cole DeGrasse, *The Beginner’s Guide to Nation-Building* (Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, 2007, 88

²³ See Trindade and Castro (2007): Rethinking Timorese Identity as a Peace Building Strategy: Lorosa’e-Loromonu Conflict from a Traditional Perspective. *Final Report for GTZ/IS as part of Technical Assistance for National Dialogue in Timor Leste* (p.28)

²⁴ The preamble of East Timor constitution emphasize the idea of “resistance and struggle” (see East Timor Constitution) served as the main national identity has favored the resistance fighters, FRETILIN members, and the Timorese exile. Many Timorese with different political background (UDT, APODETI and others) and those who simply vote in '99 in the popular consultation process felt excluded. This division created animosity, grievances and jealousy as those who involve in the resistance struggle claiming that, they fight and suffer more during resistance period compare to the others. The claim for who fight and suffer more in the resistance played major role in triggering the 2006 crisis, and divide the government institutions (such as, PNTL and F-FDTL) and regional division of Lorosa’e – Loromonu

²⁵ As the basis for this argument, the Author has a relative who was elected as CA members during this period.

“There are also some concepts of democracy and human rights that exist in traditional Timorese values. As far as democracy: listening to people, discussing before making decisions. As far as rights: society respects the rights of the individual ... Human rights don't really go against our values, but you have to see how to fit this western concept without creating another disorder” (Young Intellectual)²⁶

The concept of democracy and human rights were accepted and adhered by the Timorese, however after the implementation process undertaken, the result was not indicate the notions of democracy anymore, but it was seen more as a tool for Timorese people to fight each other, and the human rights was then used as an excuse for people to disrespect each other.

Hohe and Ospina (2001) described that, question remains on how far a democratic system can 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 (Hohe and Ospina 2001:80). The ongoing violent action between political parties in 74-75 described as follows by Xanana Gusmao at CAVR hearing:

“Each party presented their views as the national interest, but didn't take into consideration that we are all people of Timor, nor what the nation as a whole was striving for. And because of this we noticed a lack of will on the part of the party leaders to reduce the level of violence, to address what was going on. Sometimes we noticed that the parties were quite happy when their supporters would come and say: “We beat up this person or “We killed that person” it was regarded as a small victory...If a party had the most number of people in a sub-district, they didn't let other parties campaign in that area. And so when other parties would go to those places people would attack, block their way, boycott, throw rocks at each other and beat each other”²⁷

The situation still continues until today as was witnessed in 2007 post-election. ‘Democracy’ has come to symbolize peace and freedom but is not seen, so far, as challenging the local hierarchical system. Furthermore, a multiparty system is associated with animosity and is not perceived as being connected to the notion of democracy (Hohe and Ospina 2001: 9)

Independence Day

Suara Timor Lorosa'e on 28 November 2007 reported the following:

²⁶ Personal interview in Dili, Feb 2007

²⁷ Testimony of Xanana Gusmao, Quoted from *Chegal*, “Report of the Commission on Truth, Reception and Reconciliation (CAVR) (2005), chapter 3, para 100. (English edition).

“[...] The President of the Republic, Horta explains that, “on 28th November 1975, 32 years ago, the leadership of FRETILIN through its Central Committee and the first President of Democratic Republic of Timor Leste, Francisco Xavier do Amaral, declared the unilateral independence of East Timor. However, there was no country send their representatives to approve the [East Timor] independence [...]”²⁸

In regarding East Timor Independence Day, there is controversy. Those who felt connected and associated with FRETILIN independence declaration on 28th November 1975 accepted the CA decision to put this day as the Independence Day. However, the non FRETILIN supporters felt more associated with 20th May 2002, the day the UN handed over the power to the Timorese.

Many argue that, the declaration of independence in 1975 did not represent the unity of the people, as just after the independence declaration, civil conflict erupted where the Timorese were killing each other and the society were divided based on their political affiliation (See CAVR Report 2005). Meanwhile, the majority of the contemporary Timorese, specially the young people felt more associated with 20th May 2002 as they witness the moment themselves. Processes involved led to 20th May 2002 were participated by most Timorese as more than 91% voted in the popular consultation in 1999. The high number of participation of the population in this election was more of an expression of ‘survival instinct’ against oppression of colonial rule. From these 91% voters, 78.5% voted in favors for the independence of East Timorese people. This 78.5% voter represent one East Timor regardless their political affiliation, region or ethno-linguistic background. They view themselves as one East Timor with one goal. They voted with one vision towards the Independence of the whole country. This is the true unity of the Timorese at that time and for the first time. The fact that, many Timorese still don’t know what has been declared in 28th November 1975.

D. Common Culture, National Goal and Civic Ideology

According to Montserrat Guibernau “nation” refers to a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself (Guibernau 1996:47–48)²⁹. Arguably, what is missing from East Timor as a nation in its creation is a ‘shared common culture’ and “a common project for the future”, the national goal. East Timor has a common culture already; however, people tend to assume that the Timorese culture is too different and distinct from each other and there are no

²⁸ See Suara Timor Lorosae (STL), 29 November 2007: *Horta : Ema Barak Mate, Timor-Leste Sai Nasaun Soberanu* (English translation by Author)

²⁹ Quoted from Guibernau (2004): Anthony D. Smith on nations and national identity: a critical assessment. *Nations and Nationalism* 10 (1/2), 2004, 125–141. © ASEN 2004 (p. 132)

commonalities; an argument based solely on assumptions and a lack of knowledge. In terms of “common project for the future”, the majority of the Timorese believe that there is no common future or a project for it. International community may assume that “a common project for future” for the Timorese is underway (the current development process), while in reality, most development projects in the country, either initiated by the local Government or the international communities, focused its aim merely on short term goals. The constitution of East Timor article 16 stated ten fundamental objectives, without clearly defined the national goal.

Smith (1991) a leading expert on nationalism argues that “nations must have a measure of common culture and a civic ideology, a set of common understandings and aspirations, sentiments and ideas, which bind the population together in their homeland” (Smith 1991: 11)³⁰. Until now many Timorese still question their ‘civic ideology’ that will facilitate them to understand East Timor as a nation. Lacking a nation’s civic ideology has further disconnected the population from their state. In most big, diverse and multicultural countries where ‘common culture’ is too difficult to be found or develop, then the civic ideology will act as the unifying force. Within the development of the civic ideology itself, a common culture for the fellow nationals will be developed. This will facilitate the citizens to imagine themselves as one nation; solidarity and unity of the country is then fostered. An example of the civic ideology in the United States stated in the preamble of the US constitution and read as follows:

“We, the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America”

The above statement is the national goal of the United States and may as well act as the measure of all the things including laws, regulations and

East Timor Constitution
(Preamble of the first few paragraphs)

Following the liberation of the Timorese People from colonisation and illegal occupation of the Maubere Motherland by foreign powers, the independence of East Timor, proclaimed on the 28th of November 1975 by Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente (FRETILIN), is recognised internationally on the 20th of May 2002.

The preparation and adoption of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of East Timor is the culmination of the historical resistance of the Timorese People intensified following the invasion of the 7th of December 1975.

The struggle waged against the enemy, initially under the leadership of FRETILIN, gave way to more comprehensive forms of political participation, particularly in the wake of the establishment of the National Council of the Maubere Resistance (CNRM) in 1987 and the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) in 1998.

The Resistance was divided into three fronts.

The armed front was carried out by the glorious Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste (FALINTIL) whose historical undertaking is to be praised.

The action of the clandestine front, astutely unleashed in hostile territory, involved the sacrifice of thousands of lives of women and men, especially the youth, who fought with abnegation for freedom and independence.

The diplomatic front, harmoniously carried out all over the world, enabled the paving of the way for definitive liberation.

In its cultural and humane perspective, the Catholic Church in East Timor has always been able to take on the suffering of all the People with dignity, placing itself on their side in the defense of their most fundamental rights.

³⁰ Ibid (p. 133)

actions by American as individual or institution. It creates strong bonds and a sense of national unity amongst the many ethnic groups in the US, and facilitates them to imagine themselves as US citizen. The civic ideology gives them direction and a road map for the state to ‘form a more perfect union among fellow national, to establish justice, domestic tranquility, common defense, general welfare and liberty for themselves and their posterity’. (Where is the example of this dimension in East Timor?).

In comparison to East Timor constitution, the first few paragraphs in the preamble (see the box above) emphasized the idea of ‘resistance and struggle’ which divided the society instead of forming more perfect union. The preamble of East Timor constitution clearly favors the ‘resistance movement’ in which other common Timorese (not deliberately?) excluded.

E. National Symbols (the National Flag and the National Anthem)

As described above, most Timorese imagine that their political party is more important than the nation, the national interest or the national unity. In relation to the national flag as one of the national symbol, *Suara Timor Lorosa’e* reported the following on East Timor Independence day, 28 November 2007:

“The Vice President of National Parliament, Maria Paixão in the plenary session [described that], there is a bad culture where when the national anthem is played in this parliament, there are Members of Parliament, and Members of the Government did not show respect. All the people have more respect and sensibility toward the flag of their political party rather than the national flag”³¹

In Timorese culture, any symbols represent the political power, the unity or peace viewed as holy or sacred. *Sasan Lulik* is the local term for these objects. Evidence above shows that, national items for most Timorese still viewed as normal items which have no meaning to them; therefore most Timorese did not have respect or sensibility towards these unifying national symbols, because they can see the flag of the political party has some sort of sacred value (*lulik*) in comparison to the national flag. Many Timorese still don’t know how to sing the national anthem. Some said that the style of national anthem is too western and this is not the way Timorese sing a song traditionally.

F. Political Structure and the National Leadership

“The traditional power is the *lulik* [sacred, holy], because according to the stories, the one that holds the rattan [*Rota*] 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” (Liurai, Baucau) (Hohe and Ospina 2001:65)

³¹ *Suara Timor Lorosae* (STL), 29 November 2007: *Ukun Nain Falta Patriotismu, Mari: Sinal Ema Lakohi Rekonese Historia* (English translation by Author)

Hohe and Ospina (2001) noted that, the traditional political concepts form a system in which a traditional society can work without a proper state body. Traditional social systems have a mechanism to prevent itself from collapsing as there is no formal constitution. (In East Timor the constitution has not functioned properly). The ancestors are the secure point to 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 to the traditional social structure. Even in places where, ‘the old system is over, everybody can become leaders’ and they have conducted democratic elections, the leaders of the ruling families are still in place, respected and listened to (Hohe and Ospina 2001:72). At present, evidence suggested that, some of the traditional leaders (*Liurai*, the traditional political authority) sometimes high jacked Government official’s works at village level when they disagree with particular policy made by the Government. This made the work of the elected village chief more difficult, especially if they were coming from a common family and put in place by modern election process.

East Timor’s political structure adopted a semi-presidential system where the President acted as the head of state while the Prime Minister as head of Government. Timorese are not used to this idea. Timorese hierarchal social-structure only allows room for one leader where they follow and obey. Having two leaders, without clear roles and proper traditional legitimacy, has divided the society and resulted in violent dispute between members. Hohe (2002) noted that hierarchy is the core of social-structure in Timorese society. In this case, a presidential system may be better suited to the local power structure.

In relation to national leadership, Trindade and Castro (2007) described that, the new setting of governance in East Timor since independence, national leaders have not held any *Sasan Lulik* (sacred objects) to legitimate their power. Their legitimacy as current national leaders comes from the elections, which for most Timorese is still an alien idea. This created confusion among many people because for now the former legitimate leaders are out of power and replaced by national leaders who do not (yet) have the appropriate legitimacy in the spiritual sense (Trindade and Castro 2007:22). The position for political power is connected to the ‘way of the ancestors’ and to the sacred *lulik* (sacred). If the wrong person acts as political ruler, this would mean misfortune for the whole community (Hohe and Ospina 2001:65) or the whole nation when it applied to national leadership. Arguably, the 2006 crisis may be resulted from the fact that, wrong leaders were installed at national level from 2002 – 2006 without proper local legitimacy.

There is little trust towards leaders that are not connected with sacred items and ancestral legitimacy (Hohe and Ospina 2001: 82).

3. A Question of National Identity?

“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 [...]” (Liurai, Baucau) (Hohe and Ospina 2001: 80)

A well defined ‘National identity’, according to Smith, ‘involves some sense of political community, history, territory, patria, citizenship, common values and traditions’ (Smith 1991: 9)³².

It seems that, the idea of national identity in East Timor did not consider the ‘common values and traditions’ that has been shared by the Timorese for generations.³³ The ‘common values and traditions’ in East Timor in this case being ignored, denied, put aside and being replaced by the imported new values of human rights and democracy which undermined the common values and the cultural identity of the Timorese. Most nation-state building processes, rely heavily on the values of democracy and human rights³⁴ and within this processes, it’s disconnected itself with people’s historical root, shared values, culture and traditions.

While Guibernau (2004) argues that, national identity is a modern phenomenon of a fluid and dynamic nature, one by means of which a community sharing a particular set of characteristics is led to the subjective belief that its members are ancestrally related. Belief in a shared culture, history, traditions, symbols, kinship, language, religion, territory, founding moment, and destiny have been invoked, with varying intensity at different times and places, by peoples claiming to share a particular national identity (Guibernau 2004: 134)

The most comprehensive analysis of the cultural components of national identity is developed by Smith (1991) where he noted that, values, beliefs, customs, conventions, habits, languages and practices are transmitted to the new members who receive the culture of a particular nation. Smith explores the origins

³² Quoted from Guibernau (2004:133)

³³ East Timorese people are united culturally, but politically divided. Through culture, East and West Timor even viewed themselves as one united people derived from one common ancestor coming from one founding Uma Lulik (sacred house)

³⁴ The human rights principals were improperly introduced and implemented in East Timor, where the implementation of human rights programs focused more on individual rights without balancing it with duties or obligations. Most Timorese think that they even have the rights to burn someone’s house or the right to abuse someone else’s rights. The Indonesian introduced the balance between rights and obligations where priority is given to obligation over right. This idea is fit in well into Timorese concept of society where community’s interests are given priority over individual interest.

of nations and national identity and finds them in ethnic identity as a pre-modern form of collective cultural identity. In his view, 'Collective cultural identity refers not to a uniformity of elements over generations but to a sense of continuity on the part of successive generations of a given cultural unit of population, to shared memories of earlier events and periods in the history of that unit and to notions entertained by each generation about the collective destiny of that unit and its culture' (Smith 1991: 25). Smith adds: 'there is a felt filiation, as well as a cultural affinity, with a remote past in which a community was formed, a community that despite all the changes it has undergone, is still in some sense recognized as the "same" community' (Smith 1991: 33).³⁵

In the case of Timorese national identity, most of these elements were neglected and denied by those who created East Timor as a nation since 1999. The younger generation, did not receive the culture of their particular nation. Therefore Timorese society are lacking in the process of identification with Timorese culture, which implies a strong emotional investment able to foster solidarity bonds among the members of Timorese community who come to recognize one another as fellow nationals (Gellner 1983)³⁶ of East Timor. This may played a role in the East – West divide in 2006 crisis, as noted by the Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste:

"The east-west division is a simplification of a far more complex issue. Timor-Leste has no modern history of concerted political violence between easterners and westerners as unified and opposing groups. However, there are sensitive divisions within Timorese society relating to notions of national and communal identity. The **poorly defined national identity**, particularly in the absence of a common enemy post-1999, is critical to an understanding of how the east versus west distinction has arisen in recent years' (UN 2006)³⁷

As a new nation, the East Timorese have yet to develop a well-defined national identity that ensures national unity (Trindade and Castro 2007: 14). Since independence in 2002, no new Timorese identity emerged, and a sense of nation has not developed (Scanteam 2007: 4). The concept of a Timorese nation was not generally discussed, beyond the assumption of "unity through struggle or resistance"³⁸ Where noted, there was an assumption that the development process itself would be a source of identity for the new nation (Scanteam 2007: 26). The lack of common identity in East Timor expressed by the local as follows:

"There is no common identity yet, because of bad roads and the lack of communication. Therefore, people do not know each other and cannot have a common identity. No understanding of identity was taught in the formal education" (Intellectual, Bobonaro).³⁹

³⁵ Quoted from Guibernau (2004:124)

³⁶ Ibid (p. 136)

³⁷ Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste (2006), Chapter II, p. 16 para 21

³⁸ The idea of 'resistance' as the main Timorese national identity has divide the society

³⁹ Hohe and Ospina (2001:82)

The process of East Timor nation-state formations assume that ‘resistance’ is Timorese main national identity without considering that the resistance only came into place and united the people in the 24 years of Indonesian occupation. The idea of resistance has created divisions within Timorese society and played a major role in triggering unresolved 2006 crisis. The idea of resistance has divided members of F-FDTL, F-FDTL and PNTL, and regional social division of Lorosa’e (easterners) and Loromonu (westerners). The divide is based on who had fought more in the resistance, the true fighter, versus those who were associated with Indonesia or the militia or even a common Timorese who was simply voted in 1999 and disassociated with politics or ‘resistance’ (Trindade and Castro 2007:13; Babo Soares 2003:278).

Scanteam (2007:4) noted that, some of the factors contributed to the 2006 crisis is the sense of “nation”, or common identity and purpose that unified the Timorese population during their liberation struggle broke down. It was replaced by competing narratives about Timor-Leste’s history and identity that emphasized division rather than unity.

As of 2006, East Timor looked very much like a “state without a nation.” The Timorese sense of nation and state appeared fragmented, being replaced by competing and divisive narratives about the past, and a strong sense of exclusion and frustration. In the process of nation-building, key groups in society felt excluded and were looking for a sense of belonging elsewhere and associated themselves with various groups or organizations rather than the state. (Scanteam 2007).⁴⁰

Most national identities are imagined or constructed (Anderson 1991). Cultural heritage and history from the colonial period served to differentiate the Timorese population from the Indonesians, and to create a sense of “nation” where social coherence had never existed in the context of nation-state. Efforts by the political elite to develop a Lusophone identity were often seen as an imposition, particularly among youth who had no affiliation with the colonial past and Portuguese language or culture. Historically-based concepts of identity did not incorporate the experience of the youth population, further alienating them from the older leadership (Scanteam 2007: 50) and nation-building process. Therefore, it provided space for ‘violent identity’ to emerge amongst the youth population by joining different martial arts groups around them, which provided them an alternative ‘sense of security and belonging’ in opposition to state.

⁴⁰ See Scanteam (2007:12)

According to Hohe and Ospina (2001) the younger generation views the traditional values as inherent to the identity of the Timorese people. The traditional values can be modified to adapt with the progression of society, but can not disappear. The traditional values should not be neglected and there should be a combination between the tradition and the modern. The question of how this combination between traditional and modern values should look like specifically is a very difficult one. However, there are already political parties campaigning about combining the modern and the traditional. As an example, ASDT (Democratic Association of East Timor) proposed to call the word ‘democracy’ in local terms as ‘*nahe biti*’, the reference to a woven mat where the traditional elders and the community gather to discuss community interest and resolved disputes between individuals or groups. The concept of ‘foreign affairs’ was proposed to be explained as *manu’ai*, the messenger that was used to pass messages between kingdoms. And executive, legislative and judicial positions explained in traditional power structure as *lia fuan* (*lia* = words/issues/matters/problems, *fuan* = heart; a reference to the National Parliament to speak, discuss and make decision from and with their heart/their love), *ukun fuan* (*ukun* = to rule or to govern, a reference to the Government to rule and to govern the people with their heart/their love) and *lia nain* (the keeper of the words, a reference to state judicial system who holds judicial power to resolve dispute amongst state institutions and members)⁴¹.

The importance of culture to create a sense of nation and common identity has been campaigned by FRETILIN during the short period of FRETILIN when they were in power in 1975 as described in CAVR Report (2005) and read as follows:

“Fretilin cultural activities aimed to develop a sense of nationhood, [...] Fretilin took traditional songs from many regions and politicised the lyrics to further this cause. Songs were sung to traditional dances such as the *tebe* and *dahur*” (CAVR 2005)⁴²

In short, East Timor has failed as a state because elements and dimensions required in forming a state has not been all included.

After knowing the above complexities, one may question ‘where do we go from here?’ For the sake of the Timorese people, one may need to take a moment to think and to observe the mistakes we have done, either deliberately or not, by individuals or institutions, locals or internationals, so that we can correct them and put it in the right order. Admitting to the mistakes we have committed in the past is the first step to correct them, because East Timor past has determined the present and the future will depends on our actions at present. What is it then an ideal state for East Timor?

⁴¹ Hohe (2002:78)

⁴² CAVR Report (2005): Chapter 5, Para 41 (p.11)

4. An Ideal State for East Timor: Reconciling the Conflicting Paradigms

Overview

The ‘conflicting paradigms’ in this paper refers to ideas or concepts either modern/national or traditional/local that co-exist and are viewed in direct opposition to each other in the current processes of East Timor, by either directly or indirectly influencing and affecting the life of the Timorese. By analyzing these modern concepts and ideas from a local legitimacy point of view, hopefully room for merging can be developed for reconciling these conflicting paradigms.

For the above purpose, this paper uses the concept of ‘dualism’ developed by Van Wouden (1968[1935])⁴³. In this concept there is always balancing positive and negative aspect in life which compliments each other. In East Timor, there is a Wife Giver (*uma mane*) and a Wife Taker (*feto san*), there are female values in opposition to male values and there are sacred houses classified as newcomers (foreign/male) and others as indigenous (local/female). This dualistic structure is extensively described in anthropological sources on Eastern Indonesia and East Timor. This structure provides an excellent framework for the local societies to integrate ‘*new happenings/ the foreign influences/the male values/the outsider*’ into their local belief system ‘*the old structure/the local influences/the female values/the insider*’ (Hohe and Ospina 2001:28). This is relevant because when East Timor reached Independence in 2002 there was a ‘new happening’, and remains a lot of ‘*foreign influence and values*’ integrated within East Timor without fitting properly in the traditional and cultural context.

As an example, the Portuguese presence was explained locally as the ‘younger brother’ who went away and returned (Fox 1980, Traube 1986, Hohe and Ospina 2001, Babo Soares 2003), and the Church was explained as “younger values’ who came to compliment the “old traditional values”⁴⁴ (Hohe and Ospina 2001:77). With this logical explanation, the two institutions were accepted and survived few conflicts.⁴⁵

⁴³ See also Fox (1980), Hohe and Ospina (2001:28), Babo Soares (2004:22), Yoder (2005:147, 155, 209, 323)

⁴⁴ The Timorese tradition and culture always interpret the foreigner/outsider and its influences as something coming from the inside, went away and returned. Therefore, if a stranger visited a sacred site, they will be given permission and considered as a grand child (*bei oan*) who left before and now return. With this logic, no contradiction is created.

⁴⁵ During Portuguese colonial rule, they adopted local idea of Rota which symbolizes political power and legitimacy. The Portuguese then created their own Rota and distributed it to all Uma Luliks in East Timor. This Rota was installed inside the Uma Lulik and treated as sacred objects. Until today, most uma lulik still treated this Rota with respect and viewed as very important treasure. Meanwhile, the Church adopted the title of ‘Maromak Oan’ (son of god) for Jesus Christ (as the only Maromak Oan) from the ruler of Wewiku-Wehali (a kingdom located in the south of present Atmbua, West Timor) and used this idea to spread Christianity across the island. The Church also incorporated the idea of lulik into the Christian beliefs, where priest is called ‘Na’i Lulik’ or ‘Amo Lulik’ in local term (See Therik, Tom 2004: Wehali ,The Female Land – Traditions of a Timorese Ritual Centre).

Based on this logic, the modern idea of nation-state has to be explained or categorized as an “*outsider/the new one/the new comer/the younger brother/the male*” and the local traditions is viewed as the “*insider/the old one/the land lord/the older brother/the female*” in the Timorese socio-cosmic belief systems, the two must be reconciled to compliment each other in a harmonious relationship or the society will be endangered. In Timorese tradition, the '*outsider or the new comer*' will be granted the political authority to rule the land and the people. They will be titled as *Liu Rai* (*Liu* = passed, crossed, left behind and *Rai* = land; reference to those who left behind their homeland and passed or crossed many lands to arrive at their present destination). When they encounter the locals, in which if they are accepted, they will be given the political power to rule the land and the people. Following the granting of political power, they will then be called *Liurai*. However it is important to note that the previously mentioned powers can only be granted after proper relationships being established through marriage exchange or blood oaths. Subsequently harmonious familial and societal ties will be established between the local and the new comer. The political authority encompasses various tasks that include dealing with foreign affairs with different kingdoms.

While the ‘new comer’ holds political authority, the ‘*insider or the land lord*’ on the other hand, will be holding the *ritual power*, which deal primarily with internal affairs including appointing individuals for political positions (Hohe and Ospina 2001). Both the political and the ritual power must compliment each other for the benefit of the people.

In the contemporary settings, the ideas of *state, state bodies, democracy or human rights* are categorized as the ‘*new comer*’ that hold political power. This in turn creates further incompatibility as *the new comer*, ‘*the political power, the male values, the state*’ fails to incorporate the value of the ‘*land lord*’, *the ritual power, the female values, the local culture and traditions*’. The two consequently have not established a harmonious relationship with each other, and often viewed by Timorese as being continuously in direct opposition. Therefore, according to many, any failure to reconcile the opposing ideas will result in putting the society at risks of falling into violent and other catastrophic events. (was the 2006 crisis as a result of this phenomenon? See section 4.F).

In summary, a way out must be found to reconcile both entities at conceptual and institutional levels.

However, only explaining these concepts to the Timorese will not necessarily create change among the people, therefore a ‘real action’ needs to be taken so that they can see and feel a real process of reconciling or synchronizing the two concepts, the local and the national, to compliment each other

instead of in opposition. Using common cultural symbols and practices that represent the entirety of the Timorese is considered to be the best way to carry out the aforementioned reconciliation.

In order to properly reconcile the “outsider”, the concept of nation-state and its processes “inside” Timorese belief systems/the traditions; the following can be considered as a way out from the current confusions:

A. *Conducting a National Juramentu*⁴⁶

Juramentu (hemu ran, blood oath) is a method been used extensively within Timorese society to create unity and peaceful, harmonious relationships between the ‘new comer, the outsider’ and the ‘land lord, the insider’. This method is also used to create unity and relationship between kingdoms, social groups, clans, families and individuals. *Juramentu* was used in ancient East Timor (Trindade and Castro 2007:23, 38) (many myths of origin across island of Timor contain narratives about *hemu ran*), during Portuguese and Indonesian rules, and within resistance movement (Hohe and Ospina 2001).

In order to welcome the new ideas of nation-state and its processes, Timorese need to create a sense of unity among the ethno-linguistic groups across the country. As recommended by Trindade and Castro (2007:38), a national Juramentu between traditional elders (the Liurais) from main traditional *Uma Luliks* may serve to establish a sense of unity among the population. The proposed national Juramentu should also aim its goal to dissolve the social division between Lorosa’e and Loromonu from 2006 crisis (Trindade and Castro 2007:38). This sense of unity will be the key and the foundation to successfully reconciling the ‘foreign concepts’ and the ‘local ideas’, the ‘modern’ and the ‘traditions’ or the ‘local’ and the ‘national’

B. *Construction of a National Uma Lulik*⁴⁷

There has been a lot of research on Timorese *Uma Lulik* (Sacred House) such as Hohe and Ospina (2001), McWilliam (2005), Loch (2007), Trindade and Castro (2007) that highlight the importance of the *Uma Lulik* for the Timorese society past and present. *Uma Lulik* is the ultimate symbol that represents Timorese culture, where society is clustered and ordered according to their hierarchy. For the Timorese, *Uma Lulik* is the main ‘local identity’ (Trindade and Castro 2007). No *Uma Lulik* no identity (Loch

⁴⁶ Trindade and Castro (2007:38) introduce the idea of National Juramentu to dispel the Lorsa’e-Loromonu division

⁴⁷ Trindade and Castro introduce to the idea of national uma lulik construction, where it can represent Timorese unity and the cultural identity

2007). An East Timorese who does not have or belong to an *Uma Lulik* is considered to have no root (*abut laiha*), a reference to person who has low status in Timorese society.⁴⁸ The *abut laiha* person is viewed as wanderer who does not have culture or traditional root. Without *Uma Lulik*, Timorese society would live like wild animals, where there are no rules or regulations and moral standards. The sacred house embodies the ethos of communal unity and the binding relationships between the people, the land and their ancestry (Trindade and Castro 2007:38). Therefore, Trindade and Castro (2007: 38) recommend (based on testimonies from various parts of East Timor) that a national *Uma Lulik* should be created to represent Timorese national identity, solidarity and peace.

The National *Uma Lulik* will be seen as the focal point for local *Uma Luliks* across the country and the communities that associate with them. The goal of constructing a national level *Uma Lulik* is to rekindle the process of national unity by establishing a connection between the people at grassroots level. These connections will be founded on a symbolic relationship between local sacred houses and the National *Uma Lulik*, essentially making one house under which all East Timorese live. Under this base of unity, individuals will be able to relate to each other as family regardless of regional affiliation or ethnicity (Trindade and Castro 2007:39) or political party affiliation.

The national *Uma Lulik* will complete the dualism thinking, where it will stand alongside the state and be considered as the “inside/the female/the old/the older brother/the local/the ritual power” to complete the idea of state and state bodies and processes associated with it as the “outsider/the male/the new/the younger brother/the foreign/the political power”. The state and the national *Uma Lulik* will complement each other at institutional level.

According to Trindade and Castro (2007:39), the national *Uma Lulik* will have the following crucial functions:

- A venue to balance the flow of values between foreign (modern) and local (traditional) to ensure the East Timorese world view is alive and respected.
- The building will represent peace, national unity and the national identity of the East Timorese.
- It will symbolize the idea of multiculturalism under the ethos of ‘*diversity under one house*’.
- It will enable the East Timorese to understand and imagine East Timor as one nation. (Anderson’s (1991) *Imagined Communities* highlight the importance use of printing capitalism, yet printing

⁴⁸ This reference does not apply to East Timorese with different ethnic background. For example, the Chinese, Indonesian, Arabic, or European who are currently citizen of East Timor.

capitalism in East Timor is limited and the majority of the population has low literacy. In this case, cultural symbols and practices then used (see section 1).

- It will be a sacred place to store National *Sasan Luliks*⁴⁹
- It will symbolize Timorese culture and tradition, and create a space for its preservation and development.
- It will be a venue to ritualize the elected President and the Prime Minister⁵⁰.

Under the Indonesian occupation, the Suharto administration used the *Uma Lulik* symbol to represent and differentiate the Timorese from the rest of Indonesia in Jakarta, where a model of Lautem style *Uma Lulik* was physically built in *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah*, the miniature of beautiful Indonesia (McWilliam 2005:31). McWilliam (2005) in his *House of Resistance* described how the resistance against Indonesian occupation, survived partly because it based its networks on *Uma Lulik* structure, where the resistance people will fight until the end and have faith in each other.

C. Establish Council of Liurai/Elder to Ritualize the Elected National Leaders

If a national *Uma Lulik* is constructed, it should have its own Council of *Liurais*, which in eyes of the Timorese are still the legitimate leaders. A Council of *Liurais* may play more of a symbolic role, not necessarily have political power, however, they can be responsible for having the following:

- Inaugurating the elected national leaders, at the proposed national *Uma Lulik*. This is to avoid the local belief in which only a designated descendants can be a leader or a ruler, and in anticipation if a ‘commoner’ put in place by election process. Through this ceremony, the elected national leaders will be legitimate from traditional point of view and the Timorese worldview will then be respected. The ceremony will represent a symbolic transfer of power and legitimacy to the new elected national leaders, where even a commoner is elected, once they go through this ceremony, they will be viewed as legitimate by the people. In the ‘dualism’ concept, the Council of Liurai/Elders played their roles as the ‘ritual power holder/the insider/the female values’ while the national leaders will hold the “political power/the outsider/the male values” (Hohe and Ospina 2001).

⁴⁹ Refer to Section D

⁵⁰ Refer to section C

- The Timorese will see that, their legitimate leaders are respected (even they don't have political power) and their worldview has been acknowledged, and no contradiction is created or oppose their belief system.
- Provide necessary advice to the Government official and institution regarding the people and issues related to national unity and the national interest.
- Work to promote culture and traditional values to promote peace and unity amongst the Timorese

The ritualization process will create an understanding that the *ritual power/the female* lend the political authority, power and legitimacy to the *elected national leaders/the male values* on a temporary basis for a period of five years (in accordance with the election cycle) to rule or to govern the country properly in accordance with the rule of law and the prohibition of the ancestors (*bandu*),⁵¹ for the benefit of all the Timorese. With this in mind, if the national leaders abuse or misuse their political power and legitimacy, they will fear ancestral sanction as in Timorese traditions as well as consequences from the modern formal justice system. The first one will worried the Timorese leaders more than the later one. This idea will also confirm or support the democracy principal of *from people, by people, for people*. The Council of Liurais will then be viewed as the representatives of the people who lend the power and legitimacy to the national leaders.

D. Ritualize or Convert the National Symbols into National Sasan Luliks

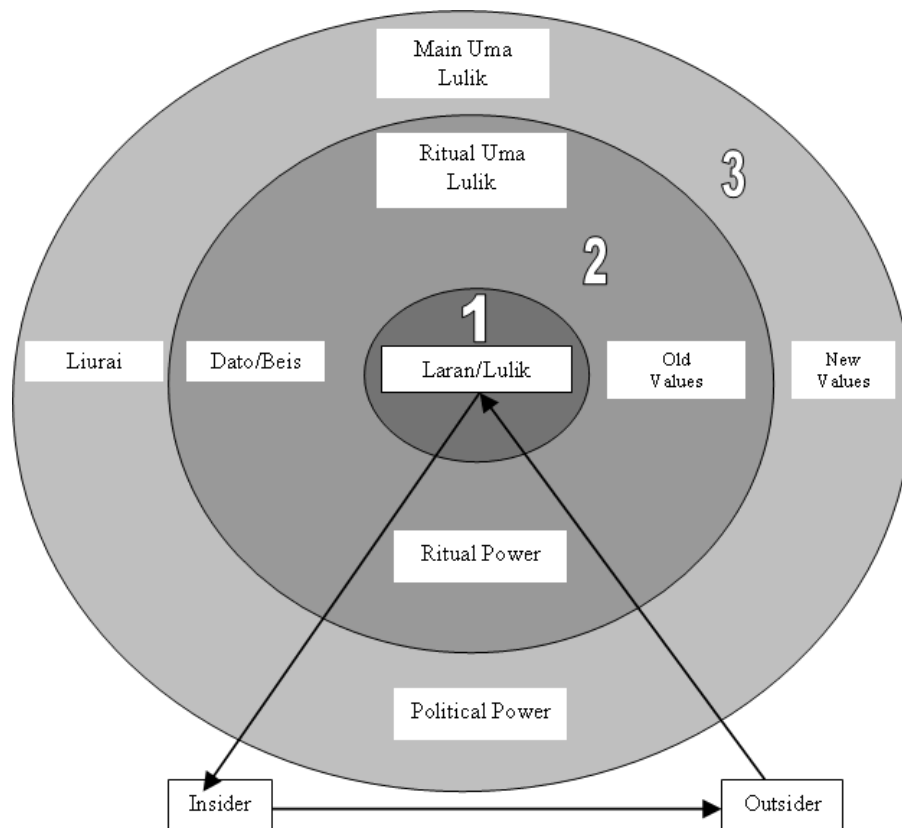
As described above, many Timorese still viewed the national symbols as normal items and the constitution as 'just pieces of paper', holding no scared values. The constitution and the national symbols need to be ritualized, so that the local population can see it as sacred or holy items (*sasan lulik*) to represent them and their identity. Only items that passed down from the ancestors are perceived as holy or sacred to represent the Timorese, or if a normal item is selected, it needs to undergo traditional ceremony to covert the normal item into holy/scared item. In the case of turning the national symbols into holy items, a traditional ceremony at national level country wide need to be held, where the national symbols will visit every main *Uma Luliks* across the country to receive cultural blessing and local legitimacy (further information see Trindade and Castro 2007:40). After the ritualization process completed, the national symbols which now become the national *sasan luliks* will then be put inside the national *Uma Lulik* proposed.

⁵¹ Rule and regulations created by the ancestors which constituent the traditional Timorese cultural values and morality. See Trindade and Castro (2007)

In addition to this process, we need to consider creating a new national rattan stick (the national *Rota*) which from Timorese point of view represent political legitimacy to rule the land and the people (Hohe and Ospina 2001). The national *Rota* can be held by the President of the Republic (Trindade and Castro 2007:40). People will look up, follow and obey to the one that hold the highest symbol of political power, the *Rota*. In the process of the ritualizing the national symbols, the dualism thinking again applied where national symbols represent the ‘outsider/the male values/the political authority’ while the blessing process represent the ‘insider/the female values/the ritual authority’.

E. How the Ideal State for East Timor look like?

As described above, Timorese society is based its social and political structures on dualistic belief systems, where harmonizing two opposing ideas or entities are crucial. If one look closer, a simplify version of a domain or an *Uma Lulik* in East Timor my looks like the picture shown bellow (call it “*Lulik Circle*” from now on):⁵²



Picture 1: Traditional Lulik Circle

⁵² For more explanation on different origin of domain and how political structure established between the new comer and the land lord in the area of Bobonaro (west), Aileu (central) and Baucau (east) see Hohe and Ospina (2001) and Therick (2004) on Wehile (possibly the origin of traditional social and political structure in Timor island). The Lulik Circle is based on their thoughtful work.

A sacred house (*uma lulik*) or a domain always has a space called *laran* (center) (layer no. 1 picture 1) which viewed as the most sacred (*lulik*)⁵³ place inside the *uma lulik* or in a domain⁵⁴, because this is where all the rituals conducted; or a place where the real world and the whole spiritual world (the ancestor, the traditional concept of god)⁵⁵ connected and communicate with each other. The second layer (no. 2) is inhabited by the land lord who holds the ritual power. The third layer (no. 3) is inhabited by the new comer (the immigrant) which holds the political power, because the new comer perceived to be connected with knowledge (*matenek*) and ability to rule and administer the land and the people. The dualism concept behind this structure is that, ‘the insider (the center) provides political legitimacy to the outsider onwards to deal with the outside world (politic) and protect the insider (the center)’. If the ancestor and the cosmic world are respected and protected and balanced by proper behavior in the society by Timorese individual or groups, the central (inner) in turn protected the outsider around them. Whatever coming from the inside always return to where it was coming from. The outsider is sent away to find food and wealth to be sent back to the center for the benefit of all the people who inhabited layer 2 and 3. This dualism system is always alive and endless because it is a circle. In layer no. 2 and no. 3 there are opposition (i.e. new values versus old values) put next to each other, because the opposition is always complement each other for a greater results. *When there is no direct opposition found in this system between the insider and the outsider, social stability, tranquility and prosperity is then guaranteed.*

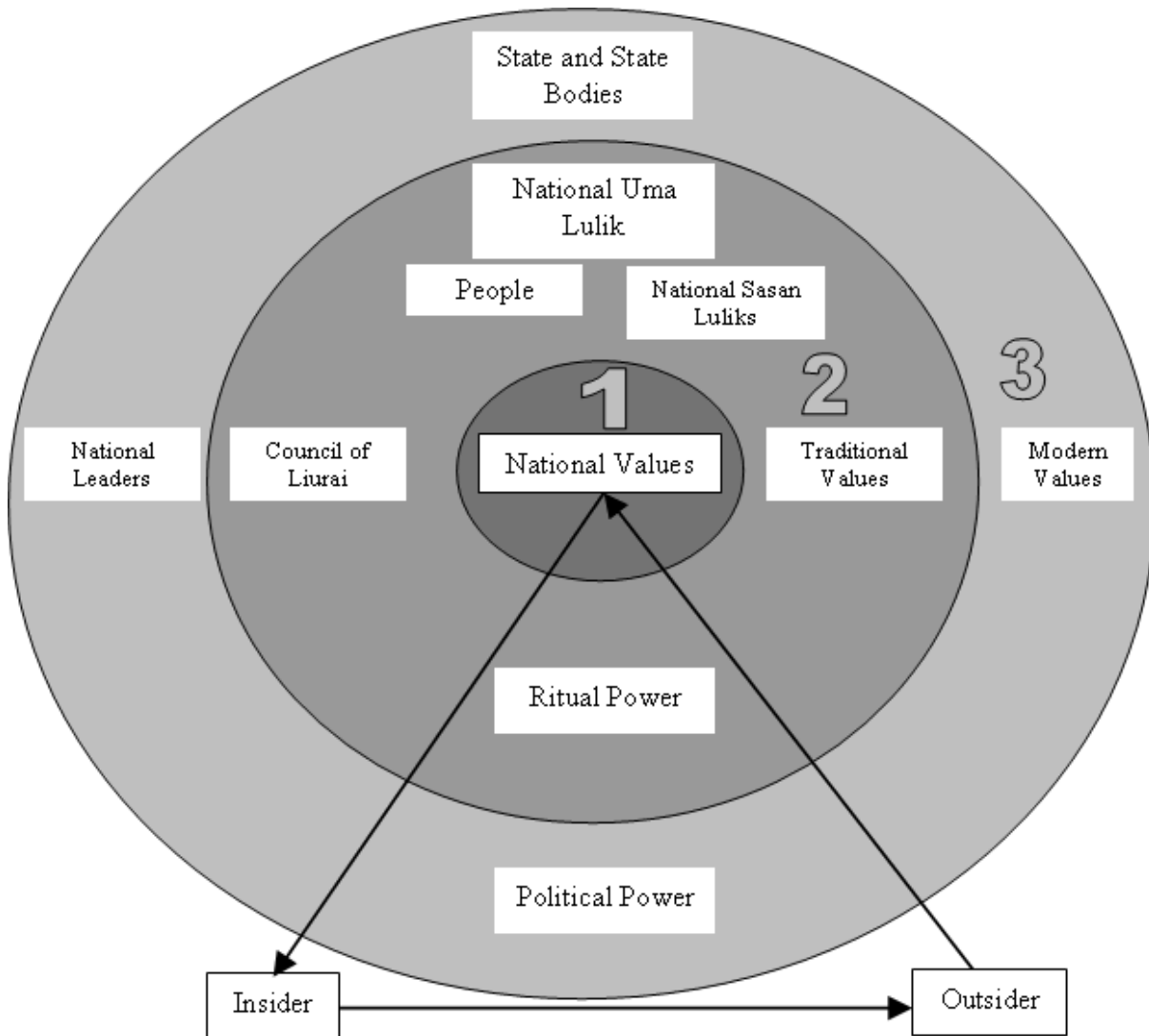
While this is not the focus of the discussion, it may worth to mention that the Portuguese and the Church in the past, not only conquered East Timor, but also penetrated the most center of Timorese society and its belief systems (layer no. 1) and established themselves and their administration form behind the center. While the Indonesian only managed to enter layer no. 2 and they never try to enter to the central (*laran*) part. Therefore, the Indonesians were not accepted and have to leave East Timor in 1999 after 24 years of Timorese resistance.

If we applied the above to the idea of state in East Timor, it looks like the following:

⁵³ Lulik literary translated as sacred, holly or forbidden. It also has magical connotation. Lulik in this paper refers to ideas, concepts or regulations determined by the ancestor (the spiritual world) for the Timorese people to follow and obey. The objectives of notion of lulik is to create peace, unity, harmony and tranquility by establishing harmonious relationship between individual, family, clan and social groups in the real world (refer to layer no 2 & 3 in picture 1).

⁵⁴ Hohe and Ospina (2001) provide example how a domain has a ritual center inhabited by the ancestor.

⁵⁵ In a sense, the term ‘Loro’ (sun) in Tetum Terik is the concept of god. The same applied to Wula-‘Lara in Naueti, Uru-Watu in Makasae. Other language groups has the same concept in their society.



Picture 2: Modern (Modified) Lulik Circle

The above *Lulik circle*⁵⁶ still based on its origin (the traditional concept of social and power structure, specially the layers). Author’s argument is based on assumption that, ‘a strong ideal state may seek to base its foundation/root on the core foundation existed in that given society for generations’. Contemporary activities (state activities, the development process) in East Timor are happening and circled around and around (with no end) only in political area at layer no.3 (see section F: The 2006 Crisis and the “Lulik Circle”). The state activities have not gone anywhere near the second layer, the ritual power, and layer number (1) or the center is out of question. As reminder, already mentioned earlier that the Portuguese (or the Church) penetrated Timorese society and its whole structure by placing themselves

⁵⁶ The lulik circle is not only existed in Timorese society, but each individual or group has the same dimension. For example, the mind of an individual is the *laran*, the center or the lulik (layer 1), then the ideology, principals or beliefs of that individual is the ritual power (layer 2) and the whole physical body who execute the action from the mind after checking it with the ideology, principals, or beliefs is the political power (layer 3). Individual will get themselves into trouble, when he/she failed to form harmonious relationship between the three layers. The same concept applied to a society or a group of friends.

at the center (layer 1) and controlling the Timorese from political area (layer 3). The Timorese society and its whole structure trapped in layer no. 2 during 450 years of Portuguese occupation. The question remain is, “does the current state and its processes has the ability and strategies to penetrate the inner part of Timorese society?”

For East Timorese social and political stability, all stake-holders need to answer this question because the whole Timorese future dependant on answers from each stake-holder and even from the smallest unit of Timorese society (Timorese as individual).

The white boxes in the three layers (especially layer 1 and 2) are suggestion from the author, and explained as follows:

Suggested State Structure	Layer Number	Origin (Traditional Structure)	Description	Opposition in Dualism Concept to Balance
National Values	1	Center, Sacred, Lulik, cosmos-world, spiritual world	Refer to ideas and concept that represent peace, unity, prosperity of the Timorese. It defines the national goals and dreams for future, which will never be achieved but always improves and develops overtime in which every individual working towards and contribute to. It also defines the civic ideology (the spirit) of the state including development of a common culture and shared meanings for the Timorese. It situated at the center, because this is the inner, Lulik, scared, the vision of the nation and the direction to move ahead for better future. This should be viewed as the national interest. If one can make Timorese to perceived “national values” as <i>Lulik</i> and manage to place it at the center of lulik circle, then Timorese will have strong unity and bonds amongst them, regardless their language-groups, region or political party affiliation. The question will be, how to bring the national values from layer no 3 go through layer no 2 and place it at layer no 1? It is difficult tasks, but if there is strong political will, it will be easy.	The human world, the reality, the real world (layer no. 2 & 3)
National Uma Lulik	2	Ritual Uma Lulik	Refer to the traditional ritual center of the nation. The national Uma Lulik should act as the central house to shade every Timorese citizen as the family members. This is where unity and solidarity among the population based upon. It also act as the focal point for the local main Uma	The State and its institutions (the Government) and the national values (layer no. 3 & 1)

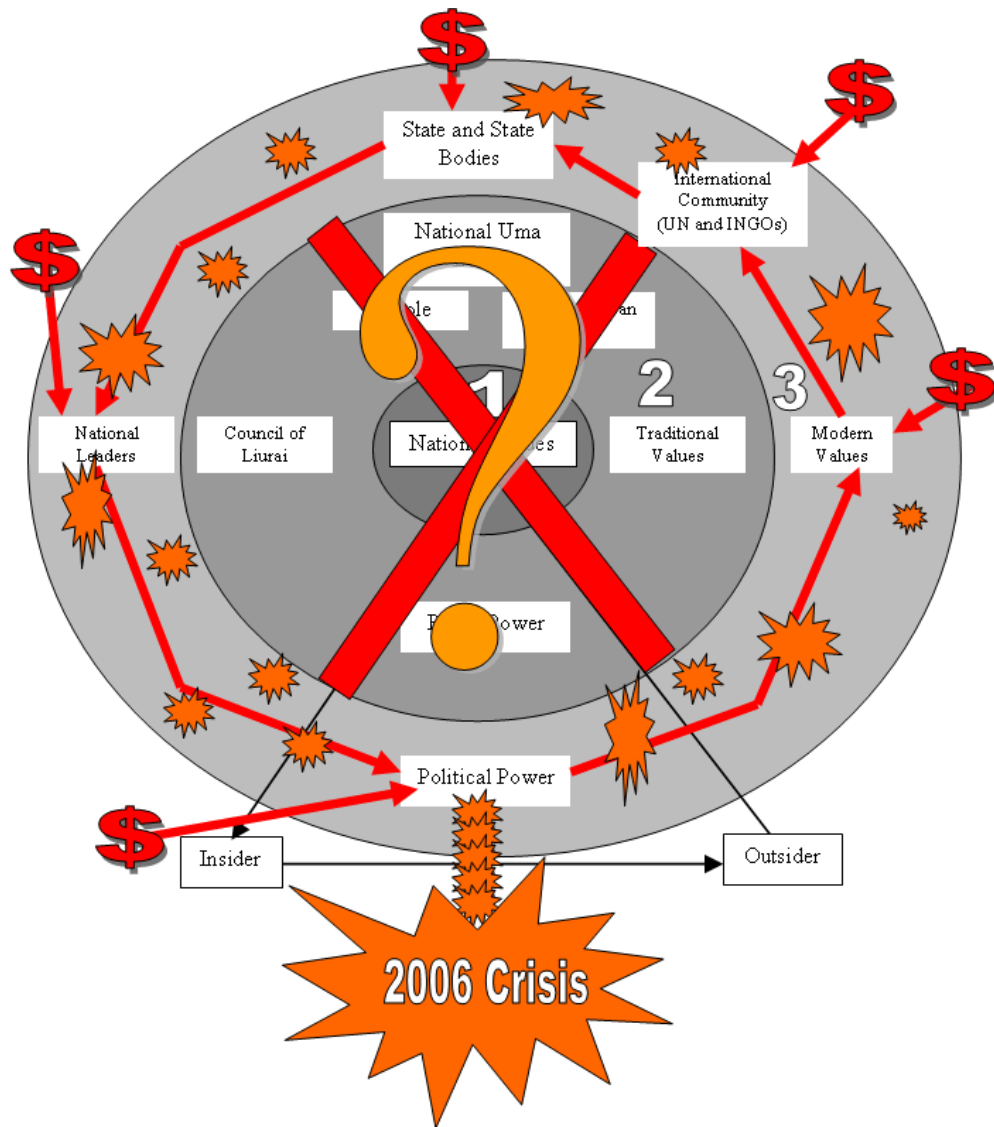
			Luliks across the country and a venue to store the national <i>sasan luliks</i> , the national symbol (see section 4.A)	
People	3	People in the traditional structure is situated in layer no 2 and 3. See traditional structure above.	Refer to Timorese citizens in general including all ethnic minorities (the Chinese, Indonesian, African, European, etc). People placed under the national Uma Lulik to create a sense of unity and bonds among them under the banner of multiculturalism, 'diversity under one house'.	The State and its institutions (the Government), national leaders and the national values (layer no. 3 & 1)
National Sasan Lulik	2	The sasan lulik is not visible in traditional Uma Lulik because it is part of every Uma Lulik in layer no. 2 and 3 in the traditional structure	Refer to the national symbols which now converted into sacred items through traditional ceremony across the country (see section 4.D). It placed under national Uma Lulik because this is where it will be stored. It will always included in layer no. 2 with an understanding that, the items only gives out to legitimize the elected national leaders to rule for a period of 5 years and return to the national <i>uma lulik</i> when it's due. It will give out again to the same leader if re-elected or to the new leader	The State and its institutions (the Government), national leaders and the national values (layer no. 3 & 1)
Ritual Power	2	Ritual Power	Based on original ritual power concept from traditional concept	Political power and the national values (layer no 1 and 3)
Council of Liurai	2	Dato/Beis	Refers to representatives of Liurai or traditional elder who represent the main traditional uma luliks across the country to create a sense of unity among them and the population who still viewed them as legitimate leaders. For their roles, see section 4.C.	The national values and the elected national leaders (layer no. 1 and 3)
Traditional values	2	Old values	Refer to original traditional values and practices that still valid, existed and used today by the contemporary Timorese in their daily life.	The National Values and the modern values (layer no.1 and 3)
State and State Bodies	3	Main Uma Lulik	Refer to the government and its institution	Everything in layer no. 2 and 1.
National Leaders	3	Liurai	Refer to elected national leaders who responsible to run the government and its institutions. The legitimacy of their political power is coming from a legitimate democratic election. The council of Liurai will grant them local power legitimacy through traditional ceremony at the national	Everything in layer no. 2 and 1

			uma lulik. They are the key actors to achieve the national values and hold major responsibility to keep the whole structure (society) from collapsing.	
Political Power	3	Political Power	The same as in traditional structure	Everything in layer no. 2 and 1
Modern Values	3	New Values	Refer to democracy and human rights and other related modern values from outside.	Everything in layer no. 2 and 1
The opposing two (three) ⁵⁷ arrows			Refers to the endless flow of life and values in dualism concept which in opposition but complement and balance each other. This notion can be utilize to introduce the idea of multiparty system to the Timorese where opposing political parties are not ‘enemy’ but it represent a balance between the two for a greater results that contribute to the center, the lulik, the national values which in turn benefit individuals form different political parties.	





F. The 2006 Crisis and the “Lulik Circle”

In the beginning of section 4, we guessed that, the 2006 crisis is probably caused by the conflicting paradigms between modern and traditional. To test if *Lulik Circle* is correct and can be used to analyze some of the contributing factors to the 2006 crisis, see the Lulik Circle for 2006 Crisis as follows:

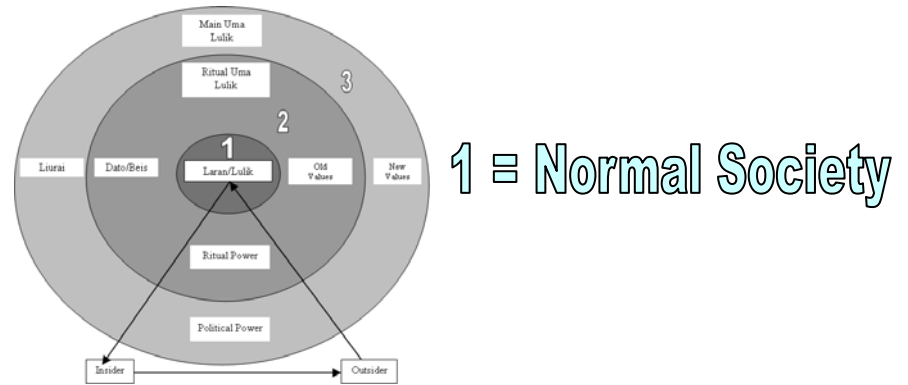
⁵⁷ The horizontal arrow is only an extra link between the insider and the outsider. The actual arrow is only the vertical ones.



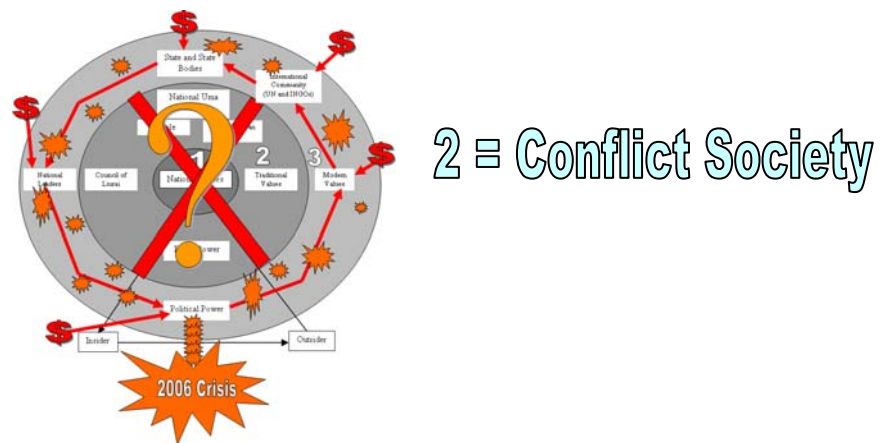
Picture 3: Lulik Circle of 2006 Crisis

-  Represents the flow of values, ideas, concepts, ideologies, project and funding
-  Represents the conflict (clash) between individuals, groups, organizations, state institution, ideas, ideologies, concepts, values, or funding between Timorese, International Communities, and between Timorese and International Communities. The clash is either emerge form 1999 onwards or inherited from Timorese political history form 1974 – 1999. The sign represent different sizes and forms of conflict at conceptual, organizational and institutional level.
-  Represent funding invested in the development process which most of them turn into values, ideas, concepts, ideologies and other projects for the Timorese.
-  Represents the uncertainties and the confusions of the Timorese about themselves, their past, current and future, their culture and traditional values, and the whole situation and processes around them in the country.

How come something like this?



Has turn into this?



If we look at *Lulik Circle of 2006 Crisis* as shown in picture 3 above. There are number of things we can highlight:

- There seems a ‘question mark (?)’ and a ‘cross’ over the *Lulik Circle* over “inner/spiritual world” on the whole layers no. 1 & 2 (the center and the ritual power).
- In layer no. 3, the “political area” there are so many things around. There is a “dollar sign” and an “arrow” going in, an “arrow” going around forming a circle while connecting few points (the white boxes) along the way, and there are ‘clash/boom’ signs all over the political area which represented in a bigger form at the bottom with 2006 crisis marked over it in white color.

The above picture interpreted as follows:

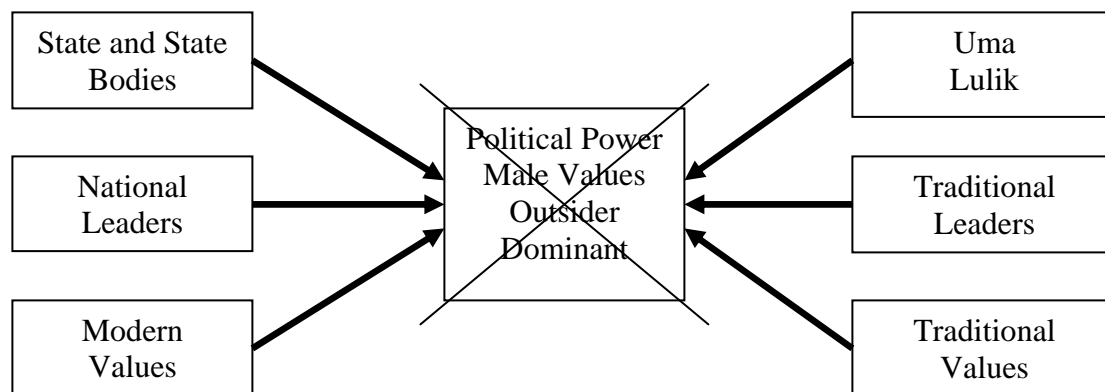
- There are funding going into the political area (layer no. 3) and circulated around as shown by the ‘circle arrows’ between the white boxes. At the same time, there are also coming in, many foreign values, concepts, ideas, ideologies, methodologies and projects as represented in the arrow pointed inwards, and mixed with funding that came in and travel endlessly across the political area (represented by the arrows travel inside the political area)
- The circulation of funding, foreign values, ideas, ideologies, concepts and project has resulted “CLASH or CONFLICT” as marked with red boom. The clash/conflict in this case not only

political or civil unrest, but also clash between paradigms (modern versus local) in the political area (layer no. 3).

- The clash/conflict resulted from the ignorance toward the flow of values in dualism believe system between giver-taker or insider-outsider. Because the inner part or the central (layer no 1 and 2), the most important component, has been blocked out for sometime since 1999. Therefore, the flow of values, energy, efforts, funding only circle around political area endlessly. The energy that built up along the political area from 1999 has no way out and no opposing balance energy coming from the inner part (layer no 1 and 2) to neutralize the tension, because the connection has been cut off. (It was mentioned earlier that society will be endangered if harmonious relationship/balance between the opposing values, ideologies or concept is failed).

Another way to explain the 2006 crisis is as follows:

Since 1999, when the foreign influences (state, national leaders, modern values) entered Timorese cosmic-world (Uma Lulik, traditional leaders, traditional values) both considered to hold ‘political power’ or ‘male values’ or ‘outsider values’ (see picture bellow)

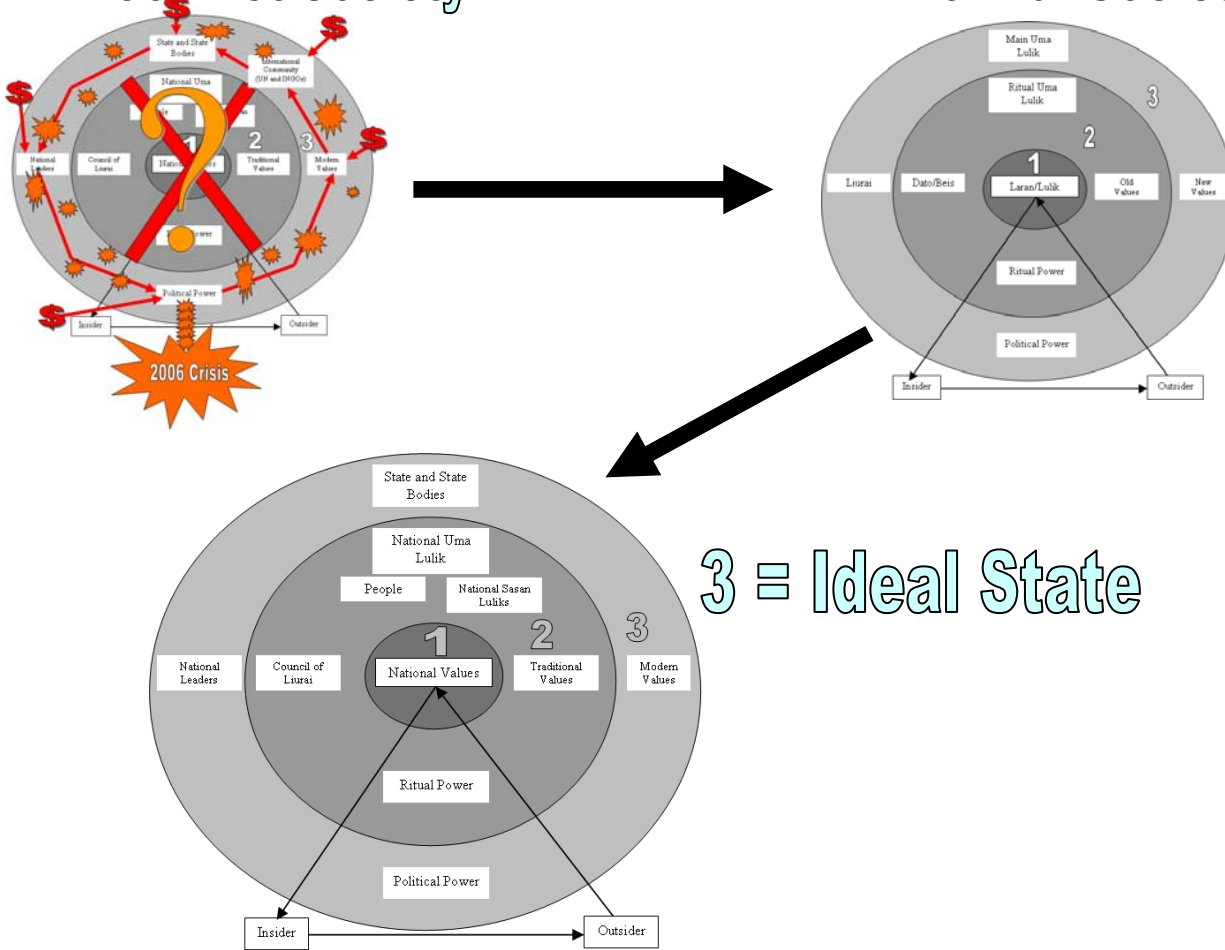


The above picture is what the Timorese worldview perceived as ‘direct opposition’ and created CLASH/CONFLICT in their belief systems, because the modern (outsider) and the traditional (insider) both holding the same ‘male values’ or ‘political power’ at the same time, and both inhabited the same area in the lulik circle of political area (layer 3) which constantly involve in ‘WAR/CONFLICT’ with each other. On top of that, the ritual area (layer 2) and the central area (the lulik, the most passive and receptive but most powerful one) are missing or blocked out from the cosmic-world. To reverse the situation, one of the entity has to be receptive and seems likely the traditional (insider) need to be changed to ‘insider values, or ‘ritual power’ or ‘female values’ to balance the incoming ‘outsider values’ or ‘political power’ or ‘male values’ and most importantly finding a way to the center to create a complete set of Timorese cosmic-world.

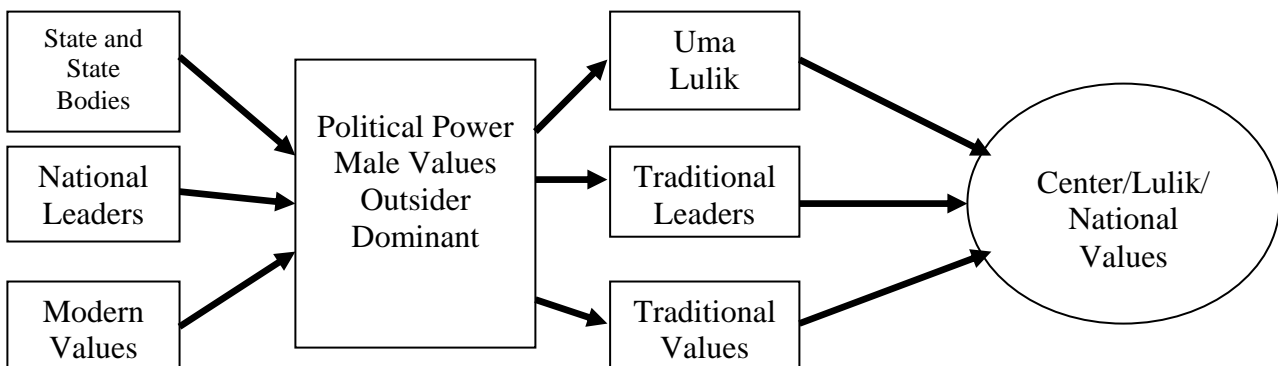
We may now think on how to change situation no 2 (conflict society) to situation no 1 (a normal society) and move forward to situation no 3 (an ideal state).

2 = Conflict Society

1 = Normal Society



Therefore, to reverse the situation, turning condition 2 (conflict society) into condition 1 (normal society), we need to enter the inner part of Timorese society, the *laran/lulik* (layer no 1). Because by working towards the center, the results will benefit Timorese people who inhabited layer 2 & 3. (detail on solutions referred to section 4.A-D and the end results as shown in Picture 2: Modern/modified Lulik Circle or see picture bellow)



G. Why the IDPs Refuse to go Home?

One may argue that the IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons)⁵⁸ refused to return home because they are dependant on rice distributions from aid agencies and the Government. However, one forgot that, the IDPs may not an expert who has the ability to analyze the complexities resulted from 2006 crisis. But, deep down their mind, in the inner part, they can sense that, there is still something wrong, and the crisis is far from over (other expected a new crisis to emerge). Even they can not explained it properly, but they can sense that, all the efforts put in place to resolve 2006 crisis, including Government efforts to send them home are still circled and go around in the political area (layer 3).

H. The Difficult Road to get the new State Structure off Ground

It is a 'difficult road' because to get this concept off ground we may need to reverse a little bit. It will cause unpleasant feelings for those who have invested so much efforts, energy and time to build up the 'current fragile state structure for the Timorese'. It may also cause unpleasant feelings for those who are gaining benefit from the current fragile state structure. But for the sake of the Timorese, if this structure is given a slightest thought and opportunity, we may need to consider the following steps: Conducting a National Juramentu to define the 'national values' which will be placed at the center of the structure (refer to picture no 2) and to create a fresh start for the Timorese for the difficult road ahead (see section 4.A). Further step refers to section 4.B, C and D.

5. Conclusion

People might think that the current turmoil in East Timor is caused by economic issue, social injustice, political issues, unemployment, education and health issues. All these points are valid and relevant, however, even all these issues are resolved; without a solid foundation upon which all these factors will be based on, there is no doubt that it will collapse again in the future as was witnessed in the 2006 crisis. This foundation must be based on East Timorese culture, traditions and worldview. By reconciling the conflicting paradigms in East Timor, will enable ways to achieve a better future.

⁵⁸ The Author and his family is one of the IDP families who left home almost two years ago when 2006 crisis broke down.

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