

How Timor-Leste influenced my academic career: A response to the papers by Michael Leach and Clinton Fernandes

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I am most grateful to the Timor-Leste Studies Association for deciding to hold this *festschrift* session for me. I am also most grateful to Aderito de Jesus Soares, Nuno Tchailoro Rodriques and Nug Katjasungkana, who found my 1978 Monash Politics Masters' thesis in 1999 and, with my permission, translated it into *Bahasa Indonesia* (Hill 2000) so that by the time I arrived in Dili in 2000 it was being quoted by the UN and others and easy to get published in English (Hill 2002)! The papers by Michael Leach and Clinton Fernandes about my 1978 Master's thesis in Politics provide me with an opportunity to reflect on the impact which writing this thesis had on my life both as an academic, a public commentator and an activist and to try to put into perspective the huge influence which Timor-Leste and its protracted struggle for self-determination has had on my career. In this presentation I plan to reflect on the context of the times in which I decided to embark on the study of Timor, what I have learnt from Timor for other parts of my teaching and research and ponder on some future directions for Timor-Leste studies in the light of these. It is also worth pointing out that two Timorese, Estêvão Cabral and Antero Bendito da Silva have already written PhD theses which expand considerably our knowledge of further aspects of FRETILIN's contribution to the 24 years using mine as a jumping off point (Cabral 2002; da Silva 2009). Two autobiographies by young males involved in the clandestine movement (Pinto & Jardine 1999; Rei 2007) have also been written and many shorter pieces by women who reflect on their experience in the FRETILIN women's organization OPMT (Conway 2009; Fernandes-Alves, Abrantes & Barros dos Reis 2006; Sequeira & Abrantes 2012). Hopefully Timor-Leste studies will develop in such a way as to encourage, support and provide the bibliographic resources for much more research like this to be done before some of the major players become too old or infirm to be interviewed.

The question of how I came to choose the topic of decolonization in Portuguese Timor for my Master's thesis back in 1974 probably requires some explanation. I did not come to the MA straight from my Bachelor's degree, and it barely related to what I had done as an undergraduate at Monash, which had been Sociology, with a major in Politics and an honours thesis on the American sociologist C. Wright Mills (after failing first year Science at University of Melbourne). While working at my first job after graduation, Assistant Lecturer in Humanities at RMIT in 1970, I was fortunate to attend the UN World Youth Assembly in New York as a delegate of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), having been an activist in the Australian section of this movement, the Australian Student Christian Movement (SCM).¹ The Assembly was an eye-opening experience for me; despite having been a supporter, at Monash of a campaign to aid the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, I had never met members of liberation movements, and there were many at the Assembly particularly from Africa. It was also the first time I took part in womens' liberation movement discussions then known as 'consciousness-raising'. On my way home I stopped at Beirut and visited Palestinian refugee camps with WSCF members in Lebanon, completely changing my views on the Middle East. I also stopped in Madras (now Chennai) to become part of the Australian delegation at the Assembly of World University Service of which I was a committee member.²

All these experiences made me realise that teaching Australian sociology at RMIT was not where I really wanted to be for the rest of my career, and I was fortunate enough to be offered a low- paid internship

¹ In the late 1960s and early 1970s ASCM and the WSCF had undergone a radicalizing period as a result of mass university expansion, the Vietnam War and other factors described by historian Renate Howe (Howe 2009).

² World University Service (WUS) was an international co-operation organization between staff and students around the world established after World War II as World initially at the initiative of WSCF, the international Catholic students' organization Pax Romana and the World Union of Jewish Students.

in London working for the 'Europe-Africa Project' of the WSCF funded by the United Presbyterian Church of the USA. My participation in the anti-apartheid movement in Australia (Jennett 1989, 107-9) had barely prepared me for all the extra knowledge I would gain, particularly about the Portuguese colonies, right next to South Africa, and which gave added power to the *Apartheid* regime. Members of FRELIMO, PAIGC, and the Angolan liberation movements came regularly into our office and were present at the Europe-Africa student conferences in Italy that I attended. They frequently asked me what I knew about Portuguese Timor, as it was so close to Australia, I had to confess I knew little of Timor; except that it was the cheapest way to leave Australia.

In London I also attended some MA courses at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies in anthropology and economic history of South East Asia, being aware that Australia was located closer to this region than to Africa and that I should learn more about this region, having travelled around Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia immediately after completing my undergraduate study.³ Through the Association for Radical East Asian Studies (AREAS), I met Carmel Budiardjo and John Taylor, later to become significant activists and writers on East Timor (Budiardjo and Liem 1984; Taylor 1991, 1999; Taylor, Gomes et al 2011). Carmel was about to launch TAPOL, which lobbied, highly successfully, for the release of Indonesian political prisoners. John Taylor, a student of Indonesia, was involved in innovative thinking about Development Theory (Taylor 1979). I also joined the Campaign for Independence in Angola, Mozambique and Guiné-Bissau, almost as large as the anti-Apartheid movement. Portugal was still in the grip of a fascist dictatorship so there was not much movement between the UK and Portugal. When the 'Carnation Revolution' came in April 1974 I was in Africa, on my way back to Australia, and wrote about it for the national weekly *Nation Review* (Hill 1974).

While in Europe I also got to know controversial Paris-based Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett, through conferences on the Vietnam War. Burchett was just beginning to write on the Portuguese colonies in Africa (Hill 1986). I also attended seminars with the legendary Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and his Geneva-based group of Brazilian exiles. He was, at the time based at the World Council of Churches, and working particularly in Tanzania and Chile on reform of education. I arrived back in Australia just as he was on tour here, and successfully gatecrashed his conference with Australian educators! (Hill 1973; Freire 1994, 180).

In 1974 I was offered a tutoring position at Monash with Dr Herbert Feith in an innovative course called 'Politics of the Third World' which covered many of the issues I had studied in London, including the green revolution, inequalities, education and development, peasant movements, the struggle against colonialism, dilemmas of aid, education and development and many others (Purdey 2011, 168). One day Herb asked whether I was considering writing a Masters thesis. While I hadn't yet contemplated enrolling, I told him I was a bit interested in Portuguese Timor. The 'Carnation Revolution' meant that major changes would be taking place there. Herb, a leading scholar of Indonesia who had been barred from the country due to his insistence of looking into human rights issues responded enthusiastically, and wanted to supervise it. Suddenly I realized what a good topic it would be for me. Of course I believed I would be going to Portuguese Timor to observe and write about its transition to Independence! (Purdey 2011, 376).

After reading everything in the Monash library about Portuguese Timor, which didn't take long, the project gained momentum when I received a phone call in August from Herb telling me 'there's a man from Portuguese Timor in Melbourne, you had better try to meet him'. I phoned a hotel in Lygon Street, Carlton, and a couple of days later met Jose Ramos-Horta on his first visit to the southern states of Australia (Hill 1974; Ramos-Horta 1987, 75-6; Freney 1991, 339). Our first meeting in a nearby cafe was an eye-opener. I learnt for the first time of the establishment of the pro-independence Timorese Social Democratic Association - *Associação Social Democratica Timorense* (ASDT) which was working closely with the

³ These units were taught by anthropologist Andrew Turton and Malcolm Caldwell, the Scottish Marxist economic historian and founder of the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, who was sadly killed in Cambodia by persons unknown on 23 December 1978. Their neo-Marxist approaches and that of John Taylor undoubtedly influenced what I looked for in Timor and my own sociological writings at the time (Hill 1975) although, as Michael Leach pointed out in his oral presentation I did not use much social theory in the thesis.

Portuguese leaders of the Armed Forces Movement *Movimento das Forças Armadas* (MFA), the democratically minded soldiers who had brought about a revolution in their own army to bring an end to Portuguese fascism. The MFA was committed to decolonization of all Portugal's territories as early as feasible and we all knew that they would not be ruling Timor for much longer. Ramos-Horta urged me to come to Timor as early as possible and promised co-operation with his political association and introductions to the other two, UDT and *Apodeti* as well as the Catholic Church and the Portuguese. I became excited that I would actually know someone there when I arrived and set about to prepare. Two Australians I knew had already made their way to Portuguese Timor: Denis Freney, founder of the Sydney-based Campaign for Independent East Timor (CIET) (Freney 1975) and LaTrobe University student Grant Evans of the Australian Union of Students (Evans 1975). Former Australian Consul James Dunn had already been back to Dili and written a report for the Parliament (Dunn 1974) and I had met him in Canberra. In September the ASDT, influenced by the African liberation movements, changed its name to *Frente Revolucionária de Timor Leste Independente* – FRETILIN (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor).

The first flight I booked to Timor, on the \$40 TAA Fokker Friendship service from Darwin to Baucau, never left; thanks to the arrival of Cyclone Tracy the previous day. I rebooked and I set out on a lengthy voyage via Jakarta, Bali and Kupang to reach Portuguese Timor early in 1975. My three months fieldwork was a whirlwind of visits with Portuguese officials, political party leaders, church leaders, founders of the students, workers and women's groups, and travel in the FRETILIN Landrover to remote parts of the country with some of its leading members including Ramos-Horta, Mari Alkatiri, Nicolau Lobato and Rogerio Lobato. The Timorese Chinese community provided lavish hospitality for the FRETILIN leaders in their restaurants when they travelled, and I was often a beneficiary of that. The country was covered with rainforest and several times we had to wade through swirling rivers, arm-in-arm in waist-deep water, while young Timorese men carried the Landrover on their shoulders. There was an atmosphere of expectancy and optimism throughout the territory as the new leaders of the MFA tried to get local political leaders together to effect a program of decolonization (Hill 2002, 96-138).

However the Melbourne *Age* headline of February 22nd 1975 'Indonesia plans Armed Takeover in Timor' created anxiety and sent two groups hurrying from Australia while I was still there. One was a delegation of Parliamentarians, including Ken Fry and Senators Gordon McIntosh, Arthur Gietzelt and Liberal Neville Bonner (Jolliffe 1978, 251; Viviani 1978/2000; Dunn 1983, 153-7; McIntosh 1983; Fry 1985; Freney 1991, 349). The other was of civil society organizations and included Jill Jolliffe representing the Australian Union of Students, Mark Aarons of the Journalists Union and John Birch of Community Aid Abroad (Jolliffe 1978, 106; Aarons 1992; Blackburn 1993, 97).

Gathering information and views in Portuguese Timor was not as difficult as I thought it would be, despite not speaking Portuguese or any of the Timorese languages. I started studying Portuguese, the language of all the political party leaders whom I interviewed, but usually found someone with enough English to translate. Back in Melbourne I enrolled in an intensive course of Portuguese at LaTrobe University, intending to visit again in the next term break, and was still doing the course when the news of the full-scale invasion came, putting an end both to my thesis topic and effectively preventing me from returning to East Timor for another 24 years. On the day of the Indonesian military assault on Dili, a meeting in Melbourne planned to hear a report from David Scott of CAA, who had just returned from Dili. The Australia-East Timor Association was formed. This organization still exists and I am currently its chair (Freney 1991, 363; Blackburn 1993, 104; Scott 2005, 30). A booklet I wrote in 1976 'The Timor Story' (Hill 1976) ensured that I was excluded as long as the Indonesian army was there. I more or less dropped out of the MA and spent three months in New York helping Jose Ramos-Horta establish the FRETILIN diplomatic office⁴, and giving seminars on Portuguese Timor at US universities. At Cornell I met Ben Anderson and Arnold Kohen who later both made a huge contribution to understanding of the Timor issue in the USA (Kohen 1977, 1999; Anderson 1993, 1996). In Europe I revived my contacts from the Europe-

⁴ Others who were involved in assisting the FRETILIN office on a more long-term basis were David Scott, Richard Tanter, Sue Rabbitt Roff and Glenda Lasslett (Scott 2005, 87-96; Purdey 2011, 376-7)

Africa Project to inform them about what was happening in Timor, and spoke at a big conference in Germany with Indonesian exiles in Germany and Timorese students from Lisbon. On returning to Melbourne I was persuaded by Herb Feith that I could resurrect the thesis as a study of the nationalist movement, FRETILIN, its outlooks and strategies.

It is thus pleasing to find, some thirty years later, that there is still such interest in my book, despite the fact that as Michael Leach points out, 'future splits in the independence movement were yet to become evident, and other divisions from 1974-5 period would later be strategically reconciled' (Leach this volume). Both Michael and Clinton have pointed to aspects of the nationalist movement which need more discussion, namely the religious and ideological origins of the ideas the FRETILIN founders proposed and to a further, more identity-related concept of Timorese nationalism additional to those I described in 1978: the concept of *korea'an*, or 'self-liberation'.

I agree with Clinton Fernandes that most of the FRETILIN leaders could be called 'Populist Christians', influenced a great deal by the teachings in Catholic Social Justice they had received from the Jesuits. Naturally, this does not fully explain how they differed from others who had a similar education but who formed or joined other political associations. I found in 1975 that the leaders of all parties, including Apodeti and UDT had a remarkably similar education. As Clinton writes in his 2011 book:

Leaders tended to come from the same circles: some were from *liurai* families, some were *mestizos* (people of mixed race), while others were wealthy landowners. Several UDT leaders held relatively senior positions in the civil service because they had been members of the *Accao Nacional Popular* (ANP), which was the only legal party during the dictatorship. By contrast, although the FRETILIN leaders had similar backgrounds, many had had run-ins with the Portuguese colonial authorities, or had been denied advancement within the colonial service. Thus, the FRETILIN leaders had no great love of the Portuguese colonial regime. APODETI leaders came from areas that were near the Indonesian border or had other ties to Indonesia (Fernandes 2011, 14).

I would add that the main differences were probably within FRETILIN itself, with those who studied in Portugal, in particular Vicente 'Sah'e' Reis and Antonio Carvarinho (*Mau Lear*) becoming more radical than those who stayed in Timor, as they were exposed to the ideas of other liberation movements in Portuguese colonies and to ideas such as that of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in addition to various currents of Marxism. Being a populist Catholic would not necessarily assist with recruitment of rural people to FRETILIN as less than 30% of Timorese were baptized Catholics at the time of the invasion in 1975 (Smyth 2004, 35). Several writers who know more about the Catholic Church than I do, have argued that there was no Liberation Theology in Portuguese Timor, even under the occupation (Hull 1992; Cristalis and Scott 2006). And a careful reading of Patrick Smythe's (2004) book, reveals few influences in Timor, either then or now, of the truly radical Christianity, such as Liberation Theology, which makes use of a Marxist class analysis, which was influential in Latin America. An exception was Father Rocha, a follower of Marxist Columbian priest Camillo Torres, was expelled from Timor at the request of Bishop Ribeiro in October 1974 (Hill 2002, 63).

The figure of Father Martinho da Costa Lopes, the first Timorese Apostolic Administrator in the colony, showed a different face of Catholicism. Initially a conservative, he was right wing enough to represent Timor in the Portuguese Parliament in the 1950s and 60s, as a member of the government party (the only party). While remaining theologically conservative, he opened up his newspaper *Seara* in the 1970s to diverse views, including quite a few from FRETILIN, leading to its closure by the Portuguese authorities (Hill 2002, 53-4). By 1983 he was removed from his position by the Vatican at the request of the Indonesian Bishops who claimed he was a Communist. On his only visit to Australia he was snubbed by most Australian Bishops who found him too close to FRETILIN (Lennox 2000). The career of the much more well-known Bishop Belo followed a remarkably similar trajectory from conservative to being under suspicion for being too close to the resistance (Kohen 1999). 'Populist' might be a better word to describe both these church leaders than 'leftist'. The FRETILIN leaders, on the other hand were mostly on the left, their ideas coming from secular movements, due to their anxiety about the close relations between the Church and the Portuguese state.

It is clear that the Indonesian government continually confused Nationalism (particularly Timorese nationalism) with Communism and defined anyone who disagreed with them as a Communist. It is clear also that even those FRETILIN members who admitted to the title of 'Marxist' (possibly including Mau Lear, Vicente Sa'he, Abilio Araújo and Xanana Gusmão)⁵ were often using aspects of it, such as the class analysis and preferential option for the poor advocated by radical clergy, rather than the concept of the vanguard party, and that none of them applied it to FRETILIN as a whole movement. Clinton's suggestion that the biographies of the 46 deceased FRETILIN Central Committee members be a priority for research is a good one. Many of their relatives are still alive and a study of their background, political outlooks and involvement in the struggle would give us a great deal of insight into Timorese society and the impact of nationalism.

Michael Leach takes up the issue of *korea'an*, or 'self-liberation' described by women's leader Aurora Ximenes as 'freeing one's self' from the customs and traditions that tie us down, expressed from a feminist viewpoint but clearly applicable not only to women. This takes me back to the old 'consciousness-raising groups' of the second-wave feminist movement in the USA and Australia and raises the important issue of the role of women in the nationalist movement in the 1970s. In the thesis I quoted Rosa 'Muki' Bonaparte, the founder of the FRETILIN women's organization OPMT, *Organização Popular da Mulher de Timor* (Popular Organization of Timorese Women), whose September 1975 speech had already been published in Australia. She quotes the twin objectives of OPMT as 'firstly to participate directly in the struggle against colonialism, and second, to fight in every way, the violent discrimination that Timorese women have suffered in colonial society' (Bonaparte 1976; Hill 2002, 160). While I regarded this at the time as exemplary and more progressive than the 'women's wings' of most of the African liberation movements, at the time of writing the FRETILIN thesis I had not seriously engaged with the issues of gender and culture in predominantly subsistence societies as I later did in the Pacific.

I have observed in my forthcoming book on Timor-Leste's transition to independence that 'of all the changes that took place during the twenty-four years of Indonesian occupation... one of the most remarkable has been the changing roles of women and changing gender relations' (Hill 2014). This has been accompanied by huge changes in attitude which have emerged, I believe stemming in part from the attitudes, views and policies of the founders of the OPMT which has influenced women and even many male leaders of all political parties, not just FRETILIN, through the intensive work done by Timorese women in the Diaspora as well as inside the country.⁶ The question is whether all the male nationalists have reached this awareness as Aurora Ximenes is presumably referring to men as well as women when she speaks of *Korea'an*.

In 1979 I received an offer of a PhD scholarship at the ANU Centre for Continuing Education to work with noted Adult Education specialist Dr Chris Duke, at the time, Honorary Secretary of the International Council of Adult Education then under the Presidency of Paulo Freire, with Canadian Budd Hall, the founder of participatory action research as its Executive Director.⁷ I wished to focus on the liberating possibilities of education, and influenced by an outstanding conference I attended at the University of New South Wales in 1976 (Mamak and McCall 1978), decided to turn my attention to the Pacific Islands region as I was not welcome in Indonesia or any ASEAN country and almost no one at the ANU wanted to hear about an independent East Timor! My research in Fiji, New Caledonia and US Trust Territory on non-formal education and development arose out of my previous contact with Brazilian

⁵ See Kammen (2010) and Fernandes (2011, 65) for the view of Marxism espoused by Xanana Gusmão in 1982.

⁶ For example Milena Pires, who worked initially in Australia and later in the UK on gender issues throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Pires 1999) was a member of UDT and later PSD in the first Parliament. Since July 2010 she has been a member of the UN's Committee which oversees the CEDAW Convention, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

⁷ Dr Duke was Director of the ANU Centre for Continuing Education, a vibrant section of the ANU engaged in public debate, community education and outreach in the Pacific Islands and Asia through ASPBAE, the Asian and Pacific Bureau of Adult Education. Sadly the ANU did not regard Education as a priority field of research and never made Chris a professor. Before I submitted my thesis he had accepted a position as Professor of Adult Education and later Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Warwick University in the UK. The CCE no longer has academics or PhD students.

educator Paulo Freire, who had inspired the FRETILIN Literacy programs I had visited on horseback with Jose Ramos Horta, Antonio 'Mau Lear' Carvarino and Vicente 'Sa'he' Reis in February 1974 (Hill 2002, 109-114). I'll never forget *Mau Lear* and *Sa'he* as we rode away from the FRETILIN literacy school on our Timor ponies; they were full of enthusiasm as they explained their philosophy to me and two Australian journalists. 'We are going to be the best country in Southeast Asia' said *Mau Lear* exuberantly. Thinking of the region at that time, the Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos conflicts only just finished, political prisoners in most Asian countries, no economic development to speak of as yet, perhaps it wouldn't be too difficult to be the best country in ASEAN. I thought of this moment again when reading Clinton's paper: the analysis of FRETILIN by DFAT's Michael Curtin was that 'FRETILIN was the sort of party we would have welcomed, even encouraged, anywhere else than in Timor.' It was, at that stage, an exemplary party, with modest, fair and achievable goals in agriculture and employment, a good sense of co-operation with the Portuguese to move towards independence. Many an Australian colonial officer in PNG probably longed for a party like FRETILIN in the fragmented Trust Territory they were trying to bring to independence as one country at the time.

My Pacific research and participation brought me in contact with other nationalist movements in particular the *Front de Liberation Kanak et Socialiste* (FLNKS) led by Jean Mari Tchibau – sadly killed by one of his own militants in Noumea. There was a time when I believed New Caledonia would become independent before East Timor. It also brought me in contact with the women's movements throughout the Pacific, to the founding of a Women and Development Network of Australia (WADNA) (Melville 1983) and to organizing a group of women to go to the UN's Nairobi Women's conference in 1985. But there was no getting away from Timor. In 1984 Jose Ramos-Horta asked me to arrange for him to speak at the National Press Club in Canberra which I did (Ramos-Horta 1984). In 1985 Pat Walsh of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) arranged for three Timorese women to attend the Nairobi conference so we spent a great deal of our time in Nairobi helping organize meetings and contacts for Emilia Pires, Inés Almeida and Mimi Ferreira. While this group made a solid and timely contribution to the Diplomatic Front, in making women and governments from all regions aware of the nature of the Indonesian occupation and resistance against it,⁸ it was women inside the country such as Maria Domingas 'Micato' Fernandes Alves, Laura Abrantes, Beba Sequeira and Filomena Barros dos Reis as well as Milena Pires who made more of a feminist analysis of the nationalist struggle (Fernandes-Alves, Abrantes & Barros dos Reis 2006; Sequeira & Abrantes 2012).

After two years in Fiji following my PhD, working for the Commonwealth Youth Program, I was asked to apply for a tenured position at the newly established Victoria University in the western region of Melbourne to teach Pacific studies. We identified a need among Pacific island students coming to Melbourne for a course for those wanting to work with youth, women, environmental groups and other civil society organizations, and so the BA (Asia-Pacific Community Development) was born. It was not long before Diaspora Timorese found out about this course and began to join it. I will never forget one Timorese student in my class in the early 1990s saying to me 'you were in Timor in 1975 and got your Masters there, what are you doing these days for the Timorese Resistance?' This was Salustiano Freitas, who later organized a conference of Diaspora Timorese in Melbourne to mobilize them to take more of a role in the Diplomatic Front (ETRA 1996). At a seminar where Herb Feith spoke immediately after the fall of Suharto, I met three Timorese academics⁹ who seemed determined not to want to waste a moment to push for

⁸ Following their Nairobi experience these three women spoke at many other conferences in the region (Pires 1986; Ferreira 1985; Almeida 1995). A larger group of Timorese women participated in the Beijing women's conference. Emilia and Inés were later to participate in the CNRM conference in Perniche in 1998 but it was probably Milena Pires and Ana Pessoa who had a greater influence on the gender ideas in the final document the '*Magna Carta*'.

⁹ These were Faustino Gomes, spending a year in the Anthropology Department at Monash, and boarding with the Feith family, Joao Cancio Freitas, a Masters Student in Business at my own university and Dr Balthasar Kehi, a lecturer at Yarra Theological Union, Box Hill who did not know each other before that meeting but who immediately got together to plan what they could do. Shortly afterwards Joao Cancio was appointed, together with Emilia Pires by the CNRT, to convene a conference on future development planning for Timor, before the Ballot of 1999 (Freitas 1999).

independence, surprising some of the Indonesians present. After that there was no going back to a leisurely life as a Pacific studies or even Pacific Community Development academic. The issues in Timor-Leste seemed so urgent compared to those of the Pacific Islands, even though some of them were facing turmoil as a result of neo-liberal globalization (Hill 2000). Victoria University was offered funding by Foreign Minister Alexander Downer to co-organize a conference on Future Strategic Development Planning for East Timor with the resistance coalition (the CNRT before the Ballot of 1999), and the University appointed me to join Emilia Pires and Joao Cancio Freitas on the committee. The role of Australia at this time has been well documented by many writers, including Clinton Fernandes (2004).

When Timor-Leste became independent Victoria University began to receive scholarship students from Timor. In first semester 2000 I was granted study leave in Timor-Leste and was based at the National University of Timor Loro Sa'e in its first year of operation (Hill 2000). I began to write the book I had intended to write in 1975 on the decolonization of East Timor and its transition to independence. Although never having studied history, I am deeply aware of the need for a historical approach to all problems and value very much the contribution of scholars such as Clinton (who gave a paper on the 1978-79 Famine at the recent UNTL-VU Conference on Future Directions for Food in Timor-Leste). Having come from being a sociologist of a social movement, the nationalist movement in Portuguese Timor, I had drifted both geographically and academically into emancipatory adult education and participatory development. My experience in New Caledonia made me realise that Timor-Leste could be getting much more out of its agriculture with more carefully designed education for farmers such as found in the *Maisons Familiales Rurales* (Hill 1987). This has led me in recent times to an interest in the sociology of agriculture, from the local to the global, and trying to explain the lack of impact of higher incomes on rural livelihoods, in contrast to the Pacific islands, most of which have much less cash than Timor-Leste yet a more adequate standard of living as reflected in their higher Human Development Indices. We are developing a series of small projects involving Timorese and outsiders which I am hoping can become a model of co-operation between academics and practitioners. Timor-Leste studies has a bright future if it continues to engage with Timorese academics, civil society, students and other professionals in cross-disciplinary discussion, debate, collaborative learning and research. The participation in this session at the TLSA conference gave me great inspiration to see large numbers of Timorese and Malae researchers working together and hopefully we can all go on to do even greater things.

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