

Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies

17/18

INSTITUTO DE CIENCIAS SOCIAIS
43756
BIBLIOTECA

Parts of Asia

Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

The Unruly Island: Colonialism's Predicament in Late Nineteenth-Century East Timor

Ricardo Roque

Abstract: This paper describes the state of colonial administration in East Timor in the late nineteenth century. It explores a common view of the "underdeveloped" nature of nineteenth-century Portuguese colonialism by examining the recurrent complaints made by the Portuguese governors about East Timor's miserable and unmanageable colonial condition. From the civilizing perspective, Portuguese rule in Timor seemed virtually impossible. The island was geographically isolated from Macau and Lisbon; the administration was militarily weak, economically poor, and enmeshed in multiple political conflicts, either between the colonizers and the indigenous or amongst colonizers. Yet this paper also tries to go beyond the negative connotations and the Eurocentric character of such discourses. In contrast, it suggests a productive engagement with the predicament of colonial administration. The intention is to set forth an alternative hypothesis that emphasizes the tactical character of colonialism and its embedding in the pragmatics of local colonial interactions.

Introduction

There were hardly any "houses of stone and lime"; "fortress" was the name given to "something" in ruins; malarial mosquitoes prospered in the enclosing swamp; it was a most unhealthy place in which to live; there was one church, the governor's palace, the custom-house; a decaying barrack for soldiers; one lighthouse barely working; no public roads, "no schools, no houses for the

officials,” and “this just in Dili because in the interior nothing exists.”¹ Thus governors in official correspondence in the 1880s described the city of Dili, the Portuguese port of trade on a natural bay on the north coast of Timor and the seat of government since 1769, the year the Portuguese settled in East Timor after a forced departure from their previous establishment in Lifau. The image was not much modified in the years to come, nor had it been significantly different in the years before.² The place gave a most negative impression of the Portuguese government—“a most miserable one,” careless about improving the country or the natives’ condition—to the British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, visiting the island in 1861: “The whole aspect of the place is that of a poor native town, and there is no sign of cultivation or civilization round about it” (Wallace 145, 151).³ No signs on the landscape hinted at the presence of “civilized,” European, rule. Under foreign eyes even the Portuguese colonizers bore a resemblance to the natives. Joseph Conrad’s *Victory* of 1915 depicted Dili as “that highly pestilential place,” “that miserable town of mud hovels,” where one lonesome British trader “refused to accept the racial whiteness of the Portuguese officials” as he wandered in despair after his brig had been confiscated at the customs “on some pretence of irregularity in his papers” (Conrad 9, 11-12).

Notwithstanding the differing nationalist verves of these views, they concurred on the verdict: imperialism in Timor was adrift. For external observers, Dili offered confirmation to the stereotype of the “primitive” and “immoral” character of the Portuguese empire. For the Portuguese authorities, East Timor stained the idealization of imperial order, adding to the self-perception of the empire’s “fragility” then current in some Portuguese intellectual circles. Wallace’s and Conrad’s observations above also conveyed a widespread negative imagery of the Portuguese colonial venture. Then current in British circles, this image eventually intensified as the Portuguese and British imperialist interests in Africa dramatically clashed in the crisis of the British *ultimatum* of 1890.⁴ The “natural” expression of a “backward” European nation, the Portuguese colonization was commonly accused of not complying with the “modern” moral, economic, and technical standards which then ought to guide the Western “civilizing mission”: the profitable exploration of the country, the military power, the moral improvement of the “natives,” or the territorial extension of an efficient state administration.⁵

In Portugal, Timor’s reputation was the worse: a “damnable colony,” a “place of hell,” cursed to perpetual backwardness (Fernandes 6-8). Such a “capital city,” Dili, was unworthy of the Portuguese empire, and overall the

colonial situation in the island embarrassingly disagreed with the good principles of proper imperial rule. “Considered from every possible point of view,” wrote a former official in 1903, “except for its natural wealth, one must admit Timor is the most miserable country in the all universe, where civilization has never entered” (Dores 821). Despite three centuries of Portuguese presence in the island, the impact of European civilization seemed nil and economic profits a mirage. This perception gained especial currency in Portuguese intellectual circles marked by the belief in the empire’s “decadence,” “weakness,” and “backwardness” vis-à-vis the “modern” and “stronger” European imperial nations, such as Britain and France (see Trajano Filho 21-39). In this vein, an influential metropolitan current of opinion in the 1880s vehemently argued for “abandoning” the colony “once and for all, for no matter what price” (Martins 12; see also Ramos 145-46). Nevertheless, engulfed by the rising imperialist-nationalist ideology that would dominate imperial policy in Portugal from the 1890s, these critical views did not prevail. Thereafter, the sacred principle of the Portuguese empire’s historical continuity determined that all colonial territories dating back to the Discoveries were necessarily inalienable (see Alexandre 147-62). In Timor, the empire could be adrift; but in the name of a glorious imperial past, no colony, not even Timor, could be given away.

Hope for turning such a “miserable country” into a profitable possession rested on the ability of imperial agents to introduce Western principles of statecraft, morality, and economic exploration. In the nineteenth century an extensive gallery of governors and interim governors took charge of the colony. The majority arrived from the metropole dreaming of modernizing programmes of government. Many took pains to effect change. But governors came and went at a rapid pace. From 1873 until 1894, the year Colonel Celestino da Silva began his fourteen years’ rule (1894-1908), Timor experienced seventeen governors and one government council. Most governors did not last more than two years, sometimes months. They succumbed to malaria, the unbearable conditions of isolation, or often to the political conflicts with Macau and local officials. Thus those who survived disease usually left the island convinced that colonial administration was practically hopeless.

East Timor’s part in the empire was perceived as problematic and disruptive; a sense of ruin and disorder bewildered the Portuguese colonial governors, even though they held to the idea that the territory could but definitely remain a Portuguese belonging. This paper explores this predicament. It takes on the civilizing perspective of the Portuguese governors in order to offer a

general description (to a considerable extent based in primary documentation) of the colonial administration in Timor, in a historical period so far secondarily addressed by historians.⁶ The paper looks at the dimensions of the colonial predicament that arose most especially in the context of the community of European colonials.⁷ It focuses on the negative connotations of the colonial order in Timor: locally, as regards the Dili administration, and externally as regards Dili's relationship with the imperial and provincial authorities in Lisbon and Macau. The narrative concentrates attention on important tropes of the Portuguese perception of Timor's troublesome condition: the patrimonial nature of the state, the financial misery, the unreliable information order, the military vulnerability, the establishment's geographical isolation, or the rivalries amongst officials. This exposes the tensions and vulnerabilities underlying the imperial project "from within" the community of colonizers.⁸ Yet, the intention is to read these contemporary accounts "against the grain," suggesting a productive engagement with the miseries of administration. It will be suggested that the accounts of trouble and disorder also express a tactical form of enacting the empire and a pragmatic mode of dealing with the difficulties of the colonial situation. The negative emphasis on colonialism's predicament might trap scholars in a vicious circle of Eurocentric analysis, hindering the understanding of such tactical and pragmatic types of colonial rule. This paper then concludes with a challenge. It invites scholars to address the possibility of "colonial order" in distressed and marginal imperial zones (such as Timor) in the context of the local pragmatics of government and with regard to the complex interplay between the European and the indigenous cultures.

The article begins by taking us back to the city of Dili. It describes the poor infrastructural condition of the colonial establishment, its military vulnerability, and the patrimonial character of the colonial society. The second section of the essay takes a wider perspective. It analyses the regime of imperial and regional connections that linked the island colony to the exterior, in particular to the provincial government in Macau. This section shows the political disconnections and misconnections of the colonial establishment, especially as regards its circuits of information. Finally, I will look at the strategies of economic survival adopted by the Portuguese in Dili. It is here shown that Dili was greatly dependent on the episodic appropriations of flows of goods and money, flows which constantly broke up and which the government authorities could barely control.

Patrimonialism and the "Moral Problem" of Administration

Dili, as we saw, seemed to contradict the expectation of European presence in the island. Yet the appearance of "civilization" was something visible in the capital city. "Officials in black and white European costume, and officers in gorgeous uniforms," Wallace derogatively observed in the 1860s, "abound in a degree quite disproportionate to the size or appearance of the place" (145). To "enlightened" visitors such as Wallace, in effect, the pompous display of uniforms and the proliferation of state officials contrasted with the native look of the town and the government's inefficiency. Uniforms and officials might have signalled European civilization, but they were hollow signs. It was at any rate in Dili that virtually all state officialdom dwelled and the very few Europeans came together (see Forbes 418). Apart from occasional foreigners, the tiny European community was composed of Portuguese officials, missionaries, soldiers, or army officers of high or low rank. State officialdom in Dili included also Macanese, and occasionally Indo-Portuguese from Goa, as well as a good number of Timorese, some of whom would achieve high administrative positions (see Fernandes 4). This society of bureaucrats and officers encompassed the formal structure of the colonial state. The real scope of intervention of this bureaucracy, however, was confined to Dili and the close surroundings, and clerks and state officials remained stationary in the capital for most of the duration of their appointments. The "appearance" of "civilization," the display of signs of administrative status, as Wallace remarked, perhaps conveyed one of Dili society's defining traits: patrimonialism.

The Patrimonial Society

Although confined to Dili, the Portuguese society was densely and hierarchically differentiated on the basis of a refined title-system, and bureaucratic and military ranks. At the summit stood the governor, highest representative of His Majesty the King of Portugal, invariably an army or navy officer of high rank. The exercise of government was to a large extent discretionarily concentrated on the figure of the governor who held authoritative power to decide on every administrative division, issue decrees and regulations, promote, sanction, or acquit individuals from post (including the missionaries), conduct war, etc.⁹ Below the governor there was a hierarchy of military ranks and bureaucratic positions: the government secretary; the judge; the medical doctor; and many other officials and clerks distributed by various sections and countless administrative ranks (director, sub-director,

inspector, sub-inspector...). Many of these posts were said to exist only on paper. Appointments from Lisbon or Macau—including appointment to the governorship—arrived following months, or even years, of delay. Substitutes could be recruited among the locals, but some positions would never be filled. An intricate, ranked state administration nonetheless existed. New administrative posts and reforms succeeded.¹⁰ For governors seemed to believe that the modernity of Dili's administration was to be measured by the degree of functional differentiation.¹¹

Rather than effectively constituting a functional division of labour, this dense bureaucratic differentiation was only rational in appearance. In practice it worked as a Weberian type of "patrimonial officialdom," in which administrative ranks configured a system of status and assets of office dependent on the endowments of the governor (see Weber 1028-38). Portuguese officials and military lived in the orbit of the governor, on whom they depended for prebends in the form of ranks, titles, posts, praise in government *portarias* [decrees], and other signs of status. Offices and prebends constituted indicators of social status, but could also be converted into economic capital, for administrative offices represented an opportunity for patrimonial appropriation. The better one's standing in the administrative hierarchies, the more one could enlarge one's patrimonial benefices, diverting flows of resources owed to the state, such as custom duties and taxes, which, as we will see, were the main local source of state receipt. Throughout the decades of 1870 and 1880, "general corruption" was denounced in every administrative division; public assets were constantly appropriated for personal advantage by whoever was the holder of office (Lacerda, 16 Apr. 1880). This practice might explain Dili's reputation as a port where "exploitation" was ordinary for those passing traders who fell through this patrimonial net. At the port of Dili, part of the custom duties endemically fell under patrimonial appropriation by the officials, while outside, in the wild hinterland, the situation was no less patrimonial. Governors distrusted the army officers in charge of the districts, accusing them of diverting the indigenous tax (the *finsta*) for personal benefit, and abusing the "natives" in all possible ways.

Yet it comes as no surprise that many officials sought to take advantage of their stay in Timor. Macau often delayed the payment of salaries for months, and ordinarily officials had to buy everything on credit.¹² Many officials had been detached to temporary service in Dili from a position in Macau or on commission from the metropole. Having left their families behind, they took

the appointments against their will, demonized Timor, and looked forward to a return to Macau or Lisbon in earnest (see Silva, 11 Aug. 1896). Governors, in particular, regarded the contingent of Macanese in these conditions as "extremely prejudicial" to administration (Lacerda, 16 Apr. 1880). Governor Celestino da Silva, for example, explicitly blamed the Macanese officials for using appointments in Timor just as a means to cover gaming debts in Macau; eventually some would return richer (Silva, 23 Sept. 1897).

Patrimonial Rivalry and the Army

Schemes, little conspiracies, and gossip in Dili, resonating in Macau's public sphere, were a central means of power struggle in a field of "patrimonial competition" internal to the state officialdom. Officials in Dili depended on the governor's prebends and survived by taking a share of the circuits of taxation owed to the state. Yet officials could fight among themselves *for* the favours of the governor (or even the favours of indigenous authorities in the interior), but also *against* the governor, when political influence and the preservation of means of securing the personal appropriation of the office's patrimonial benefices were at stake. A prevalent state of "courtly intrigue" indicated effervescent enmity among the officials themselves and between them and the governor.¹³ The "bitter tongue" and "stingy intrigue" of the European society in Dili was depreciatingly noted time and again (Fernandes 17; França). Hugo de Lacerda, for example, was under constant attack by officials and repeatedly complained to Macau of the "immoral and antipatriotic work of the intrigue makers in Macau and Timor for discrediting all district authorities and principally the governors who do not acquiesce in their ignorant and ignoble speculations" (Lacerda, 6 Feb. 1877). Solidarity among officials was feeble and loyalty to the governor loose. No wonder governors in Dili felt surrounded by a rebel mob and a treacherous colonial officialdom. "With these elements," governor Bento da França concluded in 1883, "good administration is impossible, nor is the progress of this people" (qtd. in Pereira, 24 Dec. 1883).

The question of how to "moralize" this administration greatly preoccupied the governors. "Lack of capable personnel," their "stupidity, evil nature, and greed" indeed became a *leitmotif* in the discourses on the causes of the backwardness of the colony (Dores 767). In the governors' eyes, the administration suffered at the hands of corrupt officials and officers who simply cared about pursuit of profit, exploited the natives, and robbed the state, while the guard of the colony was at the mercy of vicious regular soldiers. Police corps lingered

on paper proposals.¹⁴ The appearance in Timor of contingents of convicts, rebels, army deserters, and political deportees from Goa, Lisbon, Macau, or Mozambique had been almost as regular as the monsoons since the seventeenth century.¹⁵ Deportees normally ended up occupying some position in public administration or the army (see Oliveira, 15 July 1882; Correia, *Gentio de Timor* 51). The regular army—the *Companhia de Infantaria de Timor* [Timor Infantry Corps]—was a fluctuant and undisciplined amalgam of Africans, Goans, Portuguese, and Macanese, who erratically arrived for replacing other aged and diseased soldiers, or staunching episodic rebellions.¹⁶

The poor quality of the troops was perhaps as worrying as the shortage of regulars throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The average number of regulars in this period was around 150, and army officers for commanding the armies and securing inland administration would not exceed one dozen.¹⁷ In practice, before and after the creation of the Timor Corps in the 1810s, the military force of Dili was in the hands of a structured company of indigenous irregulars, the *moradores* [residents]; while, in the event of war against Timorese enemies, the government's dependence on the warriors supplied by vassal kingdoms—the *arraiais*—was practically total.¹⁸ The moral and numerical fragility of the regular army hindered economic development and the extension of rule over the territory. In addition, it raised serious concerns about the military vulnerability of the Portuguese establishment, an issue of dramatic importance given the constancy of indigenous hostility towards the Dili government, as evidence on the high number of Timorese “rebellions” during this historical period indicates.¹⁹ Truly dramatic requests for reinforcing this scanty regular army were repeatedly submitted to the authorities in Macau or Lisbon.²⁰ The provincial governor José da Graça would express this anxiety in a letter to the Ministry in 1882. In his opinion, colonial weakness only could derive from an army composed of “the waste matter of the European and African scum”; Europeans elsewhere convicted for “crimes of desertion, robbery, indiscipline, etc., etc.” and “the most putrid” Africans from Mozambique: “These are the elements of order and security available to the district governor for keeping at bay many dozens of *régulos* [indigenous rulers], heads of more than one million individuals!” (Graça, 20 Oct. 1882). We have looked at the patrimonial workings of colonial administration from Dili. Let us now turn to the island in the networks of empire.

Broken Links Between Dili, Macau, and Lisbon

Despite two inconsequential experiences as an autonomous province (1851-1852 and 1863-1866), Timor had always been subordinate to governors either in Goa or Macau until 1896, when the imperial government decided to bestow on Governor Celestino da Silva the administrative independence of Timor, thereafter Autonomous Military District directly subordinate to Lisbon. At the beginning of the 1870s, Macau and Timor constituted one single province headed by a governor in Macau. Administration in Dili was dependent upon the instructions, budget, and logistic support of the *provincial* government in Macau, to whom the *district* governor in Timor had to show obedience. Yet, from the perspective of Macau and Timor alike, the exercise of rule from a distance was very problematic. In Macau, Timor looked too far and too strange. Provincial governors saw the island as an unwanted burden. It set upon an already meagre provincial budget that could barely afford Dili's survival, let alone extraordinary requests for troops, weaponry, and money, normally received with antipathy if not open opposition.²¹ In Timor, the rule of Macau was a source of unease. Macau as well looked too far and too alien. District governors expressed feelings of humiliation for having to constantly “beg” for Macau's money and support, which would never come, or demur to arrive (see Oliveira, 1 Nov. 1882). Orders and decisions emitted in Timor, for instance, could still be annulled in Macau *a posteriori*, to the despair of the district governors.²² Autonomy was, therefore, a common aspiration which only Lisbon's inaction and Timor's financial incapacity seemed indefinitely to postpone.

Communications and the Troubled Information Order

Nonetheless, the connections between Timor and the Portuguese empire were solely administrative. The Portuguese had long since ceased commerce and navigation in Timorese waters.²³ There was no memory of ships from Macau or Portugal calling at Timor in the nineteenth century. From Timor “to other ports there has not occurred nor I believe will occur any Portuguese commerce,” one governor wrote in 1881, while between Macau and Lisbon there was “not the most insignificant transaction” (Graça, 20 Oct. 1881). Timor and the empire were loosely connected by bodies of legislation, letters, and state officials. As governor Lacerda e Maia stated eloquently in 1886:

Europeans are but the decrees that come in with appointments to the various public posts and [Europeans] are but those who go out after having been declared

incapable by the health council; here, there is not even one trader from Portugal and not even one commercial traveller from the kingdom. Imports from the metropole do not exist and exports to Lisbon do not occur. And with Macau the same isolation happens. From there comes nothing and from here nothing goes! (Maia, 31 Aug. 1886 [underline in the original])

Macau and Timor were separated by many miles of water and by many days of travel. Connections with Macau or Lisbon were slow and indirect. Invectives against the dependence on foreign shipping for communications and calls for regular direct connections with Portugal and Macau periodically appeared.²⁴ Yet, few changes were made. Timor was actually in touch with Dutch and British colonies in the surrounding region, more than it was with Lisbon, Macau, or Goa. Official communications were secured by a contract with the mail steamer of the Dutch East Indies Company that linked the Dutch possessions. This contract, paid by Macau, guaranteed the transport of correspondence and of colonial officials leaving or going to Timor after the late 1860s.²⁵ Despite Portuguese attempts to secure more regular transportation, the Dutch mail steamer was of “enormous irregularity,” complained one governor in 1884, so “bad” that it caused “grave inconvenience” and “exaggerated expenses.”²⁶ Furthermore, the Dutch Company did not directly link Macau with Timor. The ship successively called in other ports and intermediary islands of the archipelago, therefore greatly increasing the duration of the journey. By the 1890s-1900s, the Dutch mail-boat made a stop at Dili every two months, which meant that official correspondence from Timor to Macau and back could take sixty to ninety days, an immense time-delay for one to cope efficiently with any serious or urgent matter.²⁷ Communication by submarine cable existed from the 1890s. Yet an urgent telegraph message from Dili to Lisbon could take at best fifteen days, for the bimonthly Dutch steamers had to first take the telegram to Macassar or Surobaya, where it was finally sent out (see Fernandes 29; Correia, *Timor de lés a lés* 63).

During most of the year, Timor was isolated from Macau, Lisbon, and the outside world. No inflows, no outflows, no outgoing or incoming information. And when connections occurred, things and information in transit had to slowly run through many intermediary stations and people. The result was that information Timor-Macau-Lisbon and back was subject to myriad interferences, configuring erratic imperial circuits of information that strongly beared on the exercise of government. When, why, and how a certain occurrence

took place in Timor was unintelligible to provincial governors in Macau: “all attempts are practically vain,” governor Graça wrote in 1880, “to know what goes on there in the various areas of public administration” (24 June 1880). “Great distances separate the two entities that constitute the Province today,” provincial governor Correia da Silva declared in 1878, “insuperable difficulties in communications, always late and irregular, lack of possible and useful supervision by the superior authority, everything contributes to the Provincial Governor’s difficult understanding of the affairs of the District, and to forced decisions in serious or urgent affairs, therefore unproductive, which make sterile the best efforts” (13 June 1878). Such that, in practice, though not in theory, it was as if Timor was independent of Macau. The irregular character of the information caused as much distress as its unreliability. Before getting to Macau or Lisbon, news from Timor could first be made public at the Dutch ports where some people understood Portuguese; sooner or later occurrences in the island could appear “distorted” in the foreign newspapers of Hong Kong or Macassar.²⁸ A same occurrence, furthermore, could circulate in various and contradictory versions—even and principally within the Portuguese sphere.

Official news competed with private, non-official, flows of information. The patrimonial competition internal to the community of colonizers was also, as we saw, a political field of information struggle. Ships calling in Macau carried private letters from the Macanese or Portuguese on duty in Timor, or simply travellers’ word of mouth. These circuits of information were a site of power struggle. The local intrigue of the hostile officialdom in Dili amplified in Macau’s and Lisbon’s public sphere this way. Newspapers in Macau frequently carried polemical articles commenting on the situation in Timor and attacking the conduct of the district governor.²⁹ This situation of multiple and politically aggressive accounts in circulation caused distress as much to the provincial as to the district governors. “The Dutch mail-boats that come and go,” complained governor Lacerda e Maia, “bring *canipa* [liquor] and take coffee while mail-cases come in full with re-imported lies and go back full with calumnies” (31 Aug. 1886).

District governors feared that their “true” information never arrived intact to public opinion or superior authorities, distorted as it was by opponents and absorbed into the “low” political struggle of Dili and Macau. Hearty denials of “false” news were recurrent, as well as venomous replies attacking other public servants (the provincial governor included). Given this state of visceral enmity, it was no wonder that Lisbon looked at information regarding Timor with

distrust. Official correspondence from Macau and Timor was received with suspicion; it “virtually never expressed truth” (Dores 767). Information and counter-information, rumours and intrigue caused mutual distrust among imperial and colonial authorities. Not only was the island badly connected; it was seen through a foggy screen. If the colony could become self-sustainable, perhaps this troubled imperial administration at a distance would come to an end. But this simply was not to be the case. Having looked at Dili’s loose integration in the empire, we now examine the difficulties of its economic life.

The Expedients of Economic Survival

Some believed Timor could change if one could just appropriate its natural wealth. The prosperous era of the sandalwood trade with Macau in the seventeenth century had long passed.³⁰ However, the colonial myth of Timor’s prosperity and richness prevailed. Fertile virgin soils were available for cultivation while hidden somewhere in the land legendary geological riches—such as gold and copper—awaited discovery and mining.³¹ Geological exploration remained a figment of the colonial imagination, yet more consequential steps were taken in agriculture (see Magalhães). The successful introduction of coffee in 1815, in particular, gave rise to some optimism. Governors from the mid-nineteenth century onwards generally agreed that the solution to the modernization of the colony depended on the development of coffee production. Many expected to transform Timor into a plantation colony specializing in coffee cultivation and mirroring the prosperity achieved by the Dutch Javanese system.³² But a profitable cultivation system of coffee remained a desire awaiting fulfilment.

Commerce and the Local Trading Networks

Finances showed chronic deficit over many years and financial dependence on Macau for ordinary expenses such as public works, military equipment, and salaries of officials and troops was nearly total. Furthermore, the Portuguese had little or no direct control over the economic circuits of production and distribution of indigenous produce. Regarding contact with the outside world, dependence on foreign shipping and the Dutch regional networks, as we saw, was complete. This was as true to the flows of information as to the flows of commodities, in spite of protectionist legislation.³³ Coffee in particular was at the mercy of demand in the Dutch market of Macassar. From time to time, steam and sail ships for trade coming from Java, Macassar, Australia,

the Netherlands, and even China visited the port of Dili. They took especially coffee and in exchange left manufactured goods, flint guns, and alcoholic drinks for the Chinese trade and basic needs of Europeans in Dili.³⁴

The same dependence occurred with respect to networks of trade within the island. Dili was part of a indigenous economy consisting of circuits of exchange between the coast and the mountains opposite to the city. People from the surrounding kingdoms and mountainous areas would come to Dili’s small weekly market for exchanging their land produce and cattle with coastal products (Dores 787-88). This indigenous economy was not monetary, but based on exchange and barter. There were various currencies from different historical periods and national origins in indigenous circulation, but these were intended for ritual purposes (as sacred heirlooms or tribute gifts) or for status differentiation.³⁵ In terms of production, the economy was in the hands of the Timorese. Until Celestino da Silva attempted a state-controlled system, indigenous producers independently undertook the cultivation of coffee, although district officers were supposed to exercise supervision.³⁶ In terms of commerce, in Dili as well as in the inland districts, the circuits were almost entirely in the hands of the long-established Chinese community, whose commercial involvement with Timor dated back at least to the fifteenth century.³⁷ In Timor, the Chinese controlled trade involving foreign products and indigenous produce. They mediated the influx of coffee and other goods to the coast, negotiating directly with Timorese producers, and in the capital continued to manage the coffee business.³⁸ The Chinese were a rather significant actor in the economic as well as political affairs of the territory. In effect, Chinese mobile trading networks penetrated the interior, where some traders had firmly settled in through *barlake* (Timorese marriage alliances) with the locals. In the so-called Western kingdoms and near the Portuguese-Dutch border the Chinese had achieved considerable political influence, and were not uncommonly hostile to the Portuguese.³⁹

Custom Duties and the Political Economy of Warfare

Without any direct hold on the internal economic flows, the Portuguese could do nothing but passively wait for the Chinese and Timorese to bring local products to the port of Dili, where the customs would make the only possible profitable interference. In effect, autonomous revenue originated almost exclusively from the heavy custom duties charged by the Customs House over imports and exports traded through the port of Dili.⁴⁰ Coffee exports

provided the biggest profits in export duties, and many expected coffee to bring about the desired financial autonomy. By 1880, a sporadic increase in coffee exports provoked optimism, but it was short-lived. In the following decades it would show a tendency to decline.⁴¹ Alcoholic drinks, flint rifles, and gunpowder were at the top of the list as the most lucrative imported goods. Some of the drinks were perhaps destined for consumption in Dili, yet the flint rifles—many imported from Holland—were definitely not intended for European consumption (Silva, 17 July 1894).

The Portuguese had already put aside flint guns as old-fashioned technology, and Snider and Albini breech-loading rifles were preferred for arming regulars and *moradores*. In contrast, flint guns were part of the Timorese warriors' gear, and employed in battle against enemies, whoever these happened to be. In this period, then, gunpowder and flint guns seem to have been in considerable demand for use in indigenous warfare, and Chinese dealers would take weaponry to the kingdoms for business with the Timorese. The Dutch arms trade, Timorese demand, Chinese pressure, and financial benefits to the Portuguese customs might explain why weaponry remained a lucrative source of duties from the 1860s to 1900s (increasing in the period 1875-1880), regardless of Portuguese legislation of 1878 prohibiting its commerce in Timor.⁴² Thus, in 1894, the pragmatic governor Celestino da Silva, impressed with the volume of this commerce at the Dili Customs House, went as far as to propose that Lisbon ship obsolete stocks of swords and flint rifles from the metropolitan army so that the government could take an active part in the lucrative arms trade: "we could sell them here to the traders, and in the hands of the natives they would replace those that are imported from foreign countries" (Silva, 17 July 1894). To live on the supply of guns to indigenous kingdoms could be illegal or harmful to the state's claim to military supremacy. But it helped Dili's struggle for financial survival. For, pragmatically intercepting at the customs the trading circuits that fed on local warfare could bring economic benefits to the colonizers.

"Contraband" and the Competition of the Suai Port

Receipts rested to a considerable degree on custom duties. These, however, did not even cover administrative expenses. According to the governors, a major reason for this drawback in duties was contraband. Indeed, not every inward and outward flow of goods went the direction of Dili. "Smuggling" over the Dutch-Portuguese border and around the Dutch enclave of Maucatar was constant; even in Dili, contraband trade by "corrupt" Portuguese officials

occurred in the face of the governor (Lacerda, 6 Feb. 1877). In the remote southwest, the indigenous authorities and Chinese traders showed little interest in establishing solid ties with Dili. They freely crossed the border by land, preferring to channel the coffee to Macassar via the Dutch port of Atapupo, bringing back Dutch products without paying Portuguese duties.⁴³ At sea, things did not look better either. Firearms, gunpowder, swords, and liquor regularly entered the island from Java and Macassar via other coastal ports (Castro, *Timor* 72-73). On the north coast alone, a series of ports and customs alternative to Dili existed, which eventually charged independent duties on goods. Thus governor Carvalho, in 1881, decreed the extinction of "illegal custom-houses established in different points of the island and put all commerce of import and export under Dili's custom-house" (Graça, 9 May 1881). But his attempt was perhaps as unsuccessful as governor Lacerda's in 1879, and problems continued.⁴⁴ Coastal supervision was trusted to a small steamer supplied by Macau in the late 1870s, following complaints of "totally uncontrolled" illegal trade (Lacerda, 6 Feb. 1877). Restricted to the north coast, the steamer, however, only maintained a very uneven service; Dili often could not cover the expenses of coal supply and machinery maintenance.⁴⁵

Thus, within and around the island, the government was unable to see much of the "illegal trade" being conducted. If this was true on the north littoral, it was even more true on the south coast. The port of Suai, controlled by independent Timorese rulers, raised special concern. The Portuguese considered it "the most important port," after Dili, "through which important contraband passes," and by 1894 its enviable prosperity was such that Suai was said to surpass Dili in the number of inhabitants (Silva, 24 Sept. 1894, 1 Sept. 1894). Suai's importance in the maritime trading networks of the region was age-old.⁴⁶ A prosperous point of export of sandalwood and other land produce, Suai was moreover a traditional site for trade in human beings. Slave trading and slave raiding had occurred on the Timor coast since remote epochs (Matos 177-79; Needham). In the 1870s-1880s, to Governor Lacerda's indignation, the practice continued on the south coast and eastern point of the island (Lacerda, 1880). In 1891, even "English ships from New Zealand" would "illegally" call in to procure indigenous labourers in exchange for guns and fabrics (Forjaz, 28 July 1891). But the governors felt powerless to put an end to these practices. In recent times, the Portuguese had scarcely been seen on southern waters. Dili had no communication whatsoever with the port of Suai, whereas Dutch ships freely called in (Silva, 24 Sept. 1894).

Another independent source of revenue was further expected to supply the state coffers: taxes. However, to the governors' displeasure, the taxation system had remained unchanged since the early days of the Portuguese establishment, with meagre benefits to colonial finances. The principal source of taxation remained the old annual tribute owed to the district governor by every indigenous ruler that paid vassalage to the King of Portugal: the so-called *finta*, introduced by Governor Soto Maior around 1710-14 (Matos 127; Castro, *As Possessões* 376).⁴⁷ *Finta* was a collective "tax" or tribute traditionally paid in kind by the Timorese vassal kingdoms, but not all kingdoms were regular *finta* payers; some indeed had never paid it, and others had several years of delay (Vaquinhas, "Timor. I"; França). Besides this, the *finta* displayed patrimonial traits. When the contribution happened to be sent to Dili, the colonial government received but a small portion of the fee. A good deal of it was appropriated along the way. For this "tax," in effect, consisted of a complex and slow chain of tributes on which other fees were subsidiary and on which many other agents depended.⁴⁸ By force of "tradition" or *estilo*, the indigenous authorities in charge of sending the *finta* to Dili as well as the Portuguese army officers who went to collect the *finta* in the villages had the right to keep for themselves part of the products given by the people of the kingdom. These sorts of patrimonial appropriations were accepted as customary and took specific and complex tributary designations.⁴⁹ In fact, such diversions of *finta* seemed to be accepted as an asset of the offices of the king, the army officer, or the *suco* chief, from the moment their holders were recognized as delegates of the Portuguese government. This system prevailed practically intact until a tragic process of replacement by a "modern" capitation tax was initiated in 1908-12. In 1906, Celestino da Silva made a mild proposal for a capitation tax paid in kind that preserved much of the indigenous tributary privileges, but after his leaving the governorship in 1908 harder versions of the capitation tax were established and the change resulted in indigenous resistance.⁵⁰ Only after the Portuguese crushed the great Timorese rebellion of 1911-2, would the *finta* tribute be finally extinguished.

Conclusion: Tactical Pragmatism

The Portuguese governors dreamt of a colony integrated into the empire; a centralized territory; a proper tax system, bureaucratic administration, a disciplined army; a productive agricultural economy; fluorescent trading networks; and a reliable and truthful order of information. However, the colonial state

seemed trapped in the impossibility of developing its own "civilizing process" in the European manner. In effect, regardless of the governors' determination, neither Foucault's governmentality, nor Weber's bureaucratic administration, nor Elias's centralized state existed.⁵¹ Insufficient financial resources, lack of a regular army, and a disunited patrimonial apparatus seemed to drag the authority in Dili into an irrevocable situation of military fragility, economic vulnerability, and territorial minimalism. Isolation and financial deficit impeded the formation of an autonomous army, while military weakness hindered governors from enforcing the payment of *finta*, controlling contraband, or avoiding patrimonial appropriations by officials and delegates. Internally, in structural terms, little perhaps might have differentiated Dili from other small Timorese polities in East Timor, the former being involved in an endless struggle for supremacy with multiple militarized indigenous states. Externally, Dili's integration into the Portuguese empire was loose. Too great a distance and too many misunderstandings separated Macau, Lisbon, and Dili. As much as Timor was ungovernable from Dili, was Dili ungovernable from afar.

Behind the incapacity to break that "vicious circle" were enduring patrimonial chains and threatening relationships of hostility that, so governors argued, weakened the colonial establishment. In effect, in the modernizing viewpoint, one got the idea of a colonial administration that, at the same time, was the *object* of a multitude of patrimonial interferences, as well as the *agent* of interferences on other circuits. Yet while the first were seen as a harmful condition of weakness, the second constituted a crucial expedient for survival. On the one hand, the Portuguese establishment had locally to cope with multiple interferences acting from inside the structures, agents, and networks of colonialism. The state resources were constantly appropriated by either the European or indigenous agents from the inside of imperial and colonial administrative structures. Relationships with the provincial governor in Macau were normally tense. A patrimonial state officialdom opposed the governor time and again, appropriating custom duties, taxes, and other flows due to the state, while the circle of vassal indigenous rulers could express hostility and execute similar patrimonial appropriations with regard to the *finta* tax. Nevertheless, on the other hand, the survival of Dili depended on the art of intercepting inward and outward flows of goods and money. Regarding imperial integration, the district government could not live without Macau, from which Timor took money, supplies, and yet gave nothing in return. Commercially, the best district authorities could aspire for was to live on the

commissions provided by custom duties. Dili's financial existence depended on the appropriations it was able to make from the customs on the flows going through regional trading networks controlled by the Dutch and British, and local Chinese-Timorese circuits of indigenous produce. Militarily, given the shortage of regulars, the government could not live without an indigenous force. In war, when hostile alliances of local rulers rose against the colonial government, governors had to resort to *moradores* and to the *arraiais* requested under the terms of vassalage treaties.

At a first glance, to borrow a common view of the "Portuguese empire" as decentralized, unplanned, anarchic, or even irrational and backward seems to suffice as description. Yet it does not. We have examined this viewpoint in the shape and tone of a predicament, expressed in the contemporary descriptions of colonial disorder and difficulty in East Timor. In reinstating the nature of the Portuguese empire as weak, disorganized, or even "mediocre," some later historical accounts might end up reproducing this trope.⁵² However, if limited to the civilizing idiom of the contemporaries, or, still, to conceptual tools forged from the experience of the European state-formation, one is fated to a Eurocentric view of colonialism in the island, as if this could be explained simply in the terms of Western models of imperial modernity. Certainly, the structural conditions of the Portuguese government can account for the impossibility of a Western-type of power and state formation. But they cannot account for the fact that, under those very same conditions, political order and alternative processes of rule did exist in Timor. In this regard, the material presented in this essay allows us two alternative hypotheses.

Firstly, it might be suggested that colonial rule in Timor was marked as much by a sense of weakness as by a pragmatic and tactical mode of coping with the vulnerabilities encountered.⁵³ From this perspective, "the empire" in Timor should be understood not as a formation derived from a strategic position of power, but instead as a fluid arrangement put together according to pragmatic moves. Colonial orderings had a tactical basis. They seemed to result from the ephemeral and ingenious attempts of colonial actors on the spot to locally "seize the opportunities." This tactical form of enacting the colonial condition was thus inherently pragmatic. In performing colonialism under rather problematic conditions of isolation, financial deficit, or military fragility, the colonizers seemed to be governed less by ultimate systems of law or ethical values than by a pragmatic rationality aimed at the ensuring of collective or personal survival, or at the acquisition of private benefits. Thus we

have seen that, internally, the Portuguese establishment was structurally weakened by a diversity of interferences set upon its circuits, whilst, paradoxically, it was also precariously strengthened by the interferences set on local Chinese and Timorese circuits; on regional circuits of trade going through the Dili Custom House; or on flows of goods and money provided by the provincial government in Macau. Patrimonialism was one noticeable expression of this condition. The prevalent patrimonial character of the administration can be understood as an emergent feature of this pragmatic pattern of colonial life, in which colonial rule was performed by means of multiple tactical interferences. The dominance of the pragmatic rationale was also apparent, for instance, in the significance of the arms trade. State finances had much to benefit from a state of indigenous war, for, as we saw, the indigenous demand for flint guns was an important source of custom duties. The Portuguese in Dili lived off the commerce of flint guns, despite the recurrent complaints about the hostility of the Timorese, or despite the fact that these same guns could serve the Timorese in their wars against the Dili government.

Tactical pragmatism was an underlining principle of order behind the apparent disordered workings of colonial rule. The case of East Timor might suggest that special attention must be paid to these sorts of arrangement, especially if one is to understand imperialism in marginal and peripheral areas. Moreover, in stressing the significance of the local scene as regards the external influence of imperial centres, it invites us to further investigate the political, economic, and cultural grounds of colonial rule at the scale of the island. In this respect, a second hypothesis might be advanced. The shortcomings of the empire's civilizing process—Timor's isolation and misconnections; the lack of economy and military autonomy; the patrimonialism; or even the consistent hostility of some Timorese kingdoms—also offered favourable conditions of possibility for the development of a form of colonial system strongly articulated with the local societies. To recognize in local interactions the roots of nineteenth-century colonialism is a direction known to historians aware of the limitations of Eurocentric explanations. In the context of his "theory of collaboration," for instance, Ronald Robinson once suggested that in contexts of minor external input from European societies colonial rule was grounded chiefly in interactions with indigenous groups (see also Hyam); meanwhile, John Lonsdale has written about the "vulgarization of power" to indicate how colonial conquerors can become captives of indigenous groups. In this line of thought, it can be hypothesized that the grounds of Portuguese colonial rule

in Timor should be looked for not so much in the state of Timor's imperial integration but in the variety of symbiotic arrangements and local entanglements with Timorese societies and cultures—entanglements that the tactical pragmatism of colonizers helped to forge but to whose creation the indigenous actors also crucially contributed. This requires an historical-anthropological account of the European-indigenous interactions. Scholarly work on the Portuguese empire has only recently begun to investigate how cultural “entanglements” are articulated with the workings of colonialism in Macau and Goa.⁵⁴ Colonial East Timor offers fertile ground for exploring these themes further. This study, however, is not to be undertaken here. In another work I have examined in detail how East Timor's colonial entwinements might be approached from the perspective of “mutual parasitism.”⁵⁵ Yet in taking on this challenge, I believe, students of the Portuguese—or other—empires will be able to look beyond the rhetorical traps of the colonial predicament.

Acknowledgements

I thank the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (Portugal) for a Ph.D. research grant (BD/9048/2002) and the Fundação Oriente (Portugal) for supporting my fieldwork in Macau and Timor. Thanks to Christopher Bayly and Cristiana Bastos for generous and valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper, and to Katrina Gulliver for help in proofreading. Additional research for this essay was undertaken as part of the project *Colonial Mimesis in Lusophone Asia and Africa*, funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (PTDC/CS-ANT/101064/2008).

Notes

¹ Throughout this paper I have translated all original Portuguese quotations into English. França, 18 June 1882; Lacerda, 31 Aug. 1880; Andrade, 21 Oct. 1889.

² For Dili by 1870 see Garcia; Dores 787. For Dili in the 1900s-1920s see Fernandes 12-13; Correia, *Timor de lés a lés* 83-91.

³ But for a less negative impression of the Portuguese government (yet equally negative on Dili) by another British visitor, see Forbes 418-97.

⁴ I refer to the so-called “pink map” episode, in which the Portuguese were forced to capitulate from their pretension to link Angola and Mozambique through a contiguous inland connection by force of a British *ultimatum* in 1890.

⁵ In 1864, the British Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, stated: “The plain truth is that the Portuguese are of all European nations the lowest in the moral scale.” (qtd. in Hyam 39). A common moral accusation concerned the existence of the slave-trade in the Portuguese colonies. See, for example, Livingstone and Livingstone.

⁶ For overviews of Portuguese administration in this period see Pélissier, ch. 1; Figueiredo; Bretes.

⁷ I do not deal here with the Portuguese-Timorese relationships of hostility and their implications for the “colonial predicament.” This would require more extensive treatment. Yet elsewhere I have explored indigenous warfare and its articulations with Portuguese colonial rule (Roque, *Headhunting*).

⁸ For seminal works on the tensions and vulnerabilities of empires, see Stoler and Cooper; Stoler. For explorations of these tropes in the context of the Portuguese empire compare, for example: Bastos, Almeida and Feldman-Bianco; Trajano Filho; Roque, “The Razor's Edge.”

⁹ Eventually the governor could seek advice on administrative issues from a *Junta de Governo* [Government Council], which members he selected and appointed. In the absence of an appointed governor, the colony was put in the hands of an interim governor, or of a special government committee, *Conselho Governativo* (see Felgas 257-58).

¹⁰ Many posts said to exist only on paper would virtually never be taken, or otherwise the appointed officials would arrive with many months or years of delay. See for example the administrative measures taken or proposed by the governor Hugo de Lacerda in 1877 and a Committee in 1893 (Lacerda, 6 Feb. 1877; “Projecto de reorganização do Distrito de Timor”).

¹¹ “In Portugal,” the interim governor Pimenta de Castro (1909-10) ironically observed, “the appointment of many officials [in Timor] was considered an indicator of colonial development” (Castro, *Timor* 158).

¹² In 1863, the officials' wages were fourteen months behind; by 1890s-1900s, seven months delayed (Felgas 255; Fernandes 12).

¹³ For the importance of “courtly intrigue” as a form of power struggle for or against the ruler, or in getting patrimonial benefices of office, see Elias.

¹⁴ For insistent but inconsequential proposals to create police corps see, for example, Lacerda, 1880; Andrade, 30 Oct. 1888.

¹⁵ For deportees in Timor see Matos 191-93; Castro, *Timor* 405; Correia, *Gentio de Timor* 51; Pélissier 178-79.

¹⁶ This regular army was created in Goa in 1818 as *Batalhão Defensor de Timor* [Timor Defence Battalion]; later on, it was renamed *Companhia de Infantaria de Timor* [Timor Infantry Corps]. See Castro, *As Possessões* 369; Andrade, 30 Oct. 1888.

¹⁷ See “Documentos”; Lacerda, 10 Aug. 1878; Castro, *As Possessões* 369; Pélissier 67-68.

¹⁸ The *arraiaís* were irregular armies composed of indigenous warriors and supplied by the Timorese kingdoms to the colonial government on occasion of war, as an obligation of vassalage treaties celebrated with the Portuguese governors since the seventeenth century. The companies of *moradores* were created by Governor Coelho Guerreiro in 1702, at Lifau, and later reorganized in Dili, Manatuto, and Batugadé. Until the mid-1890s, *moradores* never totalled more than 200 soldiers. But for the fundamental colonial role of such Timorese warriors see: Roque, *Headhunting* ch. 2.

¹⁹ For a general survey of these conflicts see Pélissier.

²⁰ See for example: Castro, *As Possessões* 26; Lacerda, *A Questão Colonial* 26; Andrade, 21 Oct. 1889; França 277.

²¹ See, for example, Ávila, 1876; Graça, 8 Mar. 1880.

²² Yet, some district governors would occasionally get around this hierarchy and “illegitimately” establish direct contact with Lisbon. This could cause shocked complaints from the provincial authorities. See Graça, 14 Sept. 1882.

²³ The annual ships (the so-called *barco das vias*) supporting the sandalwood trade with Macau had been interrupted sometime in the late eighteenth century (Figueiredo 710, 720).

²⁴ See, for example, Vaquinhas, “Comunicado” 167; França 212-13; “Projecto de reorga-

nização do Distrito de Timor.”

²⁵ Occasionally, Australian steamship lines stopping at Dili could also be asked to carry money, armament, or correspondence (see Fernandes 29).

²⁶ Dissatisfaction with the Dutch mail steamer took provincial governor Maria Pereira to try to make contract with the Australasia, China, Japan, and Straits Company with a view to create a direct line between Macau and Timor (Governor of Macau and Timor, 28 July 1884; see also Graça, 20 Oct. 1881).

²⁷ According to França, in 1882-83, a single trip from Macau to Timor could last 48 days, while getting from China to Marseille took only 28 days. Since 1884 successful negotiations with the British India Co. (London-Australia, with passage by Dili) made possible a link Lisbon-Dili in 48 to 50 days. The situation was not very different still in 1910s-20s. See França 211; Figueiredo 744; Correia, *Timor de lés a lés* 63.

²⁸ “[I]n Macassar,” observed Governor Celestino da Silva, “there are people who can understand the Portuguese, and all news become public, which on abnormal occasions [such as a state of war in Timor] is always inconvenient” (Silva, 17 June 1896).

²⁹ For example, the newspapers *O Macaense* and *O Echo Macaense*.

³⁰ For the heyday and decadence of the Timor-Macau sandalwood trade, see Matos 177-85; Teixeira; Cinatti.

³¹ For the “myth” of Timor’s geological treasures, see Wallace 147-49; Correia, *Timor de lés a lés*.

³² In particular Governors Afonso de Castro, Hugo de Lacerda, Joaquim Silva Ferrão, and Celestino da Silva. Attempts to mould Timor in the Javanese system could include a visit to Dutch plantations.

³³ Commenting on legislation of 1844 and 1847 restricting imported goods to commodities of Portuguese origin, Castro observed: “This legislation was never applied to Timor, because it would mean the annihilation of the little trade existing with the Dutch and Australian possessions that supply Timor” (Castro, *As Possessões* 7).

³⁴ See Castro, *Timor* 72-73; França 212-13; Silva, 17 July 1894.

³⁵ For example: ancient Portuguese gold coins, *pardaus*, English pounds, Mexican *patacas*, rupees, and Dutch *florins*. Occasionally, coins could be included in the tributes and fines paid to the government. See Vaquinhas, “Timor. Usos” 480; Castro, *As Possessões* 336.

³⁶ Excluding perhaps the coffee plantation of the Catholic Mission in Lahane, near Dili, by the 1870s-1880s, and “a few coffee plantations [that] belonged to the government” in Carail, also near Dili. The indigenous system was deeply affected by the “pacification wars” of the 1890s-1900s. Nevertheless, it coexisted with the state-controlled cultivation established by Governor Celestino da Silva in the 1890s-1900s (see Lacerda, 1880; Dorés 784).

³⁷ Some Arabs were also involved in local trade: exceptionally, “one or another soldier” could turn into a trader and become a businessman “like the Chinese” (see Fernandes 15-16; Forbes 418).

³⁸ For the Chinese community see Silva, 13 Sept. 1894; Castro, *As Possessões* 379; Matos 175; Lencastre 54; Fernandes 15-16.

³⁹ The loss of Atapupo to the Dutch in 1818, as well as various indigenous risings against the Portuguese (notably Maubara, 1893 and Fatumean, 1895), was attributed to the Chinese hostility.

⁴⁰ To a lesser extent, the state also benefited from duties charged at the other smaller posts established in Batugadé and Ocussi (Lifau). The Dili Custom-House was independent of Macau since 1785 (see Matos 177; Lacerda, 27 Dec. 1879).

⁴¹ Governor Lacerda expressed great optimism with increase by 1879-1880, but as early as 1882 Governor Bento da França pointed to a decline. This decline continued until the 1910s (Lacerda, 31 Aug. 1880; Oliveira, 22 Jan. 1883).

⁴² For assessments of the imported goods or statistics of custom duties see Castro, *As Possessões* 374-75; Lacerda, 31 Aug. 1880; Pelissier 96-97; “Mappa do movimento commercial” 379.

⁴³ For clandestine trade and smuggling see Lacerda, 30 Aug. 1876; Andrade, 21 Oct. 1889; Silva, 10 July 1895.

⁴⁴ Custom-houses at other smaller posts would exist at least until the 1890s. See Lacerda, 27 Dec. 1879; Andrade, 21 Oct. 1889.

⁴⁵ The steamship “D. João I” was put in the service of Timor in 1879, later replaced by the “Dili,” the steamer in service by the 1890s. For problems with the steamer and requests for ships to supervise the coast, see Andrade, 21 Oct. 1889; Silva, 1 Sept. 1894.

⁴⁶ Traders from Macau had regularly come for sandalwood in the seventeenth century. Still in 1883, Vaquinhas remarked that Suai “[h]as high quality sandalwood in great abundance” (Vaquinhas, “Timor. I” 316; also see Matos 37).

⁴⁷ Separate taxes were charged on the residents in the capital city, and war booty and fines arbitrarily applied as punishment to disobedient indigenous authorities might also nourish state finances from time to time. But city fees and punitive fines generally had either an insignificant or an episodic financial impact. For the Dili tax system by 1860s, see Castro, *As Possessões* 379-81.

⁴⁸ For a thorough analysis of the *finta* tribute in the context of its ritual and political significance in colonial East Timor, see Roque, *Headhunting* ch. 2.

⁴⁹ For example, both the *régulo* and *suco* chiefs, besides charging other tributes to the people, appropriated a share of the tax called *cabeça da finta*, sometimes higher than the *finta* total established by the government. The Portuguese military received *gastos* (land produce, cattle, etc., received as provisions) and *canceliras* (payment of the officers’ journey) as they went past the villages to collect the contribution from the local authorities. For detailed descriptions of the complex chain of patrimonial appropriations involving *régulos*, *datós*, and army officers see Silva, 25 Jan. 1901; Castro, *As Possessões* 377.

⁵⁰ A decree of 13 September 1906 by Celestino da Silva suggested the replacement of *finta* by a capitation tax to be paid for in kind and of which the *régulos* were allowed to appropriate 50 percent. Collection of this tax began only in 1908-9. In 1910, new legislation diminished the *régulos’* percentage to 10 percent and established a payment in cash. Such changes in the *finta* have been suggested as one of the causes of the great rebellion of 1911-12 (see Lencastre 33-34; Castro, *Timor* 121-25; Martinho 154; Figueiredo 742-44).

⁵¹ For these concepts see Foucault; Weber; Elias.

⁵² René Pelissier has used Timor as a case for the “mediocrity” of the Portuguese empire. In a more sophisticated tone, and in the context of the Portuguese *Ancien Régime*, Hespanha has argued for a view of the empire as decentralized, disconnected from the metropolis, and lacking in strategy and political unification (e.g., a Constitution).

⁵³ This takes inspiration in Michel de Certeau’s distinction between “tactics” and “strategies” in his analysis of *arts de faire*. Elsewhere I have elaborated on Certeau’s perspective in discussing other forms of colonial vulnerabilities in the context of Angola (Roque, “The Razor’s Edge”).

⁵⁴ Pina Cabral uses the notion of “equivocal compatibilities” in the context of cultural (mis) communications in colonial Macau, a notion he tentatively extends to the colonial imagery of cannibalism in Portuguese Africa; in her studies on colonial medicine, Bastos suggests the possibility of imagining colonial order in Goa as locally negotiated processes between colonial and local elites (see Pina Cabral, “Trafic humain,” *Between China and Europe*, “Galvão na terra dos canibais” 114-15; Bastos “O médico e o *inhamessoro*” 94-95, “Medicina e império” 118-19).

⁵⁵ See Roque, *Headhunting*, chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Works Cited

- Alexandre, Valentim. *Novos Brasis, Velhas Africas: Portugal e o Império (1808-1975)*. Porto: Afrontamento, 2000.
- Andrade, Raphael de. Letter to Governor of Macau and Timor. 21 Oct. 1889. P-938. Administração Civil Collection, Arquivo Histórico de Macau, Macau.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 30 Oct. 1888. ACL_SEMU_DGU_RM_003_Cx 6, 1887-1893. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- Ávila, José Maria Lobo d'. Letter to Ministry and Secretary of Navy and Overseas Affairs. 1876. ACL_SEMU_DGU_RM_005_Cx 45, 1879-1880. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- Bastos, Cristiana. "Medicina, império e processos locais em Goa, século XIX." *Análise Social* XLII.182 (2007): 99-122.
- . "O médico e o *inhamessoro*: o relatório do goês Arthur Ignacio da Gama em Sofala, 1878." *A Persistência da História: Passado e Contemporaneidade em África*. Ed. Clara Carvalho and João de Pina Cabral. Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2004. 91-117.
- Bastos, Cristiana, Miguel Vale de Almeida, and Bela Feldman-Bianco, eds. *Trânsitos Coloniais: Diálogos Críticos Luso-Brasileiros*. Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2002.
- Bretes, Maria da Graça. "Timor." *Nova História da Expansão Portuguesa. O Império Africano 1890-1930*. Ed. Valentim Alexandre and Jill Dias. Lisbon: Estampa, 1998. 769-801.
- Castro, Afonso de. *As Possessões Portuguezas na Oceânia*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1867.
- Castro, Gonçalo Pimenta de. *Timor (Subsídios para a sua História)*. Lisbon: Agência Geral das Colónias, 1944.
- Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002.
- Cinatti, Ruy. *Esboço Histórico do Sândalo no Timor Português*. Lisbon: Junta de Investigações Coloniais, 1950.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Victory*. New York: Random House, 1915.
- Correia, Armando Pinto. *Gentio de Timor*. Lisbon: Ed. Autor, 1935.
- . *Timor de Lés a Lés*. Lisbon: Agência Geral das Colónias, 1944.
- Correia da Silva, Carlos Eugénio. Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 13 June 1878. ACL_SEMU_DGU_RM_005_Cx 47, 1878. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- Documentos das companhias d'infantaria de Timor, referidos ao anno de 1891. Annexas ao officio n. 111. ACL_SEMU_DGU_RM_003_Cx 6, 1887-1893. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- Dores, Raphael das. "Apontamentos para um Dicionario Chorographico de Timor." *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa* XIX.7-12 (1903): 763-826.
- Elias, Norbert. *The Civilizing Process. Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*. London: Blackwell, 2000.
- Felgas, Hélio. *Timor Português*. Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1956.
- Fernandes, J. A. *Timor. Impressões e aspectos*. Porto: Tipografia de "A Tribuna," 1923.
- Figueiredo, Fernando. "Timor." *História dos portugueses no Extremo Oriente. Macau e Timor do Antigo Regime à República*. Ed. A. H. de Oliveira Marques. Lisbon: Fundação Oriente, 2000. 697-793.
- Forbes, Henry O. *A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago. A Narrative of Travel and Exploration from 1878 to 1883*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1885.
- Forjaz, Cypriano. Letter to Governor of Macau and Timor, Confidential. 28 July 1891. ACL_SEMU_DGU_RM_003_Cx 6, 1887-1893. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- Foucault, Michel. "Governmentality." *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality*. Ed. G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991. 87-103.
- França, Bento da. *Macau e os seus Habitantes. Relações com Timor*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1897.
- Garcia, António Joaquim. Letter to Governor of Macau and Timor. 19 Oct. 1870. P-64. Administração Civil Collection, Arquivo Histórico de Macau, Macau.
- Governor of Macau and Timor. Letter to J. Maria Pereira. 28 July 1884. P-27855. Correspondence from the Governor of Macau and Timor to the Governor of Timor 1879-91. Administração Civil Collection, Arquivo Histórico de Macau, Macau.
- Graça, Joaquim José da. Letter to A. Cardoso de Carvalho. 9 May 1881. P-27855. Correspondence from the Governor of Macau and Timor to the Governor of Timor 1879-91. Administração Civil Collection, Arquivo Histórico de Macau, Macau.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 8 Mar. 1880. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 1, 1879-1880. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 24 June 1880. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 1, 1879-1880. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 14 Sept. 1882. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 3, 1882-1883. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 20 Oct. 1882. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 3, 1882-1883. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- Hespanha, António Manuel. "A Constituição do Império Português. Revisão de Alguns Enviesamentos Correntes." *O Antigo Regime nos Trópicos. A Dinâmica Imperial Portuguesa (Séculos XVI-XVIII)*. Ed. J. Fragoso, M. F. Bicalho, and M. F. Gouvêa. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001. 163-88.
- Hyam, Ronald. *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914. A Study of Empire and Expansion*. London: Basford, 1976.
- Lacerda, Hugo de. Letter to Counsellor and Secretary of Navy and Overseas Affairs, Confidential. 30 Aug. 1876. ACL_SEMU_DGU_RM_005_Cx 47, 1878. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Counsellor J. de Andrade Corvo. 6 Feb. 1877. ACL_SEMU_DGU_RM_005_Cx 46, 1877. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 10 Aug. 1878. ACL_SEMU_DGU_RM_005_Cx 47, 1878. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 27 Dec. 1879. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 1, 1879-1880. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 16 Apr. 1880. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 1, 1879-1880. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.

- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs, 31 Aug. 1880. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 1, 1879-1880. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs, Relatório sobre a administração de Timor desde 3 de Julho de 1878 até 31 de Agosto de 1880. [x] 1880. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 1, 1879-1880. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . *A Questão Colonial*. Lisbon: Tipografia do "Diário Ilustrado," 1885.
- Lencastre, Júlio Garcez de. "Aspectos da administração de Timor." *Boletim da Agência Geral das Colónias* 54 (1929): 31-54.
- Livingstone, David, and Charles Livingstone. *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi and its Tributaries; and of the Discovery of the Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa, 1858-1864*. [1865]. London: Duckworth, 2001.
- Lonsdale, John. "The Conquest State of Kenya 1895-1905." *Unhappy Valley. Conflict in Kenya and Africa*. Ed. B. Berman and J. Lonsdale. Athens: Ohio UP, 1992. 13-44.
- Magalhães, António Leite de. *Memória Descritiva dos Recursos Agrícolas da Possessão Portuguesa de Timor*. Dili: Imprensa Nacional, 1909.
- Maia, Alfredo Lacerda e. Letter to Governor of Macau and Timor. 31 Aug. 1886. P-682. Administração Civil Collection, Arquivo Histórico de Macau, Macau.
- "Mappa do movimento commercial, importação e exportação realizado no districto de Timor no primeiro semestre de 1895." *Boletim da Província de Macau e Timor* 36 (1895): 379.
- Martinho, J. Simões. *Timor. Quatro Séculos de Colonização Portuguesa*. Porto: Livraria Progrediot, 1943.
- Martins, J. P. Oliveira. *O Brazil e as Colónias Portuguezas*. Lisbon: Livraria Bertrand, 1887.
- Matos, Artur Teodoro de. *Timor Português 1515-1769. Contribuição para a sua História*. Lisbon: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa/Instituto Histórico Infante D. Henrique, 1974.
- Needham, Rodney. *Sumba and the Slave-Trade*. Clayton: Monash University, 1983.
- Oliveira, Bento da França Pinto de. Letter to Governor of Macau and Timor[?]. 22 Jan. 1883. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 3, 1882-1883. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 18 June 1882. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 3, 1882-1883. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 15 July 1882. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 3, 1882-1883. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs 1 Nov. 1882. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 3, 1882-1883. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- Pélissier, René. *Timor en Guerre. Le Crocodile et les Portugais*. Paris: Orgeval, 1996.
- Pereira, João Maria. Letter to Governor of Macau and Timor. 24 Dec. 1883. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 3, 1882-1883. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- Pina Cabral, João de. *Between China and Europe: Person, Culture and Emotion in Macau*. London: Continuum, 2002.
- . "Galvão na terra dos canibais: a constituição emocional do poder colonial." *Trânsitos Coloniais: Diálogos Críticos Luso-Brasileiros*. Ed. Cristiana Bastos, Miguel Vale de Almeida, and Bela Feldman-Bianco. Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2002. 93-116.
- . "Trafic humain à Macau: les compatibilités équivoques de la communication interculturelle." *Ethnologie Française* XXIX.2 (1999): 225-36.
- Projecto de reorganização do districto de Timor, elaborado pela Comissão nomeada em Portaria de 16 de Novembro de 1893. 19 Apr. 1893, ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 9, 1895-1896. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- Ramos, Rui. *A Segunda Fundação (1890-1926)*. Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1994.
- Robinson, Ronald. "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration." *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*. Ed. R. Owen and B. Sutcliffe. London: Longman, 1972. 118-40.
- Roque, Ricardo. "The Razor's Edge: Portuguese Imperial Vulnerability in Colonial Moxico, Angola." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 36.1 (2003): 105-24.
- . *Headhunting and Colonialism: Anthropology and the Circulation of Human Skulls in the Portuguese Empire, 1870-1930*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Silva, José Celestino da. Letter to Governor of Macau and Timor. 17 June 1896. ACL_SEMU_DGU_RM_005_Cx 1, 1890-1899. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Governor of Macau and Timor. 17 July 1894. ACL_SEMU_DGU_2R_001_Cx 9, 1895-1896. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Governor of Macau and Timor. 1 Sept. 1894. ACL_SEMU_DGU_RM_003_Cx 7, 1890-1895. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Governor of Macau and Timor. 24 Sept. 1894. ACL_SEMU_DGU_RM_003_Cx 7. 1890-1895. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 13 Sept. 1894. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 8, 1894. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 10 July 1895. ACL_SEMU_DGU_RM_005_Cx 1, 1890-1899. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs, 11 Aug. 1896. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 9, 1895-1896. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs, Reservado. 23 Sept. 1897. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_Cx 10, 1897-1900. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- . Letter to Minister and Secretary of the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 25 Jan. 1901. ACL_SEMU_DGU_1R_002_Cx 11, 1901-1904. Macau and Timor Collection, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
- Stoler, Ann Laura, and Frederick Cooper. "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda." *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. Ed. Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper. Berkeley: U of California P, 1997. 1-56.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power. Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002.

- Teixeira, André. "Comércio Português na Região de Timor na Segunda Metade do Século XVII." *Oriente* 4 (2002): 83-95.
- Trajano Filho, Wilson. "A Constituição de um Olhar Fragilizado: Notas sobre o Colonialismo Português em África." *A Persistência da História: Passado e Contemporaneidade em África*. Ed. Clara Carvalho and João de Pina Cabral. Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2004. 21-59.
- Vaquinhas, José dos Santos. "Communicado. Macau e Timor." *O Macaense* 22 Nov. 1883: 167.
- . "Timor. I." *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa* IV.7 (1883): 307-28.
- . "Timor. Usos—Superstições de guerra." *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa* IV (1884): 476-92.
- Wallace, Alfred Russell. *The Malay Archipelago*. [1869]. New York: Free Press, 1962.
- Weber, Max. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1978.

Ricardo Roque holds a D. Phil. in History from the University of Cambridge and is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon. He has conducted research on the history and anthropology of colonialism and human sciences in Portuguese Asia and Africa in the period of late imperialism. He is the author of *Antropologia e Império: Fonseca Cardoso e a expedição à Índia em 1895* (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2001) and the editor (with J. Arriscado Nunes) of *Objectos Impuros: Experiências em Estudos Sobre a Ciência* (Porto: Afrontamento, forthcoming). His new book, *Headhunting and Colonialism: Anthropology and the Circulation of Human Skulls in the Portuguese Empire, 1870-1930*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2010. Email: ricardo.roque@ics.ul.pt.