

# Revisiting the Viqueque Rebellion of 1959

**Geoffrey C. Gunn**

Research on anti-colonial rebellions in Southeast Asia has not only contributed to our understanding of state-society relations, peasant modes of production, millennial protest, proto-nationalism, and a range of other themes, but has enriched social science theory building. This is demonstrated in an array of creative studies on, especially, Burma, Vietnam and Laos, touching, variously, on peasant rationality (Popkins), “moral economy” (Scott) and political economy (Gunn) approaches. It is striking that Portuguese Timor, renowned for its history of anti-colonial rebellions, has been virtually neglected in this field.

By far the most serious challenge to Portuguese authority in East Timor in the post-war period prior to the decolonization crisis of 1974-75 was the insurrection of 1959. Broadly known in Portuguese writing as the “movimento de 1959” and, in Indonesia, as the “Gerakan Viqueque 1959,” after the major locus of the revolt in the remote eastern part of the island, the conspiracy against the colonial government also included Timorese members of the administration in Dili. Information about the events of 1959 and the deportation of the ringleaders long languished under a strict censorship regime. Obviously this was an important event in modern East Timor history, not only because of the scope of the insurgency against Portuguese rule, but also the ferocity in which it was crushed leading to hundreds of deaths in some accounts.

While the hand of Indonesia in this rebellion is well established, it is also worth considering whether or not the event was a showing of anti-colonial pro-independence sentiment some fifteen years prior to the emergence of modern political parties following the collapse of the Salazar-Caetano dictatorship in Portugal in April 1974? While tracing the rebellion to its origins and following the fate of its alleged leadership, deported to Angola and Portugal, this chapter seeks to profile the rebel leaders sociologically, at least as can be determined through a scrutiny of colonial police dossiers on the deportees (numbering in all 68 according to Indonesian sources). We are also concerned to anthropologize the rebellion that broke out in remote Viqueque province at a time when Portugal was seeking to better know and document the peoples of its far flung Oceanic colony. Still, we allow, this is only a preliminary investigation as, rare in the history of classic European colonialism, memory of the 1959 rebellion is still fresh and alternative narratives should, rightfully, comprise part of the inquiry.

## **Preludes to the Rebellion**

Fatefully, in early 1958, a group of fourteen Indonesians, two of them military officers, entering the Oecusse enclave from across the Indonesian border in west Timor, demanded – and received – political asylum status. Their removal and resettlement to Baucau in the east was then facilitated. The “refugees” were awarded a stipend (7 patacas a day), although not always paid punctually obliging them to frequently take out credit with various shopkeepers (Barata 1998, 79).

The question remains unanswered in Portuguese writings (cf. Barata 1998; Lima 2002) as to why in the first place the authorities in Dili, known to be entirely wary of Indonesian intentions from

any quarter, actually went out of their way to offer refugee-status and virtual political exile to the hitherto unknown group? Was this a misplaced humanitarian gesture? Was this on instruction from Lisbon via the Portuguese Embassy in Jakarta out of sympathy for the eastern island rebellion, or was this to please the external backers of the outer island rebellion, the American CIA?

According to Felipe Jose Freira Themudo Barata (1998), who arrived in Timor on 22 June 1958 to take up the governorship, his predecessor, Governor César Maria de Serpa Rosa (1950-58), was less attuned to “political subtleties” and, fitting the mold of a typical military officer, was given to “prudence and parsimony.” Serpa Rosa's term in office also coincided with the tenure in Timor of Indonesian Consul Nazwar Jacob Sutan Indra. As observed, Consul Nazwar began to unfold a “discrete but active anti-Portuguese campaign” working with local employees of the Consulate as well as the small local Arab population, known to harbor pro-Indonesian sympathies. He also gained the confidence of a number of gullible Timorese individuals, albeit quickly identified by the Portuguese authorities. The Consul was also observed to be engaged in such “subversive” activities as photographing sensitive military sites.

In late 1958, alarm mounted in Dili with the discovery of the robbery of sixteen rifles, all but three recovered. The authorities also remained concerned at the rising frequency in which Indonesian sailing *prauh* beached on the north coast of Timor. Between 19 and 30 May 1959 up to 50 Indonesian *prauh* made landings at Lautem, some of them armed. In some accounts Portuguese military units confiscated weapons believed to be destined for rebels. If the initial concern was contraband, the major concern turned to the political and security threat posed by these visitors, especially as it became apparent that the illicit landings were connected with anti-Jakarta rebel forces in Sulawesi. In order to clarify a swirl of rumors regarding these activities, two customs officials were dispatched to Lavai, located on the north coast between Baucau and Lautem, even though no decisive proof of any direct subversive activity was then uncovered (Barata 1998).

While there was uncertainty in Portuguese thinking as to the nature of the threat or as to whether the Jakarta government was involved, according to one PIDE analyst, “In our opinion the actions of the leaders of the South Celebes (Darul Islam) group [actually] posed a major problem for the central authorities in Jakarta.”<sup>1</sup> While subsequent research on the Permesta rebellion has revealed that the rebels upheld vague designs on west Timor, no evidence has come to light directly linking them with the rebellion in Portuguese Timor (cf. Kahin & Kahin 1995, 173). Nevertheless, their actions potentially threatened the status of Portuguese Timor as they were not bound by the good relations protocols developed between Jakarta and Lisbon.

Putting all these facts together, the government believed that it had advance warning of a revolutionary movement in Timor. Notably, in early 1959 the Portuguese authorities gained wind of illicit meetings held in Dili at the instigation of the Indonesian consul. Reportedly, in December 1958, the consul made contact with the exiles in Baucau, and paid them off. On 21 December, five of the Indonesians departed Baucau for Viqueque. Two of them, Lambertus Laden and Gerson Pello, then embarked on tours of *sucos* (administrative sub-divisions) in, respectively, Baucau, Laga and Ossu, and Uoto-Lari and Uoto-Carbau on the remote south coast of the island (Barata 1998, 63).

According to Governor Barata (1998, 63), first news of rebellion brewing in Viqueque also came to the attention of the Administrator of Baucau, Artur Marques Ramos, derived from information

supplied by the head of the Baguia military post in the early days of June. [Baguia was a strategic town athwart the road linking the north coast of the island with Uato Carabau in the south]. Two Indonesians had been identified as conspiring with native chiefs in Uato-Lari and Uato-Carabau to plan rebellion. Accordingly, the administrator prepared instructions to transport the two Indonesians to Dili. Ramos, also received information from Baucau in early June that Indonesian exiles residing in Viqueque were holding clandestine meetings in Luca and that “revolutionary” cells had been uncovered in Dili. Even so, Ramos claims not to have been aware of any suspicious activity by the Indonesians in Viqueque and appeared to be totally unprepared for the events.<sup>2</sup>

### Chronology of a Rebellion

A basic chronology of the rebellion in Viqueque and elsewhere follows drawn from a number of official and unofficial sources.<sup>3</sup>

- 30 May 1959, armed clash between crew of an Indonesian sailing boat and Portuguese military, 8 rifles confiscated.
- 7 June (Sunday ) 1959, a *cipaio* (sepoy or native soldier) and a *morador* (resident) were killed in a nighttime attack by rebel elements on the administrative post of Uato-Lari. The rebels made off with 48 rifles and ammunition. The administrator, accompanied by his family, offered assistance to the *cipaio* by driving him to Ossu. The rebels also cut telephone lines connecting Viqueque with Baucau and, in a series of riots and sporadic attacks, burnt a number of houses.
- 9 June, once Baucau had informed Dili by telegram, authorities in the capital mobilized to prepare military reinforcements with a view to taking control of telephone communications, and to arrest the Indonesians. Early the next morning a force of 50 troops were flown to Baucau in relays. Arms and ammunition was distributed. Captain Manuel João Farjado Barreiros was placed in charge of local operations. At the last moment it was decided to use four-wheel drive military Unimogs (Barata 1998, 66).
- 9 June, after midday Administrator Ramos returned to Viqueque at the head of the party, comprising an official, a sergeant, and nine soldiers.
- 9-11 June, meantime Lt. Braga was charged with reinforcing the Baguia post and the radio station in Baucau. Owing to lack of communications two days passed without information on the military column.
- 11 June, a *batida* or shooting-party of *arraias* was assembled in Uatolari.
- 11 June (11 AM), the rebels staged an assault on Baguia but were repelled. As Barata (1998, 66) writes with irony, “happily for our side the arms stolen by the rebels were of poor quality and many cartridges were duds.”
- 12 June, arrests were made of a *chefe de suco* along with two others.
- 13 June, the *arraias* reoccupied Uato-Carabau.
- 13 June, the Indonesian Joubert was arrested along with five Timorese including a *chefe de suco* and a *chefe de povoação*.
- 16 June, attack on the Portuguese authority at Afalebe, site of the revolt.
- 17 June, repetition of the attack leading to the arrest of the *chefe de suco* of Ossu-Huna, and the Indonesians Gerson Pello and Jeremias.

- 17 June, 80 Portuguese commandos arrived in Baucau at the end of a flight from Portugal aboard two [C-54] Skymasters after stops in Goa, Sri Lanka, and the Cocos Islands. Armed with FN rifles and automatic pistols, their sojourn in the Portuguese colony would be prolonged.<sup>4</sup>
- 18 June, the “campaign” came to an end with the regress of the *arraias* to their homes.
- 20 June, the two Indonesian ringleaders were captured.
- 25 June, capture of an assistant working with the meteorological department and end of military campaign.

## Explanations

As far as can be established, nothing of the events described entered the international media at the time. Australian Consular files declassified in the 1990s offer some candid appraisals even if short on substance. According to the picture painted by the Australian Consul F.J.A. Whittaker, who toured Viqueque on 14 July 1959, a week after the events, in contrast to the scene he witnessed at Baucau and Ossu where people were going about their marketing and agricultural activities in accustomed fashion, “Viqueque presented a different picture – hardly a native to be seen – I felt it to be depressing. The Uato Lari area had been “swept clean” – not a village left standing, completely burnt out and all livestock driven off.” Although he did not visit, he believed that Baguia presented a similar picture. In describing the method of attack he asserts that “Aided by native auxiliaries (loyal natives from Ossu) they converged on the area from two points – Lautem and Viqueque, using mortars, bazookas and machine guns.” In answering the explanation offered by the concerned Portuguese military Chief of Staff, “brief as the action was, it was equally ruthless and complete.”<sup>5</sup>

While we have little documentary information on the actual suppression of the rebellion, James Dunn (1983, 33), former Australian Consul in Dili, offers a figure of 150 dead, while historian-journalist Jill Jolliffe (1978, 49) offers between 160 and 1,000 casualties. There is also some consensus in the secondary literature on the rebellion that its suppression was eased by the Portuguese ability to manipulate clan and ethnic loyalties, such as in the above-mentioned reference to the use of “loyal natives from Ossu.” The basic facts of the rebellion in Viqueque and its swift demise are not contradicted by Indonesian accounts except for the ferocity in which the rebellion was put down and the precise number killed (500 killed in Viqueque and 200 arrested in Dili) 6 or between 100 and 1,000 killed.<sup>7</sup>

In the absence of the text of the official Portuguese inquiry into the rebellion and its suppression, one strikingly critical account entering the PIDE record bears scrutiny. Authored by the future bishop of Timor and the sole Timorese deputy in the Portuguese parliament, Martinho da Costa Lopes, the account questions the conduct of Administrator Ramos along with Captain Barreiros in the gunning down of seven of the rebels. In this account, equipped with pistols Ramos and Barreiros set forth in a jeep to the Ba Bui river several kilometers from the Uato-Lari post where they encountered two *cidadaes* (citizens); namely Alberto Ribeiro and Armindo. Upon return to base, the two officials announced that Alberto and Armindo had “escaped,” a fact made highly questionable when their bodies were found in the river bathed in blood. Obviously, Costa Lopes stated, this act by Ramos did not sit well with the law. However, because of “abnormal circumstances” neither should it qualify as a “criminal act.” Even so, he continued, if these individuals were attempting to escape should they have been shot dead? Another case merited

clarification, namely the death of Carlos de Carvalho. Implicated in the events, he was taken to Baucau hospital and survived his wounds. But “while attempting to escape” he was shot by *cipiao* number 8. As Costa Lopes concluded, “there was no justification for the death.” Given the ramifications of the event, he commented, this “*bocadinho*” or morsel of the history of Timor concerns an attempt at escape by a prisoner to justify a crime. The “system never changes” the future bishop lamented.<sup>8</sup>

In seeking explanations of the revolt in Viqueque, Costa Lopes also observed that there was a wide-scale tendency over the years for the out-migration of youth to schools and colleges in other districts. Another concern was that administrative posts in the interior were vacant for want of personnel “to the prejudice of the social life of the population.” A major grievance of many native chiefs, he observed, was the obligatory delivery of cattle including buffalos to the city of Dili as required by the administration. He wrote, “It is not rare to hear from the chiefs and others, that it would serve them better to produce nothing for sale, because they are only offered the rock bottom price.”<sup>9</sup>

As Costa Lopes' biographer, Rowena Lennox (2000, 72-4), has written of Viqueque in 1959, conditions were notoriously bad even by Timor standards. Although whipping had been proscribed, this practice continued in Viqueque. Wages were low and the administration had cut to less than a third the wages offered by the Australian-owned Timor Oil Company. Costa Lopes, who returned to Timor from Portugal a short time after the crushing of the rebellion, shared these concerns and pressed the administration for leniency for the convicted rebels. According to Lennox, in the late 1960s Costa Lopes brought a case to the government attorney in Dili against the administrator of Viqueque for pushing his people into virtual slave labor. In this affair the administrator was punished.

## **Events in Dili**

While the major leitmotiv appearing through official Portuguese writing on the rebellion is the determinant role of the Indonesian consul in masterminding the revolt with the assistance of the “pseudo-refugees” (Barata 1998, 50), it fails to explain how the Indonesians gained such a strong showing of support for a people whose language and mores they could not have understood in such a short period of time. There is no doubt that the Timorese, whether rural or urban, shared many grievances. To better understand these grievances it is important to separate out the rebellion in rural Viqueque and the conspiracy in Dili, two very different social milieu, albeit under a single colonial regime. While the details of the events in Dili are no less sketchy, it should also be understood that, in the minds of the authorities, the violence in Viqueque and the actions in Dili were part and parcel of the same plot.

According to Barata (1998, 50), the revolt in Dili was first planned for 28 May to coincide with the anniversary of the foundation of two football clubs, namely, the Associação Desportiva e Recreativa União (exclusively a Timorese club), and Club Sport Benfica. In the event, the authorities in Dili were alerted as to clandestine meetings and possible subversion. On 27 May military authorities were placed on alert, just as Club Sport Benfica cancelled its event as a sense of panic took over. The authorities moved to the repressive stage, no doubt panicking the rebels in Viqueque to launch their revolt prematurely. It is unclear but, from one account, the União Sporting and Recreation Club was burnt down (Niner 2000, 16). It may be coincidental, but the Indonesian

authorities had made prior contact with the two sporting clubs, notably inviting members to Kupang in 1956 to participate in Indonesian national day celebrations.

Where the Portuguese analysts saw evidence of careful planning, Dunn (1983, 33) regards the plot as “rather amateurish” and that, even if it had not been discovered, probably would not have been successful. Nevertheless the events jolted the Portuguese especially as it proved that their security was vulnerable at a time of rising anti-colonial sentiment in neighboring Indonesia.

Following a meeting on 3 June between government authorities and the chief of police, 15 alleged ringleaders of the planned revolt were detained. In addition, 14 Indonesians implicated in the revolt were also taken into custody. Altogether, some 120-200 people were detained in the Dili area alone. A “preliminary” enquiry was completed on 6 June (or one day before the attack on the Viqueque administrative post). The official inquiry opened on 25 June, the day that the military operations were concluded in the east. While the detail of judicial process in Dili is sketchy, official telegrams described the detainees as having committed “crimes against security.” Even so, as reported by the Australian Consul Whittaker, on 14 July, “interrogation continues” with one employer of the Banco Nacional Ultramarino implicating 20 families in the affair, suggesting an even broader band of support.<sup>10</sup> The process was conducted by Superintendent of Police, administrator Abilio da Paixão Monteiro, whose report of 25 July first laid bare the conspiracy by the Indonesian consul along with local consular staff and further identified the 15 ringleaders. According to Barata (1998, 69), echoing official sentiment, an “exemplary punishment” was merited matching the “enormous human and political costs” engendered by the insurrection. But he also conceded that prison conditions in Dili, including a prison hulk anchored in the harbor, were intolerable leaving little option but for deportation. The case of Francisco Araujo was exceptional and devolved to a vote within the Government Council of which he was member.

According to information supplied the Australian Consulate in Dili by Consul Tengku Usman Hussin, nine of the original fourteen Indonesians responsible for the unrest were quietly returned to Indonesia in mid 1960 [one other had been shot dead and the other four had been sent to Lisbon]. In Usman's version, the Indonesians were simply pushed across the border at Oecusse without the Jakarta authorities being informed. According to Usman, they were not political refugees as they made out, but deserters from the Republican army, guilty of armed robbery and other crimes. Accordingly, they had been taken into custody in Kupang pending charges for desertion and other crimes. As for the remaining four deported to Portugal, as Usman asserted “Jakarta will continue its efforts to have them brought to trial or returned to Indonesia.” It is also true, as Usman acknowledged, that Lisbon did not press the case against the Indonesian consul, no doubt not wishing to push relations with Indonesia to the brink.<sup>11</sup>

## **Exile**

Moving with dispatch, the Portuguese Minister of Overseas (Territories) authorized the deportation of 57 of the rebel-prisoners on a Portuguese-owned passenger ship, the *India*. Originally scheduled to embark Lisbon on 5 June, the *India* arrived in Dili on 30 September, albeit delayed owing to events in Timor. Characteristically, the arrival of the vessel linking Timor with the outside world was the occasion of much rejoicing and this day would have been no different. But this time the *India* also disembarked an additional 80 commandos while landing a quantity of automatic weapons and munitions, some sizeable artillery pieces, along with military Unimogs.

Another consignment of 32 armored jeeps was also due on the Timor scheduled to arrive in February 1960.<sup>12</sup>

According to an official cable, the India departed Dili on 6 October heading for Lisbon with 53?? Timorese and four Indonesians convicted for “crimes against security” (Barata 1998, 70). Scheduled to arrive in Lisbon some time in November, as discussed below, the ship was unexpectedly re-routed to Angola. Eventually, on 26 November 1959, the India arrived in Lobato port in Angola. For the disembarking Timorese prisoners, Angola would be their long-time place of exile and, for some, permanent home. Of the 63 initially detained and transported to Angola, at the end of two years, 16 (25?) were sent to Lisbon and, in 1970, 12 were chosen for repatriation to Timor.

### **Prisoner Profiles and Interpretation**

It would be illustrative to examine the backgrounds of the prisoners, not only to ascertain their links with the rebellion but to offer clues as to their motives for participation, whether as integrationists as averred in Portuguese and Indonesian official writing or, whether out of anti-colonial or even pro-independence angst. In other words, can we see in the Viqueque rebellion the stirrings of anti-colonial nationalism some more than a decade prior to the rise of Fretilin, the party which led East Timor to independence?

Conveniently, PIDE files from the “Delegação de Angola” based in Luanda offer a list of 52 of the prisoners along with short biographies. This was drawn up in Angola on 2 December 1959 with the observation that 30 were destined for the penal colony of Blie, while 22 were destined for “military service.”<sup>13</sup> It might be useful to separate out those prisoners arrested in Dili from those detained in Viqueque, as the former group appear to be better educated or occupied positions in government or were employed in “industrial” activities, relative to the Viqueque group who owed their positions to traditional authority or worked in traditional occupations, namely agriculture. A third group include non-Timorese. In fact, only eleven of the 52 can be linked with Viqueque, the balance are identified as having Dili as their place or residence, although one is identified with Aileu and one with Covalima province.

Among the Viqueque group was Antonio (Metan), age 48, the *ex-chefe de povocacão* of the Uato-Lari post; João (Lisboa) 28 year-old peasant farmer; Domingo, a 24-year-old peasant farmer; Paulo, 25 year-old truck driver; Manuel a 25 year-old peasant farmer from Behore, José a 24 year-old farmer from Rai Um; Fernando, a 33 year-old assistant at the Uato Carbau post; and Domingo, a 24 year-old “worker” a native of Vessa; Armindo a 25 year-old driver from Vessa; José a 35 year-old painter; Nicodemos a 36 year-old *chefe de povocacão* of Anen *suco* in Carau Belo, Eduardo, a peasant from Lete Foho; and José, a 47 year-old native of Raimere Hei.<sup>14</sup>

While António Metan and Nicodemos undoubtedly owed their positions in large part to tradition, among this group of peasant-worker agriculturalists only Fernando could plausibly claim his position based upon some degree of education. In other words, the Viqueque rebels were overwhelmingly unlettered, unskilled, peasant agriculturalists grounded in tradition, undoubtedly sharing the grievances and hardships of their people under a largely remote colonial regime that imposed duties, such as *corvée* and punishments for default, but hardly delivered much in the way

of education or health much less modernity outside of sporadic communications links by Chinese truck to Baucau, the nearest big administrative center.<sup>15</sup>

Certain contrast can be made with those identified as having Dili their place of residence and, by inference, linked with the plot in Dili. First, the Dili group included a number of Timorese employed by the government. These include José (Manuel Duarte), a 26 year-old working in the meteorological service; Amaro, a 59 year-old official of the treasury department; Alberto, 27 year-old compositor employed in the Imprensa Nacional and Maria, 50 years old and in the same employment; Germano, a sailor employed by the Capitania dos Portes; Matias, a 31 year-old employed in the Health Service in Dili (although a native of Viqueque); Manuel, 54 years old and employed in the customs service (second degree); Joaquim (age 40) and Manuel (age 37), both employed as telephonists in the postal service.<sup>16</sup>

While it is hard to measure years of education and level of responsibility in these positions, this strategically located group in Dili represented, by Timor standards of the day, a relatively advanced Portuguese-Tetum Praça-speaking even cosmopolitan group alongside the Viqueque rustics, widely exposed to public information and rumor such as existed in the closed atmosphere of colonial Timor of the late 1950s. Standing aside from this “government”-employed group was Francisco (age 27) “professor catechist” of the Catholic mission in Alieu, undoubtedly the best educated of them all and, as mentioned, “Chico” Francisco Araujo who, owing to his status on the *Conselho do Governo*, was part of the establishment. In the language of the day, the Dili group included a large percentage of *assimilado*, or those deemed assimilated into overseas Portuguese society, while certain also included mestiço.<sup>17</sup> The balance of the group of 52 held such occupations as truck driver or assistant, house boy, servant, cabin boy, painter, rural worker and so on. Additionally, two held “traditional” albeit significant positions in Timorese society in Dili, namely Paulo (44 years) *chefe de suco* of Bidau, and Vicente (age 45) *chefe de suco* of Caluhun.<sup>18</sup>

Setting aside the special case of the four Indonesians, the only other proclaimed foreigner among the group was 27 year-old Celestino of Chinese nationality (actually Chinese father and Timorese mother). But the group also included two non-Timorese deemed “Arabs,” namely Saleh; and Osmen. Another Muslim identified was Saleh bin M. (native of Dili and clerk in the Indonesian Consulate). Additionally, Maria was identified as a native of Mozambique.<sup>19</sup> Undoubtedly, the Muslims among this group were also Indonesian-Malay speaking.

Fate of the Detainees in Angola

Upon arrival in Angola, 30 of the detainees were immediately dispatched to the Colonia Penal, Bié, located at Capolo some 70 kilometers south of Kuito then known as Silva Porto in the central Angolan province of the same name. As revealed by a document entitled, “Inquiry into the Timorese detained in the Penal Colony of Bié,” they were liable for “crimes against the external security of the state.” As such, the group were collectively implicated in the assault on the Secretariat of the Administration of Viqueque and subsequent robbery of arms and munitions as distributed to other groups with a view to revolt against the authority in Timor and to annex Timor to the Republic of Indonesia. The determination was conducted by the Territorial Military Tribunal of Angola at Luanda on 17 May 1960.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Cabecilhes or Ringleaders**



But on 27 March 1960 it was already decided to transport to Lisbon 16 *cabecilhes* or ringleaders deemed a threat to state security. This group of 12 Timorese and four Indonesians, accompanied by seven PIDE officials departed Vila Luso (Lwena) on 3 June at 14:00 PM for Lisbon under “rigorous security and secrecy.”<sup>21</sup> While the documentation is lacking, it is understood that this group was destined for the notorious political prison of Caixa in Lisbon joining other political opponents of the Salazar regime along with exiled Goan, Angolan, and Mozambican “freedom fighters.”

A short list of eight ringleaders had earlier been drawn up based upon close police surveillance of their behavior. For example, certain of the group deemed “dangerous” were known to have listened to foreign radio broadcasts. Some received and read Indonesian magazines; and some were recipients of Indonesian-language Bibles offered them by an American evangelical missionary (himself identified as a dangerous anti-colonial type). Adding to suspicions, some of the Timorese wrote home letters in Portuguese mixed with romanized Tetum.

The eight ringleaders by name were:

- Joaquim, was identified as frequently traveling from his native Viqueque to Dili to establish “conspiratorial contacts” with rebellious elements with a view to integration with Indonesia. He was even alleged to have traveled to Jakarta to seek out political support along with arms and munitions. As the PIDE analyst noted, “he has not lost his ambition to be installed as a *regulo* (traditional ruler).” In conversation, “he denounces Portuguese and Europeans.” Moreover, he was said to listen to radio broadcasts from Brazzaville, Moscow and Beijing.
- João (O Chicito), who worked in the health clinic in Dili, was described as one of the ringleaders of the projected rebellion in Dili, seeking to integrate Timor with Indonesia. Moreover, he was alleged to have received 30,000 patacas (180,000\$00 in metropolitan money) from the Indonesian Consul. He was understood to be unchanged in his beliefs over the years.
- António [not mentioned on the list of 52] was *regulo* of the poste of Uato-Lari at the site of the revolt. Asked what he did in Timor, he retorted: “lá plantava café, coquiros e...revoltas” (in Timor I planted coffee, coconut trees and ...rebellions). The report continued, “he has not changed his mind about integration.” “He exercises a profound influence upon his compatriots in Silva Porto.” On 6 October 1964 he participated in a reunion with Chicito to discuss the future independence of Timor.
- Fernando, former *regulo* of Uato-Caribau, was deemed influential and understood not to have changed his ideas. It sounds improbable, but the report contends that he displayed a photo of the Indonesian Consul and chief organizer of the revolt in his house.
- Amaro, was eldest of the exiles in Silva Porto. In Dili, he was third level official of the Treasury [and first deported to Lisbon before arriving in Angola.] As with the previous four, he held strongly to integration. He participated in a meeting convened by Chicito.
- Mateus, who was compromised by participation in the rebellion was known to harbor ambitions to be appointed *regulo*.
  - Luis (also known as Luis China), formerly of the Agricultural service.

As PIDE observed, “it is clear that among the Timorese residing in Silva Porto there is an “organized political group” against the security of the state. On the other hand, the collaborating group posed no risk in returning to Timor. A cover note to the report summarized that most of the

Timorese lived “normal” lives in Silva Porto although there was some “regression.”<sup>22</sup> An exception was made for Chico Araujo, owing to his state of health, and then in hospital in Luanda. Decisions on other exiles were made by the Tribunal on 25 June.<sup>23</sup>

### **The *Pouca Culpa* (Less Culpable)**

In February 1961, a date which coincides with the landmark assault on the Luanda prison by members of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), PIDE in Luanda requested the Governor of the colony to offer liberty to the Timorese “*pouca culpa*” (less culpable) then interned in the Bié penal colony while transferring the “more dangerous” prisoners to Luanda by plane. Obviously, as captured MPLA cadre started to be transferred to Capolo, PIDE feared the political contamination effect upon their Timorese wards. In the event, as a PIDE report of 1963 recorded, the Timorese had been granted their “liberty” and were staying in a number of residences in Silva Porto, by then a relatively prosperous provincial capital, in one case in the home of a security police official, and in another case in the home of a commercial enterprise.<sup>24</sup>

Now reduced to 28, the Timorese nevertheless got on with their lives. Almost all, according to the police record, took up with “*mulheres de raça negra*” or local women and started families. Most of them lived on a government subsidy and, as “quasi-literates,” were not easily employable. At this time, a group of Timorese began to petition the authorities as to their desire to return to Timor. As the PIDE record reveals, a long enquiry and vetting process of potential returnees was then undertaken. Even so, a group of five Timorese made it clear that they did not wish to return to Timor.<sup>25</sup>

At 12:00 AM on 21 March 1970, the *India* departed the port of Luanda for Timor. Among the passengers were 12 of the original exiles, mostly hailing from Viqueque, along with five *Africanas* and 15 children. According to Indonesian sources, a total of 45 of the exiles were eventually allowed to return to East Timor during the 1970s, leaving a balance of 23 in exile until the 1990s.

### **Petition-Declaration of José Manuel Duarte**

While it is easy to dismiss the exiles as unwitting stooges of the Indonesian agents, their rebellion was not without social context. In other words there were serious grievances brewing in the backwater colony. It is hard to recapture the kind of pressures imposed upon the prisoners in the penal colonies and prisons of Angola, especially as the Timorese were dependent upon their jailers for sustenance and, of course, release from this forced exile. Certain of the exiles might also have caught wind of the independence struggle in Angola.

Otherwise, it is inexplicable to explain the self-confession provided by José Manuel Duarte, recorded in Bié on 31 August 1968.<sup>26</sup> In other words Duarte was not included among the “dangerous” group sent to Lisbon, neither was he eligible for repatriation. As noted, 26 years-old at the time of the rebellion and employed in the meteorological service in Dili, Duarte wrote that, in 1953, a group of government workers petitioned the Governor offering a litany of complaints, not addressed at the time of the rebellion. After the Japanese surrender, he explained, all Timorese rallied to the Portuguese flag, but then the Portuguese imposed a \$16 pataca annual capitation tax. Added to that, a great contrast existed between educational opportunity in Lisbon and lack of facilities in Dili. Moreover, Timorese civil servants posted to the interior were obliged to live in

palm-leaf huts while Europeans occupied nice houses. Even *ex-deportados* held high posts in Timor, he commented. Restrictions imposed upon entry of girls to the *liceu* was another grievance. Use of the *palmatoria* (the strap) in the administration of justice in Timor was accompanied by torture and the production of martyrs, he complained. Having lost everything during World War II, including their clothes, it was the Chinese shopkeepers who benefited most when clothes were eventually issued, he alleged.

All-in-all, Duarte offered up a trenchant critique of Portuguese colonialism; failure, oppression, and discrimination. <sup>27</sup> No doubt PIDE were livid to read such insolent complaints. It is not clear when Duarte and his comrades were dispatched to Portugal but it is also probable that the colonial authorities were less concerned with the physical welfare of the Timorese than insulating them from the general contagion of revolution entering full throttle by the 1980s. Duarte was an early returnee from Lisbon to his native Timor joining pro-Indonesia Apodeti party in 1974 along with a number of former participants in the 1959 rebellion. In 1992 he served as a deputy in the Indonesian parliament in Dili and, in 1996, commenced to lend his voice to Jakarta's denunciation of Portugal's colonial record.<sup>28</sup> According to Berlie (2001), Duarte returned to Viqueque in 1998-99, before relocating to west Timor along with Joaquim.

### **Sequels to the Rebellion**

Journalist Bill Nicol (1978, 290) visiting Uatolari in 1975 observed the growing animosity between pro-independence Fretilin and pro-integration Apodeti supporters, evenly divided in the area. Nicol recalls an interview on 8 April 1975 with a Captain Antonio Ramos who stated that the people in Uatolari do not easily forget the events of 1959. Angola exiles returning in 1968 also remarked that, in their absence, their cattle and land had been taken over. Now those who had control of the land were basically members of the pro-independence party, Fretilin, thus turning a domestic issue into a political issue between these two parties.

As Timor analyst Helen Hill (2000, 62-3) has elaborated, both Apodeti and Fretilin have honored the rebels and the memory of the rebellion to advance their respective causes. For Apodeti, the rebellion stands as a precursor to integration with Indonesia. For Fretilin, as mirrored in the writings of Abilio Araujo, the rebellion stands as a significant showing of modern East Timor anti-colonialism. Also, as remarked, for Fretilin leaders such as Xavier do Amaral, the actions of the rebels was a direct inspiration.

For Indonesia under the New Order, however, memory of the rebellion was more than academic, especially as the exiles were sought out for attention and for propaganda purposes, both in Timor and in Portugal. According to Indonesian sources, it was President Suharto, acting upon the petition of his roving East Timor-born ambassador, Francisco Lopez da Cruz, who, in 1994, sought with International Committee of the Red Cross assistance to “repatriate” the remaining exiles to Indonesia. With the evident blessing of the Jakarta government, the exiles were promised Indonesian citizenship upon arrival.

In the official Indonesian New Order narrative, the heroes of the attack on the Portuguese administration were the first to unfold the Indonesian flag in the Portuguese colony and the first to strike a blow for integration. Not surprisingly, then, certain of the Viqueque generation drifted into the pro-integrationist Apodeti party, and, subsequently participated in the signing of the so-called

Balibo Declaration of 30 November 1975, one of the phony documents which Indonesia used to officialize its annexation of the territory. Through to 2004, Indonesian media reports declared that many pro-integration “fighters” remaining in west Timor among refugee elements were descendents of the 1959 rebels and remained constant to a revanchist Indonesian cause.

## Conclusions

If we can draw inferences from this list of suspects hastily rounded up in Viqueque and Dili in June 1959 is that, yes, a number of the accused were caught *flagrante delictio* in such acts as attacking the administration headquarters in Viqueque, in stealing arms, and in conspiring with the Indonesians and perhaps the Consul. The unlettered peasant farmers of Viqueque were undoubtedly stooges caught up in events, as were the truck drivers, servants, and cabin boys included in the Dili group. Setting aside the Indonesian conspirators and the “Arabs” who undoubtedly upheld very specific ideas on pan-Malayism or Indonesian-style nationalism, the educated among the Dili Timorese also appear as an unlikely group of anti-colonial conspirators. First, there does not appear to be any coherent ideology shared by the group, neither was any formal organizational structure uncovered, nor was there any coherent plan for seizure of state power. The case of Chico Araujo just remains mysterious. Why would a prosperous coffee planter risk everything on such a half-baked rebellion? Still, as the testimony of José Manuel Duarte reveals, many of the rebels among both the Viqueque and Dili groups, shared a sense of discrimination and resentment against Portuguese colonialism. They may have had little to lose by taking an extraordinary risk. Also, there is nothing in Duarte's testament that he saw integration with Indonesia as a solution.

There was evidently a great deal of naivete among the would-be Dili rebels that, with a few captured weapons they could seize power against overwhelming military force. There was also a great sense of overreaction on the part of the Portuguese authorities in deporting the rebels with only minimal judicial process. In their zeal to find an Indonesian connection, were they blind to the iniquities of late colonial rule? While the Viqueque actions drew in large numbers of camp-followers, its rebellion also shared some traditional features, namely the Timorese warrior style of settling grievances. But insurrection in Dili was of a different order and, as proven by events, the Portuguese security services were on top of the situation even before it got off the ground. But can we grant the 1959 rebels a nationalist imprimatur or was their rebellion fatally imbricated with integrationist designs? Also, as far as the Fretilin narrative is concerned, were the Viqueque rebels before their time as the still-to-be written official history of Timor-Leste traces the origins of nationalism to the foundations of Fretilin party itself (1970-74), albeit acknowledging such heroes as leader of the 1919 rebellion, Boaventura.

## Notes

1. Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT), AOS “Salazar archives,” PIDE, “Alguns Informações sobre actividades Indonezes em e volta de Timor, et,” 23 October 1959.
2. Ramos memo in Annex VII, (Barata 1998), pp.223-26.
3. The primary source for the chronology, actually entering the PIDE file, was made by Rev. Father Martinho de Costa Lopes [ANTT, AOS/CO/UL-36 “Timor-factos ocorridos em Viqueque e Uatolori, 1959-1960.”] According to Jolliffe (2001, 326), Costa Lopes traveled to Viqueque from Portugal after the revolt expressly to conduct an investigation. See also, National Archives of Australia (NAA), memo by F.J.A. Whittaker, Australian Consulate, Dili, A1838, 3006/4/3 Part I, “International Relations, Indonesia and Portuguese Timor.”

4. NAA, Australian Consulate report, 23 June 1959, A1838, 3006/4/3 Part I “International Relations:” Indonesia and Portuguese Timor.”
5. NAA memo by F.J.A. Whittaker.
6. cf. *Republika Online*, 11 November 1995.
7. *Jakarta post.com*, 23 May 2004.
8. ANTT, AOS/CO/UL-36, “Timor-factos ocorridos em Viqueque e Uotolari, 1959-1960.” Contrast this opinion with the words of Ramos writing in an official memo of 23 January 1961 “in my modest opinion the repression of this movement was excessively benevolent and can encourage animation of repetition of an identical case” [Ramos document in Annex VII, Barata (1998, 225)]. In fact Ramos remained in office in Viqueque and was still in office when interviewed by an Australian journalist in 1974.
9. ANTT, AOS/CO/UL-36, “Timor-factos ocorridos em Viqueque e Uotolari, 1959-1960.”
10. Memo dated 14 July 1959 by F.J.A. Whittaker, Australian Consulate, Dili. A1838, 3006/4/3 Part I, “International Relations, Indonesia-Portuguese Timor.”
11. NAA, Australian Consulate, Dili, 20 October 1959, A1838 3006/4/3 “International relations: Indonesia and Portuguese Timor.”
12. NAA, memo by F.J.A. Whittaker, Australian Consulate, Dili. A1838, 3006/4/3 Part I, “International relations: Indonesia and Portuguese Timor.”
13. ANTT, PIDE/DGS C(1) 2 GU Timor, “Gabinete do Ultramar-Timor,” 7 October 1969.
14. ANTT, PIDE/DGS, “Timoreense” 15. 07A.
15. *ibid*
16. *ibid*
17. *ibid*
18. *ibid*
19. *ibid*
20. cf. ANTT, PIDE/DGS, “Timoreense” 15.07A.
21. cf. ANTT, PIDE/DGS, “Timoreense” 15.07A.
22. ANTT, PIDE/DGS, Luanda, 23 September 1965.
23. Processo 25/60 in ANTT, PIDE/DGS, “Timoreense” 15.07A.
24. ANTT, PIDE/DGS, “Timoreense” 15.07A.
25. ANTT, PIDE/DGS, “Timoreense” 15.07A, 13 October 1963.
26. ANTT, PIDE/DGS, AOS/CO/UL-32A-8, “Memorandum o Acontecimento em Timor em 1959.”
27. *ibid*.
28. *Publico*, 4 January 1996.