
CONVERTING TETUN: COLONIAL MISSIONARIES' CONCEPTUAL MAPPING IN THE TIMORESE COSMOLOGY AND SOME LOCAL RESPONSES, 1874–1937

Kisho Tsuchiya

This paper studies Catholic missionaries' epistemological attitudes to Tetun language and Timorese culture, on the one hand, and some Timorese reactions, on the other hand, from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s. Tetun is one of the many languages on the Timor Island; indeed, Tetun is considered a kind of lingua franca of the Timorese. Here I focus on the narrowness of the Western interpretation of “*lulik*” (sacred objects, idol worship) and trace the linguistic construction of the Timorese as “gentiles,” an inferior class in colonial society.¹ The concept of *lulik*—like caste in India—has become for many in East Timorese Studies the category through which all

Kisho Tsuchiya is a postdoctoral fellow in the history department, National University of Singapore. An early version of this paper was presented at the Association for Asian Studies' Timor-Leste Studies Initiative 2017 pre-conference workshop, sponsored by the Southeast Asia Council's Indonesia and Timor-Leste Studies Committee, at Sheraton Centre Hotel, Toronto, March 16, 2017. Later it was selected for the Pattana Kitiarsa Best Student Paper Prize by the Southeast Asia Council, Association for Asian Studies. A Japanese version was published as *Porutogaruryou Timor niokeru 19 seiki kouhan kara 20 seiki shotou no senkyou tekisuto no Tetungoyaku—seiyouchuushinshugi teki goyaku to sono shakaiteki/gakumonteki eikyou* -. *Tounanajiakenkyuu* 55, 2 (2018): 139–68

¹ “*Lulik*” in Tetun “... refers to a whole range of objects, places, topographic features, categories of food, types of people, forms of knowledge, behavioural practices, architectural structures, and periods of time”; see Andrew McWilliam, Lisa Palmer, and Christopher Shepherd, “*Lulik* Encounters and Cultural Frictions in East Timor: Past and Present,” *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 25, 3 (2014): 304.

types of negative and positive interpretations of Timorese-ness came into being. I argue here that the image of the Timorese as idol worshippers was a result of missionaries' imagination of the Timorese "other," which was based on a Europe-centric (mis)translation of Timorese culture.

Interestingly, the missionaries found southeastern Tetun—not the Dili vernacular of the Portuguese colonial capital, nor the Belunese vernacular in the Dutch territory—more conducive to explaining Christianity and colonial relations. The hierarchical structure that supported the superiority of the Iberians over the inferior Timorese was linguistically established only after honorific expressions of southeastern Tetun were mastered. Thus, I will show how religion, local language, and colonial identity converged as a result of missionary interventions.

There are three gaps in the available scholarship. First, existing studies assume a neutrality of the missionaries' linguistic activities, and thus the perpetuation of the missionaries' ideologies through language manipulation have not been critically examined. The linguistic sources examined hereafter—dictionaries, catechisms, Bible stories, and Tetun grammar books—have been largely ignored by historians and social scientists. Against this background, I examine European missionaries' concerted efforts to impose their prejudices and assumptions regarding Timorese culture and geography upon a Timorese language. I will also demonstrate the limits of such attempts by examining Timorese reactions to the missionaries, such as by answering the following questions: if Timorese inferiority was accepted by the Timorese people themselves, how were these differences in status defined by the Timorese language? If the Timorese rejected these hierarchies, how was this resistance expressed?

Second, there has been little effort to reconstruct colonial relations in Portuguese Timor through a philological/phenomenological approach. One reason might be because it is difficult to find pre-1950s Timorese sources that support a history of Timorese mentalities equivalent to that of Reynaldo C. Ileto and Vicente Rafael's works on the Philippines.² Borrowing some methods developed by these Filipino historians and William Hanks, my study aims to reconstruct Timorese reactions to Christianity and the missionaries through a study of the transformation of the Tetun language and the analysis of how anonymous Timorese collaborated with missionaries in producing their texts.³ I show that, even if the authors of the texts were European missionaries, they were not able to control how the Timorese interpreted and used those writings.

Third, and most importantly, this paper adds to the body of writings on *lulik*. This word has been strongly associated with Timorese identities by academics and the religious. The missionaries in the late nineteenth century negatively identified "*lulik*" as the Timorese religion, synonymous with "idolatry" and "*pomal*" (putting evil, any un-Christian activity). When naturalists of the nineteenth century and cultural anthropologists in the latter half of the twentieth century visited so-called "primitive societies" in search of humankind's origins, some authors paid attention to *lulik* as the

² See: Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979); and Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Quezon City: Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

³ William F. Hanks, *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

Timorese religion or the Timorese version of taboo.⁴ After East Timor—whose citizens are predominantly Catholic—gained independence in 2002, scholars and intellectuals reevaluated *lulik* as a pillar of an alternative Timorese identity that suggests an “essentialist nativism.”⁵ Geoffrey Gunn, a historian, interchangeably used the word to refer to the “essence of Timorese animism,” “sacred objects,” or “black magic.”⁶ For Josh Trindade, a Timorese intellectual, *lulik* meant the “core” of Timorese culture.⁷ Trindade further proposed to establish a “national *lulik* building” and to use the idea of *lulik* for nation-building. A more recent academic article on the subject defined it as “a potency that animates the environment and that is concentrated in specific sites in the landscape, in ancestral objects, and houses.”⁸

Aside from such usage as a noun, late-colonial Portuguese anthropologists, a secular dictionary editor, and structural anthropologists used *lulik* as an adjective meaning “sacred” and “prohibited.”⁹ In my view, it is probably closer to being understood as an older oral literature’s tradition. Such variances in the understanding of *lulik*, combined with its religious and politically charged usage, creates an opportunity to apply approaches drawn from discourse analysis to understand its layered meanings and its relation to the making of Timorese-ness.¹⁰

If we limit our focus to the usage of *lulik* as a noun, there is a traceable genealogy from the Portuguese missionaries to the Anglophone anthropologists. Margaret King was the first Anglophone anthropologist in the twentieth century who extensively discussed *lulik*. She defined *lulik* as “the Timorese religion,” and wrote as follows:

My first introduction to the term *lulik* had been from a mention of the word by Father Pasquale of Ermera, made as a casual reference to the worship of the crocodile and the swearing of an oath of blood-brotherhood.¹¹

“Father Pasquale” was probably Father Ezequiel Enes Pascoal, the editor of *Seara* (the church journal in Portuguese Timor), and the author of a book on Timorese fables,

⁴ See: Henry O. Forbes, “On Some of the Tribes of the Island of Timor,” *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 13 (1884): 410–15; and King, *Eden to Paradise*, chapter 14, “The Power of the *Lulic*,” 50–58.

⁵ J. Neil C. Garcia, “Nativism or Universalism: Situating LGBT Discourse in the Philippines,” *Kritika Kultura* 20 (2013): 57–60, <http://kritikakultura.ateneo.net>

⁶ Geoffrey Gunn, *Historical Dictionary of East Timor* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010).

⁷ Josh Trindade, “Lulik: The Core of Timorese Values” (paper presented in Dili at the Communicating New Research on Timor-Leste 3rd Timor-Leste Study Association Conference, June 30, 2011; and at the Creative Industry Conference, July 16, 2011).

⁸ Judith Bovensiepen, “Lulik: Taboo, Animism, or Transgressive Sacred? An Exploration of Identity, Morality, and Power in Timor-Leste,” *Oceania* 84, 2 (2014): 121–37. See also McWilliam, Palmer, and Shepherd, “Lulik Encounters and Cultural Frictions in East Timor,” 304–20.

⁹ For example, see: David Hicks, *Tetum Ghosts and Kin: Fieldwork in an Indonesian Community* (California City: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1976), 20; Rafael das Dores, *Dicionário Teto-Português* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1907), 160; and António de Almeida, *Contribuição para o estudo dos nomes “Lúlik (sagrados)” no Timor de Expressão Portuguesa* (Lisboa: Acad. De Ciências, 1976), 121–47.

¹⁰ The idea to study *lulik* as a discourse was inspired by: David Mosse, “The Politics of Religious Synthesis: Roman Catholicism and Hindu Village Society in Tamil Nadu India,” in *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis*, ed. Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart (London: Routledge, 1994), 108–26; and Julius Bautista, *Figuring Catholicism: An Ethnohistory of the Santo Niño de Cebu* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2010), 97–122.

¹¹ Margaret King, *Eden to Paradise* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963), 150.

legends, and tales, *A Alma de Timor Vista na Sua Fantasia*.¹² He was one of the few missionary-scholars who remained deeply preoccupied by pre-World War II colonial ideology, even through the 1960s.

Below I review the historical background of the Catholic missions in Timor and explore the unique role of the Medeiros Mission in the development of Tetun language and Christianity since 1875. My analysis then focuses on the first Portuguese-Tetun dictionary, the first Tetun catechism, the first Tetun Bible summary, and a practical grammar book—all of which emerged between the 1880s and the first half of the twentieth century.

Historical Background

Missionary activities in Timor started in the sixteenth century. Until the end of the seventeenth century, Timor was only an informal Portuguese settlement.¹³ The missionaries acted as spiritual leaders where indigenous Portuguese-speaking communities developed.¹⁴ Although we do not have statistical information, it is reported that there were converts in various parts of the island.¹⁵ Lisbon first sent a governor in 1702 with the hope of officially incorporating Timor into *Estado da Índia*. Having vested interests, however, the missionaries and the mixed-blood local groups called Topasses vehemently resisted the government's attempt to assert its authority. In 1769, the governor's expedition was surrounded by determined Topasses and was forced to resettle in a small village named Dili, east of the older settlement in Lifao (Oecussi). Henceforth, the Portuguese government's direct settlements in Timor were limited to the three port towns of Dili, Batugade, and Manatuto until the 1860s.

The situation was different in Lisbon. Due to the system of *Padroado*, in which the Holy See delegated responsibility for the church missions in Asia to the kingdom of Portugal, the missionaries were dependent on the institutions and the patronage of the Portuguese government. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the Marquês de Pombal expelled the Jesuits from Portugal as anti-church sentiment began to take root in Portuguese society. Church-state relations worsened again in the 1820s. In Timor, there was an expulsion of the religious orders in 1834.¹⁶ However, in 1875, Timor was included in the Diocese of Macao, and the mission in Timor entered a new phase. The bishop of Macao decided to send Fr. António Joaquim de Medeiros to investigate the situation of Christianity in Timor.¹⁷

¹² Ezequiel Enes Pascoal, *A Alma de Timor Vista na Sua Fantasia: Lendas Fábulas e Contos* (Braga: Barbosa/Xavier, 1967).

¹³ A. R. Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire, Volume Two: Portuguese Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 197–98.

¹⁴ For detailed information about the historical summary in the next two paragraphs, refer to the relevant sections in: Dom Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste 450 Anos de Evangelização, 1562–1940 1ª Volume* (Baucau: Tipografia Diocesana Baucau, 2012); and Hans Hägerdal, *Lords of the Land, Lords of the Sea—Conflict and Adaptation in Early Colonial Timor, 1600–1800* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012).

¹⁵ See, for example, Dom Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste 450 Anos de Evangelização, 1562–1940 1ª Volume* (Baucau: Tipografia Diocesana Baucau, 2012), 175–83.

¹⁶ Regarding Christianity in Timor during this period, see Belo, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, 309–50.

¹⁷ Belo, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, 355–56, 373–74.

Medeiros's impression was a pessimistic one. He reported a lack of European missionaries and wrote that the Timorese Christians were influenced by Indian and Timorese priests. He continued, "Due to this, Christianity declined to a point that it seemed there had never been a good missionary." He further added that Timorese Christians were engaged in "gentile practices" while Dutch Calvinist influence encouraged rebellions against Portuguese dominions. The Timorese continue to believe in animism, to construct *pomali* (sacred house), and to practice *barloque* (gentile marriage).¹⁸ The Church of Macao took the report seriously and sent a group of eight missionaries to Timor in 1876.

The intensification of missionary work in Timor paralleled Portugal's military "pacification" at that time. Governor Celestino da Silva (Medeiros's cousin) was a leading figure in the series of military campaigns that established Portuguese control by 1912 under the reign of Governor Filomeno da Câmara.¹⁹ The missionaries themselves were involved in the war and in the anthropological practices that accompanied it (such as collecting skulls and commenting on or writing about Timorese culture and religion). For example, Medeiros convinced the government to exterminate the group of D. Manuel dos Remédios of Laleia (in today's Manatuto district) for practicing idolatry in 1878–79.²⁰

In comparison with the colonial government's preference for "indirect rule," the missionaries were more inclined to pursue cultural assimilation. According to Ricardo Roque, the colonial government employed a "parasitism" whereby it engaged and interfered with Timorese traditions.²¹ Missionaries from the metropole found such mixing of European rule and Timorese traditions rather horrible. For a proper civilizing mission, distinguishing European values and Timorese culture was a priority.

In such a context, Fr. Manuel Maria Alves da Silva's report in 1887 was an attempt at making "Timorese culture" legible. He listed the "gentile practices" that he personally observed in Manatuto as follows:²²

- Polygamy: In Manatuto, sorcerers conduct ceremonies and practice polygamy under gentile marriage.
- Indigenous marriage: *Barlaque* is the dominant mode of marriage to create an alliance between the families of the groom and the bride. The house of the groom pays 30, 40, 50, up to 100 buffalos, or the same numbers of goats,

¹⁸ Belo, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, 358–59.

¹⁹ See: Belo, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, 413–16, 463–65; and Gunn, *Historical Dictionary of East Timor*, 159–90.

²⁰ This event appears differently in several works. The agreed fact is that a Portuguese force killed the *liurai* and his followers, although opinion differs whether the *liurai* was really against Catholicism and the Portuguese line of "civilization." Refer to: Rafael das Dores, *Apontamentos para um Dicionário Corográfico de Timor* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1903), 38; Dom Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, *Os Antigos Reinos de Timor-Leste: Reys de Lorosay e Reys de Lorothona, Cronéis e Dados* (Porto: Porto Editora, 2013), 146; and Ricardo Roque, *Headhunting and Colonialism: Anthropology and the Circulation of Human Skulls in the Portuguese Empire, 1870–1930* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 183–215.

²¹ Roque, *Headhunting and Colonialism*, 17–69.

²² Manuel Maria Alves Silva, "Diocese de Macau, Missão de Timor, Relatório," *Annaes das Missões Portuguesas Ultramarinas*, nº 2 (1889): 110–12, cited in Belo, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, 385–92.

spears, and weapons to the house of the bride (called *humânia* or *umane*). This alliance is called *feto san umane*.

- Worship of the dead: The Timorese believe in the immortality of the soul. However, based on this belief, they attribute unfortunate accidents and sicknesses to the works of their deceased ancestors, and conduct rituals for them.
- The ritual of war: The ancient priests (*ancião sacerdote*) conduct *pomal*.
- Superstition concerning sickness: If a Timorese falls sick, they attribute it to the works of witches or dead ancestors.
- Pact of blood: When they form an alliance, the two parties mix and drink one another's blood.

Fr. Abílio Fernandes's statements in the 1930s about European civilization affirmed conventional portrayals of Timorese:

To civilise the colonial people is to remove their cruel barbarism and their tyrants' despotism; is to raise the women from the condition of a commodity that they occupy among all the barbaric people, and place them at the level of men; to put an end to polygamy; is to remove the most grotesque and brutal superstitions from the land, that crawl toward degradation, assassinations, parricides, infanticides, conjugicides, mutilations; is to call for familial, domestic, social and economic situation inspired by the spirit of European civilisation; it ultimately means the fruition of Jesus Christ's doctrine.²³

For the missionaries, from Medeiros to Fernandes, Europeanization and Christianization were two parts of one project. Portuguese missionaries interchangeably used *pomal* and *lulik* to refer to "gentile" or syncretic religious activities. What was "sacred" for the Tetuns was deemed "evil" in the missionary perspective. Thus, to define *pomal* as *lulik* and remove it from the context of Timorese culture became a central theme in missionary discourse from 1876 to 1942. As a result, the Western concept of *lulik* came to represent Timorese idol worship, a feature that would be attached to the anthropological understanding of the Timorese.

Identifying the "Other": Da Silva's Confusing Use of *Lulik*

A pioneer of both Tetun studies and Catholic literature was Fr. Sebastião Maria Aparício da Silva. He belonged to the first generation of the Medeiros Mission from 1877.²⁴ He was later appointed as the representative of the mission for the southern coast, and established the Christian community in Soibada.²⁵ He served in Timor until the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1910. His major intellectual contributions were *Catecismo*

²³ Abílio José Fernandes, *Esbôço Histórico e do Estado Actual das Missões de Timor Refutação dalgumas falsidades contra elas Calniosamente Afirmadas por um Ex-Governador de Timor* (Macau: Typ. Mercantil de N.T. Fernandes & Filhos, 1931), 99–100.

²⁴ Belo, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, 361–62, 423–29, 565–66, 591.

²⁵ Frederico Delgado Rosa, "Sebastião Aparício da Silva," in *History and Anthropology of "Portuguese Timor," 1850–1975: An Online Dictionary of Biographies*, org. Ricardo Roque, <http://www.historyanthropologytimor.org/>

da Doutrina Cristã em Tetum (Catechism of Christian Doctrine in Tetun) and *Dicionário de Português-Tetum* (Portuguese-Tetun Dictionary).²⁶ His *Catechism* had been revised and used for several decades and the *Dictionary* was the first Portuguese-Tetun dictionary in history.

It is necessary to emphasize that the dictionary was not always an accurate repository of Timor's linguistic culture.²⁷ Bilingual dictionaries present the exchange of meanings between two highly distinct cultural worlds. As suggested by Gramsci, dictionaries often translate what is untranslatable. For example, in Da Silva's *Dictionary*, one finds the terms *anjo* (angel) and *diabo* (demon).²⁸ These words did not have equivalents in Tetun. But the compiler decided to transplant them into Tetun because the concepts were critical for evangelization.²⁹ By 1966, when the anthropologist David Hicks conducted his fieldwork, the word "*diabo*" (demon) was already being used by villagers in Viqueque to mean "*rai-nain*," or nature-spirits, which were believed by the villagers to cause disasters.³⁰ Another example is the term "*convertido*" (converted).³¹ The 1889 dictionary listed the Tetun translations as "*fila oná*" (returned already) and "*ba di'ac*" (going to good). However, these usages did not take root among Tetun speakers and they were forgotten. Today they use "*tama*" (enter) to mean "converting one's religion" and "*sarani*" (Christian) as a verb to mean "get baptized."

To explain the structure of Da Silva's *Dictionary*, it was a Portuguese-Tetun dictionary, not a Tetun-Portuguese one. No Tetun-Portuguese dictionary was published by the mission until a colonial officer, Rafael das Dores, published one in 1907.³² This distinction between the two types of dictionaries is important; Da Silva's *Dictionary* is useful to find Tetun words to express Portuguese meanings, but not to find Tetun meanings. The dictionary's author very likely expected Timorese readers to learn Portuguese words, given that he included lengthy Tetun explanations of borrowed Portuguese words. Moreover, readers could not understand the introduction and grammatical explanations until they had mastered the Portuguese language. By and large, the primary objective of the *Dictionary* was to bring Portuguese Christian meanings into Tetun.

God and *Lulik* in Missionary Texts and Oral Literature

Like other missionaries of the time, da Silva had a negative attitude towards Timorese culture and religion. This tendency is evident from his *Dictionary*, in which he translated *gentio* (gentile, pagan, savage, uncivilized) as *timor* (literally, "Timor")

²⁶ See: Sebastião Maria Aparício da Silva, *Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã em Tetum* (Macau: Tip. do Seminário, 1885); and Sebastião Maria Aparício da Silva, *Dicionário Português-Tetum* (Macau: Tip. do Seminário, 1889).

²⁷ Theoretical insights about bilingual dictionaries in the next several paragraphs were impossible without reading Hanks, *Converting Words*, chapters 1, 5–7.

²⁸ Da Silva, *Dicionário Português-Tetum*, 34 (angel), 161 (demon).

²⁹ Another dictionary editor, Rafael das Dores, listed these two words as words introduced in Tetun after 1873. See Dores, *Dicionário Teto-Português*, 22, 27.

³⁰ Hicks, *Tetun Ghosts and Kin*, 25.

³¹ Da Silva, *Dicionário Português-Tetum*, 125.

³² Belo, in *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, states that Fr. Manuel Fernandes Ferreira (stayed in Timor in 1899–1910) wrote a Tetun dictionary. Nonetheless, the timing is not specified and no copies of this version are known to exist.

and *ema fuic* (wild people).³³ There are two levels of othering in this translation. *Ema fuic* is a word that lowland Tetuns used to refer to uplanders whom they considered “savage.” However, by putting *timor* together with *ema fuic*, the priest added a Portuguese perspective that regarded *both* the lowland and highland Timorese as “savage gentiles.”

Da Silva tried to distinguish, in Tetun, what was Christian and what was not. The following exchanges from his Tetun *Catechism* provide an example:

- Q. *Ema hakru'uk iha saka ruma nia oin sala contra caridade?*
Does a person who bends [kneels] in front of things commit sin against charity?
- A. *Hee nai. Ema hakru'uk iha fatuk ruma nia oin, iha ai ruma nia oin, iha be matan ruma nia oin, iha dikul ruma nia oin iha diman, ka surik ruma nia oin sei sala contra Nai Maromak, sei sala contra caridade.*
Yes, lord. A person who bends in front of any stone, tree, water spring, horn, spear, or sword commits sin against the Lord God and against charity.
- Q. *Ema halo buat nee hotu, naran sa iha Timor?*
In Timor, how do you call people who practice this in general?
- A. *Katak, haktuir lulik.*
[We] call it following *lulik*.
- Q. *Lulik katak sa?*
What is *lulik*?
- A. *Lulik katak, saka ruma ne'e be ema Timor rai iha fatin ruma, atu adora, atu fiar saka nee hotu bele fo isin diak, bele fo hare diak, bele halo batar toos, iha batar barak, ka hare barak. Ema Timor beik atu sae ba hatuda, halo estilo Timor, fiar mos lulik bele fo diak atu la bele mate.*
Lulik refers to things that the Timorese have in certain lands; and [that they] worship, and believe that these things can give health to body, give good sight, make corns lush and plentiful, or to see many.³⁴ Foolish Timorese wage battle, conduct Timorese ceremonies, and believe that *lulik* gives good [fortune] not to die [to be invincible].
- Q. *Ema halo buat ne'e hotu halo diak, ktuir Nai Maromak nia lia fuan?*
According to [the] Lord God's words, are the people who practice [*lulik*] good?
- A. *Lae. Ema ktuir lulik, fiar lulik, hadomi diabo, fiar diabo liu Nai Maromak.*³⁵
No. Those who follow and believe *lulik* love and believe demons (*diabo*) more than [they do the] Lord God.

In this citation, *Maromak*, the highest deity in the Timorese worldview, is rather uncritically adopted as the translation for the Christian “God.” On the other hand, it is

³³ Da Silva, *Dicionário Português-Tetum*, 240.

³⁴ The meaning of “or to see many (ka hare barak)” is unclear. Possibly he meant a supernatural ability to see what is normally unseen. The use of such awkward expressions in the first Tetun catechism indicates the low quality of the missionary scholarship of Tetun at the time.

³⁵ Da Silva, *Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã em Tetum*, 32–33.

clear from the context that *lulik* became synonymous with *idolatra* (idolatry) and *idolo* (idol). Moreover, *lulik* was associated with the “love of demons,” which was in opposition to the Catholic God.

In Da Silva’s dictionary, “*lulik*” and its variation “*luli*” appear in several ways. First, the priest used “*luli*” as an adjective, “prohibited,” while “*lulik*” was used as “intact” and “saint” once each.³⁶ Second, “*lulik*” was frequently used as a part of the phrase “*nai lulik*,” which referred to “Catholic priest” (I will discuss this usage later). Third, when “*lulik*” appears as a noun, it was always the translation of “*pomal*,” as in the following lines:

Quem trata dos pomaes = Ema tur hó lúlic
Who treats *pomals* = Who sits down with *lulik*; and

*Sacrificar aos pomaes carne e arroz = haránan éto ho náan iha lúlic*³⁷
To sacrifice meat and rice to *pomals* = to offer rice and meat in *lulik*

In this way, while *lulik* used as an adjective appeared as “sacred” and “prohibited,” the word as a noun appears as a translation of “*pomal*” and “*idolatra*,” pejorative words applied to un-Christian religions. Da Silva thus constructed a word to identify what the priests viewed as un-Christian features of Timorese culture.

It was convenient for Da Silva to use “*Maromak*” to identify the Christian God, because *Maromak* was a transcendent god who was not around. But the adaptation of an indigenous word for God’s name was not a universal policy of the Medeiros Mission. More than half a century later, in the 1960s, a Timorese priest, Fr. Jorge Barros Duarte, reviewed the names of God in Timorese languages for the church journal.³⁸ Duarte wrote that “*Maromak*” was the translation of “God” in seven Timorese languages (Tetun, Tokodade, Idate, Mambai, Bunak, Lacalei, and Habo) out of the fourteen languages known to the Medeiros Mission. The other names were “*Uci Neno*” in Baiqueno, “*Acai*” in Nogo-nogo, “*Datu Geme*” in Lamaquito, “*Uro Uato*” in Makassai, and “*Amo Deus*” in Galoli, Midique, and Nai-ma-a. Aside from *Amo Deus* (“Beloved God” in Portuguese), all the names were of indigenous origins. Being a Portuguese–Timorese *mestizo*, Duarte commented that the adaptation of the European name *Amo Deus* was an unfortunate choice.

However, *Maromak* (and similar gods with other names) had been worshiped as an indigenous god and he was also perceived to have a *lulik* existence. *Maromak* takes many forms in Timorese mythologies. Most often he is associated with light (*naroman*), and is believed to be a heavenly male god.³⁹ Mother Earth (*Rai Inan* in Tetun) and Moon (*Fulan*, or *Hula*) are sometimes said to be his wives, and in other cases

³⁶ Da Silva, *Dicionário Português-Tetum*, 5, 350 (*luli*: “prohibited”); 261 (*lulki*: “intact”); 385 (*lulik*: saint).

³⁷ Da Silva, *Dicionário Português-Tetum*, 4, 362, respectively.

³⁸ Jorge Barros Duarte, “Deus em Timor,” *Seara*, May–June 1960: 176.

³⁹ See, for example Wehali’s mythology *Language of the Earth (Rai Lian)*, recorded in Tom Therik, *Wehali: The Female Land: Traditions of a Timorese Ritual Centre* (Canberra: Pandanus Books and ANU’s Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, 2004), 244. There are rare references to *Maromak-inan* (Maromak-mother) in several origin tales.

“divorced.”⁴⁰ The significance of *Maromak* and Mother Earth could be reversed, depending on the context and ethnic groups involved.⁴¹ In the case of *Uis Neno* (which Vaiqueno speakers believe is the equivalent of *Maromak*), “god” was identified with the crocodile and water, sometimes with the fertility of the earth, and at other times treated as the “Lord of Heaven.”⁴² As such, *Maromak* was a god of many images with local mythological backgrounds. Although we can assume that some of the non-Tetun-speaking remote populations encountered the word *Maromak* as a Christian word through missionary activities, the word was primarily associated with local traditions. In this context, the missionary’s use of “*Maromak*” in phrases such as “false *Maromak*” and “one and only *Maromak*” might have sounded awkward to the Timorese in the early days of the Medeiros Mission.

In relation to the idea of Jesus Christ and the Trinity, we need to understand the implications of the words “God’s Child” (*Maromak Oan*) in Tetun. In Timorese indigenous polities, “*Maromak Oan*” was the title for the ritual (or symbolic) ruler who resided in Wehali, a village by the southern coast of Dutch Timor.⁴³ This village was prominent in precolonial Timor, and the Dutch conquerors called the ritual ruler “keizer of the Belunese.” According to Grijzen, a Dutch comptroller of the Belu regency in 1904, *Maromak Oan* was

too high to involve in political matters; he only sits, drinks, and sleeps. His faithful subjects (servants) will take care of other matters. His highest servant was the Liurai.⁴⁴

The word “*liurai*,” which is used as the translation of “king,” originally referred to the executive rulers sent by *Maromak Oan* in Wehali to other domains. The indigenous title “*Maromak Oan*,” however, was not known to Europeans until Grijzen reported about it in 1904.

From a local perspective, translation of *lulik* as *pomal* resulted in some serious consequences. In Da Silva’s dictionary, the descriptions of *pomal* = *lulik* included socially prescriptive practices and functions, such as “offering rice and meat in *lulik*,” “*makai lulik*” (master *lulik*), and “*mata dook*” (healer, fortune-teller; Tetuns distinguished *makai lulik* and *mata dook* from *buan*—socially unaccepted witch).⁴⁵ Thus, Timorese who were responsible for traditional ceremonies and medicine were suddenly put in a negative light by the missionaries.

In contrast to the Portuguese usage, the most common usage of *lulik* in Timorese oral literature was as an adjective, such as *uma lulik* (sacred house), *sasan lulik* (sacred

⁴⁰ See: Elizabeth Traube, *Cosmology and Social Life: Ritual Exchange among the Mambai of East Timor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 36–50; and Helena Bárbara Marques Dias, ed., *Lendas e Fábulas de Timor-leste: A Partir de Textos Produzidos por Professores Timorenses* (Lisbon: Lidel, 2009).

⁴¹ See: Traube, *Cosmology and Social Life*, 34; cf. Hicks, *Tetum Ghosts and Kin*.

⁴² H. G. Schulte Nordholt, *The Political System of the Atoni of Timor* (Verhandelingen van Het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, en Volkenkunde, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 142–43.

⁴³ Concerning the history of European and Timorese interpretations of Wehali’s authority, refer to Therik, *Wehali: The Female Land*, chapter 3.

⁴⁴ H. J. Grijzen, “Mededeelingen omtrent Beloe of Midden-Timor,” *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 64, 3 (1904): 22, cited in Therik, *Wehali: The Female Land*, 65.

⁴⁵ Hicks, *Tetum Ghosts and Kin*, 111–12.

object), and *fatin lulik* (prohibited place).⁴⁶ Another common expression of *lulik* is as a complement, for example, *asu mak lulik iha Oecussi, la bele han* (“dog is *lulik* in Oecussi, so [one] cannot eat [it]”). From this perspective, da Silva’s use of *ktuir lulik* (“to obey *lulik*”) could be read as “to keep the sacred untouched” or “not to violate what is forbidden,” rather than the Christian expression of “to worship idols.” Prior to the Medeiros Mission, the Tetun language did not have the idea of “idolatry.” Seen from this perspective, the missionary’s objectification of *lulik* contained a negative projection of the Timorese social order as a whole.

The Missionaries’ Presence in Tetun

Despite his intentions, da Silva was unable to maintain strict conceptual boundaries between European Christianity and Timorese *lulik*. The following part of his *Catechism* reveals how the Timorese audience forced the missionary to accept the conflation of the two meanings:

- Q. *Bispo katak sa?*
Who is bishop?
- A. *Bispo katak, Nai Lulik boot liu Nai Lulic seluco. Hodi Apostolo sira nia fatin, ukun sarani hotu iha sira nia rai, naran diocese, ka bispado.*⁴⁷
Bishop is the greater *Nai Lulik* compared to other *Nai Lulik*. He takes the place of the Apostles and governs all the Christians in his land, called diocese or bishopric.

Here, what da Silva meant with the word “*nai lulik*” were the Catholic priests and missionaries themselves. “*Nai*” means “lord,” and the literal translation of “*nai lulik*” is “*Lulik Lord*.” As we have already mentioned, this phrase was included in da Silva’s *Dictionary*. I was not able to confirm whether this word was used before the Medeiros Mission existed. But I can confirm that *lulik nain* was just a reverse order of the phrase, and “*makai lulik*” (master *lulik*) referred to pre-Christian Timorese clergy or saints.⁴⁸ It is illogical to assume that the Medeiros Mission religious proactively started to call themselves “lords of *lulik*,” because once they used *lulik* as the translation for idolatry, they must have desired to avoid associating that word with themselves. Otherwise, the distinctions between Christianity and “gentile practices” could be confused. Instead, it is more likely that Timorese Tetun speakers called the missionaries *nai lulik*, and forced the missionaries to use the phrase.

Moreover, an oral tradition in Tetun provides an explanation of the phrase “*nai lulik*.” It is a story about the first Catholic missionary who visited Timor Island. It emphasizes the missionary’s magical ability to pull the island (or to cause an earthquake) by means of a galleon.⁴⁹ At the climax of the story, the Timorese queen

⁴⁶ Refer to the usage of “*lulik*” in: Artur Basílio de Sá, *Textos em Teto da Literatura Oral Timorense—Estudos de Ciências Políticas e Sociais* (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, Centro de Estudos Políticos e Sociais, 1961); H. Cliff Morris, *Verse and Legends from Timor, the Land of the Sleeping Crocodile* (Frankston, Vic.: KITLV, 1984); and oral literature recorded in Therik, *Wehali: The Female Land*.

⁴⁷ Da Silva, *Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã em Tetun*, 14–15.

⁴⁸ Belo, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, 389–90.

⁴⁹ De Sá, *Textos em Teto da Literatura Oral Timorense—Estudos de Ciências Políticas e Sociais*, 90–113.

decides to surrender to the missionary, and attempts to kiss his hand to show her obedience. Then the following lines appear:

Houri hakbesik ha'u, tan ba ha'u ema lulik!
[The missionary screamed] Touch me not, for I am a *lulik* man.

Nune'e, sira tomak hateten:
Therefore, all of them [the Timorese attendants] said:

*Ita bot, na'i lulik liu ami liurai lulik sira.*⁵⁰
You, the Great, are a lord more *lulik* [*na'i lulik liu*] than our *lulik* kings [*liurai lulik sira*].

The orator concludes the story by saying, "The title *nai lulik* came from this story." The Catholic missionary's superiority over the Timorese kings was acknowledged in the oral literature. However, this superiority was based on the missionary's higher *lulik* quality in the eyes of the Timorese. *Lulik* appears here as an adjective, and the Catholic missionary is considered *lulik*. This oral tradition could be understood as a Timorese reaction to the missionary attempts at transforming Tetun. It was collected by Fr. Artur Basílio de Sá in the late 1950s. He was an ethnographer, but in the eyes of the Timorese orator, he was also a representative of the Europeans and the Catholic Church. The orator was telling De Sá, who was called *nai lulik*, why he and his colleagues have been called so, contradicting the *nai luliks'* idea of *lulik* as idolatry and *pomal*.

To conclude the analysis of Da Silva's works, we can summarize that there are at least two linguistic perspectives in the texts. The first perspective is the Medeiros Mission's stance on establishing Christianity as the religion of Maromak and relegating the terms *pomal* and *lulik* to mean evil. The second is the Timorese view of European missionaries as having the quality of *lulik*. In other words, the Timorese applied the word "*lulik*" to describe the foreign religion, whereas the missionaries themselves saw *lulik* as the symbol of un-Christian practices. The tension between the two meanings resulted in the linguistic confusion about *lulik* by later generations of scholars.

Early Bible Translation and Its Relevance to the Colonial Reality

The earliest Portuguese-Tetun bilingual Bible stories emerged in 1908. The author was Fr. Manuel Fernandes Ferreira, and it was titled *A Summary of Sacred Stories in Portuguese and Tetun for the Use of the Children of Timor*.⁵¹ Ferreira received his education from a seminary in Braga, and became a Jesuit.⁵² When da Silva was appointed as the vicar general for the mission of the southern coast, he was sent to Timor in September 1899. He served with da Silva in Soibada until the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1910.

⁵⁰ De Sá, *Textos em Teto da Literatura Oral Timorense*, 113.

⁵¹ Manuel F. Ferreira, *Resumo da Historia Sagrada em Português e em Tètum para Uso das Crianças de Timor* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1908).

⁵² D. Carlos Ximenes Belo, "Expulsão dos Jesuítas e das Religiosas Canossianas de Timor em 1910," *Agência Acclesia*, <http://www.agencia.ecclesia.pt/noticias/documentos/expulsao-dos-jesuítas-e-das-religiosas-canossianas-de-timor-em-1910/>

Ferreira wrote many booklets in Tetun. Fr. D. João Paulino d’Azevedo e Castro pointed out that Ferreira made an enormous effort to write these texts in the most “perfect” version of all the Tetun vernaculars.⁵³ For this purpose, Ferreira invited “good speakers” (*fallantes*) of Tetun from many regions to check whether his translation correctly expressed what he intended. From his literary style, we can assume that what he considered a perfect version of Tetun was southeastern Tetun, which anthropologists call Eastern Tetun, or Tetun Therik. Compared with the official language of East Timor today (or Tetun Dili), the Eastern vernacular retained older features. One such feature is grammatical complexity involving conjugating verbs depending on the subject. What was important for the missionaries was its sophisticated structure of honorific expressions. Ferreira understood that Eastern Tetun was a useful model to strictly define the hierarchical relationship between God and human beings.

Ferreira’s linguistic sources were his Timorese collaborators and da Silva’s *Catechism* and *Dictionary*, which were completed by the time of his appointment. The production of *A Summary of Sacred Stories* probably involved the following process: (1) Ferreira wrote the first Tetun draft based on the Portuguese version of the story and da Silva’s linguistic works; (2) Ferreira then recited the draft for the Timorese linguistic mentors to correct; and (3) after the Timorese mentors’ advice, Ferreira completed the final revisions. It was, therefore, a result of unequal, but repetitive linguistic negotiations between the missionary and his Timorese linguistic mentors.

Monotheism Expressed in Tetun

One of the European missionaries’ primary challenges was to establish the logic of monotheism in Timor where animism was the dominant paradigm. Ferreira’s Bible stories adopted Da Silva’s interpretation of *lulik* in this context. Ferreira’s first mention of the evil of *lulik* appears in the section following the flood in Genesis.

*Rai naué liu tiha, ema sa’e tan sa’e tan: sira hetoc raluha buat ne’e bé, sira bein ro sira na’in ranourin, radômi reci rai nia saçán, la ralo tuir Na’i Mar(omak) nia ucun-fuan, adora buat let, no mos buat ne’e bé sira duni ralo ha’e ralulic. Ha’a-foin sira ralo at ba malu, ralo funu, rodi radáu malu; sira ranoin de’i atu ralo buat at oioin.*⁵⁴

The flood dispersed, and the number of mankind increased. Soon they forgot the teachings of the ancestors, loved earthly things [*rai nia saçán*], did not follow *Maromak*’s law, and worshiped empty things [*buat let*] and what they made *lulik* [*ralulik*]. After that, they did evil things to each other, engaged in war, and plundered each other: they only thought of doing evil to each other.

Also, in Ferreira’s concluding section of the Old Testament:

*Cleur tiha ema ralia Israelita sira, ra’ac Judeu. Sira n’e de’i adora Marômac los: povos sira seluc tuir lulic, adora marômac la los; sira moris at liu, sira retan de’i rahu-at.*⁵⁵

⁵³ D. João Paulino d’Azevedo e Castro, *Os Bens das Missões Portuguezas na China* (Macau: Edição fac-similada Fundação de Macau, 1995), cited in Belo, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, 592–93.

⁵⁴ Ferreira, *Resumo da Historia Sagrada em Português e em Tètum*, 18.

⁵⁵ Ferreira, *Resumo da Historia Sagrada em Português e em Tètum*, 48.

Long after that, the Israelites came to be called the Jews. Only they worshiped genuine *Maromak*: the other people followed *lulik*, and worshiped false *Maromak*; they lived evilly, and found only misery.

In these sections, the religion of the Israelites is represented as a worship of genuine *Maromak* without the catalysis of *lulik*. But if *Maromak* is worshiped through *lulik*, it is a false *Maromak*. In this way, hostility towards *lulik* was retained.

In Fierra's story of the flood, above, "earthly things" (*rai nia saçán*) are described as the opposite of the heavenly God, *Maromak*. This juxtaposition expresses the transcendent aspect of the Christian God. In some Timorese mythologies, *Maromak* is said to be married to Mother Earth (*Rai Inan*); in some others, they are "divorced." Often, Mother Earth's ritual significance is greater than *Maromak*, the heavenly male god.⁵⁶ Thus, Ferreira devalued the Earth's religious importance and narrated a story in which the Earth is only a creature of *Maromak*, rather than his wife. This cosmological background in Genesis justifies the indigenized Christian theology that if it is mediated by *lulik*, the object of worship is a false *Maromak*.

Another example of the Portuguese understandings of *lulik* can be seen in how "following *lulik*" and "worshipping false *Maromak*" are said to result in violence, war, looting, indecency, and misery. It is reasonable to assume that such correlation was related to the Portuguese stereotypical view of the Timorese and their "traditional belief system." However, the missionary could not help using *lulik* for other meanings, too. When Moses was to receive the commandments from God on Mt. Sinai, God declared that the land is "*lulik* and sacred" (*lulik e santa*).⁵⁷ The insertion of the Portuguese word *santa* is redundant, but probably the author wanted to avoid describing the mountain only as *lulik*. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ's disciples are called *nai lulik*. In this respect, Ferreira did not solve the linguistic confusion also present in da Silva's works.

Maromak Oan Jesus, Father Caiaphas, and Governor Pontius Pilate

The Biblical characters in Ferreira's work were often depicted as if they were people who lived in Timor Island, even if they were explained to be Israelites, Romans, or from other Biblical communities. For example, in Genesis, the Egyptian Pharaoh has two titles. The first is *Liurai Egypt* (King of Egypt), a designation that Timorese audiences would also associate with an indigenous ruler in Eastern Timor.⁵⁸ His second title is *Ema bot*, literally "Great Man," but also the title of the Portuguese governor. Another example is how the *Liurai Egypt* consulted *ema dook* (witchdoctor, healer, fortune teller, or wizard) when he had a strange dream.⁵⁹ And Joseph, the son of Jacob, was sold as a slave, but by giving good interpretations of dreams, he was chosen by the *Liurai Egypt* to be the *lia nain* (lord of words) and to govern all the Egyptian

⁵⁶ Hicks, *Tetum Ghosts and Kin*, 21.

⁵⁷ Ferreira, *Resumo da Historia Sagrada em Português e em Tètum*, 39.

⁵⁸ Ferreira, *Resumo da Historia Sagrada em Português e em Tètum*, 24–27.

⁵⁹ Ferreira, *Resumo da Historia Sagrada em Português e em Tètum*, 26.

land.⁶⁰ In this way, Bible stories were rewritten for the Timorese audience using local terms to present the lessons and sacred geographies within local, Timorese contexts.

However, it is in the translation of the Passion of Christ where we see the interplay between Western and Timorese notions of the sacred. In the scene in which Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane after coming down from the Mountain of Olives, the characters are depicted as follows:

Jesus naré sacerdote ulun sira, catuas ro ema bot ruma, ro soldado sira ba, nalo lia tun ba sira na'ac: "Imi hodi suric no ai-dôna, atu mai cair Ha'u cba iha Templo, ctur iha imi let, canorin povos sira imi la cair Ha'u?"

Jesus saw the chief priests [*sacerdote ulun sira*], the elders, the big ones [*catuas ro ema bot ruma*], and soldiers [*soldado sira*], and directed his words to them [*nalo lia tun ba sira*]: "You brought swords and cudgels to capture me, as you do when you capture robbers? Each day, I was with you teaching in the temple, and you did not capture me?"⁶¹

In this scene, chief priests are called "*sacerdote ulun sira*." This phrase is the missionary's invention. *Sacerdote* is a Portuguese word for "priest" and *ulun* means "head" in Tetun. *Catuas* is the Tetun word for "parent" and "elder," and "*ema bot ruma*" could be translated as "certain big shots." *Soldado* is a Portuguese word for "soldiers." The illustration in Ferreira's book that accompanies this scene clearly depicts Jesus's antagonists as ethnic European. These factors lead the readers to imagine that Jesus was praying in the mountain and was arrested by people from the colonial city center. The villains were the city-dwelling locals (*catuas*, *ema bot ruma*, and *soldado sira*) led by the European priests (*sacerdotes ulun sira*), and soldiers (*soldado*).

In comparison to his antagonists, Jesus is depicted as Timorese-like, a native. After Jesus was arrested, Caiaphas, the high priest, interrogated Jesus. "Are you the Christ, the Son of the most beautiful Maromak, or not?" (*o Christo duni, Maromak cmanec liu nia Oan, e lae*). Then, Jesus replies:

*"Tebes, Ha'u Christo duni, nu'udar imi heçuc. Ne'e-dumi Ha'u keçuc los ba imi, lora ida imi sei haré Maromak Oan nalo-an mane, tur iha calohan fohon, nodi cbat ua'in liu, Maromak Aman narai ba Nia, mai nicas fali iha rai, atu nalo justiça ba ema tomac sira hahaloc."*⁶²

True, I am the genuine Christ as you say. I will truly tell you, that one day you will see *Maromak Oan* [the Small Bright One], who became a man, go up to the top of the clouds, and take great power, and *Maromak Aman* [the Bright Father] will go down toward him, return to the land, and give justice [*justiça*] to all the people's doings.

Upon hearing these words, Caiaphas suggested that Jesus should be executed. As we already learned, *Maromak Oan* meant the ritual ruler of Wehali, whose authority was supposedly the highest in precolonial Timor. In this version of the Bible summary, Jesus is considered blasphemous because he insists that he is *Maromak Oan*, and is

⁶⁰ Ferreira, *Resumo da Historia Sagrada em Português e em Tètum*, 27–28.

⁶¹ Ferreira, *Resumo da Historia Sagrada em Português e em Tètum*, 100.

⁶² Ferreira, *Resumo da Historia Sagrada em Português e em Tètum*, 101–2.

equal to *Maromak Aman*, i.e., God the Father. Thus, Jesus claims the highest place in both Christian and Timorese mythologies.

After his interrogation by Caiaphas, Jesus is brought in front of Pontius Pilate. In this scene, Pilate's title is *Embót*.⁶³ In colonial usage, this term referred to Portuguese governors. It, therefore, helps the reader to see the parallels between the Roman occupation of Judea and the Portuguese colonization of Timor. Now, Jesus, who claimed the title of an indigenous ritual ruler, is interrogated by *Embót* Pilate, the foreign occupier. Another development follows:

Pilatos neçuc: Ne'e-duni o liurai? Jesus nalo lia tun na'ac: Tebes duni; hau, liurai nu'udar o meçuc. Ha'u cmai iha rai atu canorin lia los; ema ne'e be rona Ha'u lian, sei fiar Ha'u."⁶⁴

Pilate asked: "Is it true that you [o] are a *liurai*?" Jesus granted gracious words that: "Exactly; I am *liurai* as you [o] say. I came down to earth to tell true words [*lia loos*]: Those who listen to my words will believe Me."

In this stanza, *Embót* Pilate asks whether Jesus is a *liurai* (an indigenous king), and Jesus replies "yes." Also, "*lia*," the Timorese word for "word," implies "story" or "history," as *lia nain*, the lord of words, is a person who memorizes the origin stories, and *lia foun* (new words) means "news." Thus, when Jesus says, "true words," he also claims that his version of the story is the authoritative one.⁶⁵

Both Jesus and Pilate refer to each other as "*o*," a pronoun used to refer to a second person who is either socially equal or lower than the first. Here is linguistic politics to determine who is higher than the other. Against this backdrop, Ferreira uses the phrase "*Jesus nalo lia tun na'ac*"—meaning "Jesus granted gracious words"—to show the higher status of Jesus, the self-claimed indigenous ruler, over Pilate, the foreign occupier. However, at the end of their encounter, *Embót* Pilate was pressed by the *sacerdote uluns* (the high priests), and sends Jesus away to be crucified by the Roman *soldados*.⁶⁶ Despite his reservations about the execution, Pilate does not want to bother Julius Cesar, who is described as a Roman who became *Liurai* of Judea—a stranger king.

The translation of the Passion story could be read as an extension of the colonial reality in Timor and it possibly enabled a revolutionary perception of the situation. Jesus, an innocent man who performed miracles, claimed a Timorese authoritative title and was executed by the European-like high priests and the governor. Anyone with knowledge of local events in Timor Island would not have missed the parallels with the Bible's historical events. Wehali, the residence of *Maromak Oan*, was invaded by the Portuguese in the seventeenth century, then re-pacified by the Dutch in 1907, when its political importance declined.⁶⁷ However, its ritual significance remained until recent times. In Oecussi, the Horneys and da Costas, the *mestiço* families acknowledged by the

⁶³ Ferreira, *Resumo da Historia Sagrada em Português e em Tètum*, 104.

⁶⁴ Ferreira, *Resumo da Historia Sagrada em Português e em Tètum*, 105.

⁶⁵ This usage is found in Tom Therik, *Wehali: The Female Land*, 257–59.

⁶⁶ Ferreira, *Resumo da Historia Sagrada em Português e em Tètum*, 108.

⁶⁷ Gérard Francillon, "Incursions upon Wehali: A Modern History of an Ancient Empire," in *The Flow of Life: Essays on Eastern Indonesia*, ed. James Fox (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 248–65.

Portuguese as the *liurais*, acted as the rulers. Some Timorese, however, questioned the families' legitimacy to rule due to the irregularities surrounding the marriage-alliance tradition in the area.⁶⁸ In the 1870s, there was a persecution of Dom. Manuel Salvador da Costa Remédios, the "Civilized Liurai of Laleia," by Catholic missionaries who accused him of blasphemy. Given such histories, Ferreira's Bible stories must have been read in relation to diverse Timorese experiences of colonialism.

The missionary writings in Tetun were originally intended to communicate European Christian monotheism and its hierarchical order to local-language speakers. The Tetun texts from the Old Testament especially expressed such intention. However, during the process of translation, which relied on Timorese linguistic mentors, the original intention was dislocated. The project to establish the superiority of European Christianity was reversed through the Passion of Timorese. The translated Bible stories unintentionally supported the precolonial Timorese authorities, whom the missionaries and the colonialists wanted to subjugate.

A Grammar Book to Rule

Ferreira and da Silva left Timor when an anti-clerical Portuguese Republic was established in 1910. After this, Timor's colonial government managed to win the war against *Liurai* Dom. Boaventura's Manufahi kingdom and its allies in 1912—the last Portuguese colonial war in Timor. With the campaign of "pacification" completed, the missionaries silently began to come back to the colony. Fr. Abílio José Fernandes was appointed a Timor missionary, and he stayed in Soibada, where in 1925 he was nominated to be the superior of the Southern Mission.⁶⁹ By 1926, the expulsion of the religious order officially ended with the collapse of the First Republic. Fernandes was appointed the acting superior of the Timor Mission and was assigned to Dili. He officially became Timor's vicar general in 1932, and left Timor in 1938.

Fernandes wrote two important books and many articles while in Timor. However, he wrote quite differently when compared to his predecessors, in that his writings were intended for a Portuguese-reading audience rather than the local population. His first work had a long title: *Outline of the Timor Mission's History and Actual Situation and a Refutation of Some Falsities about Them Slanderosly Insisted by an Ex-Governor of Timor*.⁷⁰ This is the first history book ever written about the Timor Mission. The "Ex-Governor of Timor" that appears in the title was Governor Teófilo Duarte, who wrote that "the missionaries are sorcerers of another quality in the eyes of the Timorese." Until the time of Fernandes, the official history of the colony was mostly written by former governors and colonial officers, and for that reason the Timor Mission was presented

⁶⁸ My research notes, July–September 2015, based on a talk with a descendant of an indigenous *liurai* family in the Oecussi area. According to this informant's account, Horneys and Da Costas married daughters of the *liurais* of the area and thereby claimed their *liurai*-ships. However, in traditional *fetosan-umane* (marriage alliance in Timor), the wife-giver is considered superior to the wife-taker. Therefore, even if they took daughters of the indigenous ruler, such alliances did not convey to them a natural acknowledgement as the *liurai*.

⁶⁹ His biography is found in Belo, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, 570–73, 594.

⁷⁰ Abílio José Fernandes, *Esbôço Histórico e do Estado Actual das Missões de Timor Refutação dalgumas falsidades contra elas Calniosamente Afirmadas por um Ex-Governador de Timor* (Macau: Typ. Mercantil de N.T. Fernandes & Filhos, 1931).

in a critical light. Fernandes's history book might be viewed as an intervention to that history.

For the purpose of justifying the cause of the mission, Fernandes depended on a familiar colonial discourse. He considered the Timorese as "a child that would never reach matured age," and shared most of the European stereotypical bias about them.⁷¹ According to his view of history, the factors that civilized Timor—even if they were a minor contribution—came from the activities of Christian missionaries, not the colonial officers. However, such contributions were hampered by the government's interference in missionary activities. His book emphasized the missionaries' efforts to educate Timorese children through European and Christian ideas, an agenda that placed the history of the mission in a more positive light.

His second book was a Tetun grammar book titled *Método Prático para Aprender o Tètum* (Practical Method to Learn Tetum), published in 1937.⁷² The introduction explains that it was intended for new missionaries and colonial officers to assist them in directly communicating their ideas to the local population in order to avoid "vicious interpretations by the natives."⁷³ As the title and introduction suggest, the book emphasizes practical expressions in the colonial relationship, rather than being grammatically complete with comprehensive explanations. Fernandes was praised by the colonial government in 1938 for writing this book. According to the government bulletin, he "contributed to the Portuguese actions of civilization and colonization by making the local language far more accessible."⁷⁴ Colonial space-making, religion, and language converged here.

During Fernandes's service in Timor, colonial officers and the missionaries faced a new problem because Portuguese control of the territory was already complete. Now Fernandes sought to "improve" the Portuguese use of Tetun expressions because their credibility was often lost in front of the Timorese if they spoke it improperly. In this context, Fernandes's invention was to master the relatively easier Tetun-Dili and combine it with the honorific expressions in Tetun-Therik (Southern-Eastern Tetun). Mastery of honorific expressions was essential to reinforcing desired colonial social hierarchies. A section explaining the use of honorific expressions according to social hierarchies can be seen here:

"Hau hacara hateten ba ó ..." [can be stated as] "Háu ata hacara hasáe lia ba Ita-Boot."⁷⁵

"I want to tell you..." [can be stated as] "I, a slave, would like to humbly inform Your Excellency."

"O aman dehan catac o sei ba ..." [can be stated as] "Amo hatun lia catac o sei ba ..."

⁷¹ Fernandes, *Esbôço Histórico e do Estado Actual das Missões de Timor*, 15–16.

⁷² Abílio José Fernandes, *Método Prático para Aprender o Tètum* (Macau: Escola Tipográfica Orfanato de Macau, 1937).

⁷³ Fernandes, *Método Prático para Aprender o Tètum*, 2–3.

⁷⁴ Boletim Oficial de Timor, AnoXXXIX, nº2, (January 8, 1938), cited in Belo, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, 572.

⁷⁵ Fernandes, *Método Prático para Aprender o Tètum*, 26–29.

“Your father said that you will go...” [*can be stated as*] “The Lord brings words down that you will go ...”

“*O nia liman...*” [*can be stated as*] “*Ita-Boot futar liman ...*”

“Your arm...” [*can be stated as*] “the arm of Your Excellency ...”

All of these honorific expressions are only found in Southern and Eastern Tetun. In Dili, one may encounter such usage only in churches. The word “*futar*” in the third line is used to express the nobility of the superior person’s body parts and words. Such usage is found in da Silva’s *Dictionary*, but Rafael das Dores, the secular dictionary editor, reported that he “never encountered such an expression.”⁷⁶ Most probably, such usage of “*futar*” is an invention of the Medeiros Mission.

In the latter part of his grammar book, Fernandes presented numerous sample sentences and conversations to highlight the hierarchical honorifics. It is arranged according to social relations between “Equal Friends” (European and Timorese), “Female Master and a Cook,” “Female Master and a Laundry Servant,” “Female Master and a *Criado*” (servant), “Patron and a Landscaper,” and “Patron and a Horse Keeper.” Among these, the case of “Patron and a Landscaper” is a monologue whereby the patron directs the landscaper; it is not a conversation.⁷⁷ In “Female Master and a Cook,” the European female master threatens the lazy and talkative Timorese cook to make him work by saying “I will cut [out] your tongue.”⁷⁸ Even in the conversation between “Equal Friends,” Bernardo, a European, openly discusses his negative view about Timorese culture, while António, a Timorese, does not have an opportunity to defend his culture.⁷⁹

Fernandes sometimes borrowed expressions from the rural areas of Timor, and in other cases used the Tetun expressions created by the Portuguese settlers to reproduce his “ideal colonial hierarchy.” What he especially wanted European readers to learn was how to instruct the indigenous population. Thus, his grammar book linguistically constructed Timor as a place of inferiority and subservience.

Reframing Tetun Meanings

This paper examines the Timor Mission’s gradual mastery of Tetun and its efforts to impose ideas of European/Christian superiority over Timorese culture by appropriating Tetun words and concepts. The missionaries’ objectification of *lulik* as a noun as the translation of “*pomal*” and “*idolatry*,” that is, anti-Christian and un-Christian things, was reflected in their linguistic and religious texts. This added a territorial quality to the concept of *lulik* by anchoring it to Timor and calling it “Timorese religion.” Nonetheless, Timorese preferred to use the term *lulik* as an adjective that referred to one’s spiritual power, calling the missionaries *nai lulik* (lord *lulik*). Unlike the missionary’s view of *lulik* as “Timorese religion,” the oral tradition’s use of *lulik* did not contain any geographic specificity.

⁷⁶ Dores, *Diccionario Teto-Português*, 111.

⁷⁷ Fernandes, *Método Prático para Aprender o Tètum*, 214–16.

⁷⁸ Fernandes, *Método Prático para Aprender o Tètum*, 198.

⁷⁹ Fernandes, *Método Prático para Aprender o Tètum*, 191–92.

Another type of territorialization is found in missionaries' Tetun Bible stories. The Tetun Bible interpreted and devalued *lulik* as the collective religious culture of Timor. The Tetun version of Christ's Passion unintentionally legitimized local religious beliefs and society by associating Jesus with Timorese notions of high status and sacredness. By portraying Jesus as *Maromak Oan* and a *liurai*, the Portuguese unknowingly associated themselves with the Romans, who executed Jesus. In their attempts to translate the figure of Jesus into terms drawn from what they understood as "Timorese beliefs," Portuguese missionaries created a figure that represented both Christianity and Timorese spirituality.

Although the missionaries' translation project likely failed to meet its desired political objectives, the missionaries successfully brought certain Christian notions into the Tetun cosmology through their translation and reframing of the word "*lulik*." By appropriating Tetun words and concepts the missionaries were able to present European colonialism and Western Christianity as superior to Timorese culture. In order to present themselves as superior beings in Tetun, the missionaries had to speak like the Timorese authorities by accommodating Timorese hierarchies of power. Ironically, an available approach for the missionaries was to make themselves more *lulik* than the local authorities.

To clarify, my point is not to emphasize that the Timorese never used the word *lulik* as a noun. As Saussure writes, the relations between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and there is no such thing as the "right signified."⁸⁰ Instead, it is important to understand that when the word "*lulik*" was identified and used by missionaries (and later anthropologists), it was more likely to appear as a noun, which carried with it certain connotations about Timorese indigeneity. Indeed, both missionaries and anthropologists visited Timor to understand Timorese "religion" and "culture," and they added a geographical specificity to the word "*lulik*." Thus, "*lulik*" came to be understood as an essential part of the unique Timorese identity: a signifier for Timorese religion, Timorese animism, and as a core element of Timorese culture.

Timorese students at mission schools in the twentieth century encountered both Tetun religious texts and a secular colonial education. They lived through both colonial influences and Christianized Timorese cosmological worlds. Today, the Timorese population and academics abroad use "*lulik*" both as an adjective and a noun. The post-independence reevaluation of *lulik* as the cornerstone of Timorese indigeneity emerged when foreigners' and the Church's negative projection of Timorese culture was reassessed. This ongoing Timorese intellectual movement takes up the missionaries' objectification of "*lulik*" as a noun, and uses it to positively affirm presumably precolonial traditions of the Timorese. This "essentialist nativism" differs from the earlier Timorese reactions that incorporated the missionaries into the Timorese cosmology ("moderate nativism"). The missionaries' attempt at translating and expropriating Tetun is incomplete, and the contemporary syncretic linguistic situation reveals both the enduring impact and limitations of the Medeiros Mission. Interestingly, two prevalent notions of Timorese identities—Catholicism and indigeneity—originated from negative and positive interpretations of *lulik* based on missionaries' objectification of the word as the translation of *pomal*, i.e., "putting evil."

⁸⁰ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaue, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 67–70.