PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN IN TIMORESE SOCIETY

PERCEPÇÕES SOBRE AS MULHERES NA SOCIEDADE TIMORENSE

Alessandro Boarccaech

Professor at the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e

PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN IN TIMORESE SOCIETY

Alessandro Boarccaech[*]

Abstract: This article analyses some of the perceptions of women in the Timorese society. To organize the discussion, this article is divided into three parts. In the first part, I describe an activity conducted with civil servants, in which four curricula vitae were handed out to two women and two men. They were asked to choose the one that presented the best qualifications for the position of a director in a project that would have social impact. In the second part, I analyse the results of a group dynamics study that was performed with 30 men and 30 women, in which they were asked to evaluate a hypothetical situation of intra-familial violence, as well as opinion research conducted with 50 women and 50 men on their understanding of domestic violence. In the third part, I describe some situations involving customary justice that is served, as it relates to violence against women. In both activities, it was found that there are general components (values, ethics, cultural norms), specific components (typical of men/women relationships), and singular components (each individual's characteristics) governing the meanings and the perceptions of women in society.

Keywords: cultural patterns; domestic violence; women; society.

PERCEPÇÕES SOBRE AS MULHERES NA SOCIEDADE TIMORENSE

Resumo: Este artigo analisa algumas das percepções acerca da mulher na sociedade timorense. Para tal, o artigo está dividido em três partes. Na primeira, descrevo uma atividade desenvolvida com funcionários públicos, em que foram distribuídos quatro currículos vitae (duas mulheres e dois homens) e solicitado que escolhessem aquele que apresentasse as melhores qualificações para desempenhar a função de diretor(a) de um projeto de impacto social. Na sequência, analiso os resultados de uma dinâmica de grupo realizada com 30 homens e 30 mulheres, onde foi solicitado que avaliassem uma situação hipotética de violência intrafamiliar, bem como uma pesquisa de opinião realizada com 50 mulheres e 50 homens sobre o que entendem acerca de violência doméstica. Na última parte, descrevo algumas situações que envolveram a justiça costumeira acerca de agressões contra mulheres. Em ambas as atividades, podemos constatar que existem componentes

gerais (valores, ética, normas culturais), específicos (próprios das relações entre homens e mulheres) e singulares (as características de cada indivíduo) que regulam os significados e as percepções acerca da mulher na sociedade.

Palavras-chave: padrões culturais; violência doméstica; mulheres; sociedade.

This article analyses some of the perceptions of women in contemporary Timorese society. As seen in the 2015 Population Census, there was a total of 1,089,672 inhabitants over the age of three, and 537,419 women living in urban (156,231) and rural areas (381,188). Timorese society is plural and multicultural. The territory that corresponds to East Timor today was first occupied systematically thousands of years ago by Malayo and Melanesian groups during their migrations in the region. However, throughout its history, there was contact between Timor and groups of various origins, such as Malaysian, Arabic, Portuguese, Indonesian, Chinese, Australian, and Japanese people, as well as people from various African countries, among others. As of 1999, after the referendum in which the population chose to separate from Indonesia and the consequent proclamation of independence in 2002, the country was also subject to the influence of the numerous United Nations workers and collaborators, non-governmental organisations, and countries that formed bilateral agreements with the young nation.

In addition, there are Timorese who were born in the countryside, in the capital city, or in other countries; have either completed university studies or are illiterate; and have either travelled abroad or have never left their communities. There are Timorese who have either light or dark skin, are economically stable or work for subsistence, and there are those who believe in a plethora of religious systems (e.g., Catholic, Muslim, Protestant, as well as in the existence of spirits of nature and the ancestors). East Timor also has communities with their own stories, myths, heroes, leaders, hierarchical systems, coexistence rules, and more than 30 linguistic variants. This is only to mention some of the most evident diacritical features of the Timorese population.

For this reason, when the noun "woman" is used in the singular, it constitutes a category of analysis. This does not mean that there is a single

definition of its meaning. The analyses presented here are not focused on the definition of the Timorese 'woman'; they investigate the perceptions that the Timorese themselves have of women.

This article is divided into three parts. In the first part, I describe an activity conducted with civil servants, in which four curricula vitae of two men and two women were handed out to participants, who were asked to choose the one that presented the best qualifications to perform the role of a director in a project that would have social impact. In the second part, I present the results of a group dynamics study that was performed with 60 people (30 women and 30 men), in which they were asked to analyse a hypothetical situation of intrafamilial violence, as well as opinion research conducted with 100 people (50 men and 50 women) on their understanding of domestic violence. In the third part, I describe some situations that are either directly or indirectly linked to the customary forms of justice regarding litigations involving women.

WOMEN, SOCIAL PROTAGONISM, AND LEADERSHIP

Thirteen civil servants who performed the functions of national directors and department heads in five National Directorates of three different Ministries participated in this activity. The participants, ten men and three women, presented the following general characteristics: they were all between the ages of 41 and 58, two were national directors and 11 were department heads, they had entered the public service at least six years ago, nine had been performing their current functions for at least three years (one started work two years ago, and three have been in their positions for less than one year), and all have university degrees, with three also having Master's degrees. Some of their tasks involved managing multidisciplinary teams, planning and controlling the annual budget, defining work aims and strategies, assessing annual performance, preparing the terms of reference for the officials of their respective departments and national directories, writing reports, and so forth.

When I requested permission to conduct the interviews, I introduced myself as a researcher from the National University of Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL)

who was conducting a study on the evaluation of professional curricula[1]. After they agreed to grant me the interviews, I explained that, from a hypothetical situation, they should select the curriculum vitae which exhibited, in their opinions, the best qualifications for a certain job vacancy. The curricula vitae of four candidates were presented for the position of project director of an international organisation that wanted to open an office in Dili. Some of the project director's tasks were to coordinate the work of a team composed of 26 professionals, to organise a 1.5-million-dollar annual budget to develop tourism and income generation in the country, and to meet with the ministries of the State, members of the national parliament, community leaders, and local entrepreneurs.

The structure and appearance of the curricula followed the same pattern. The information was displayed in the following order: personal identification (the names of the candidates were omitted), academic training, work experience, and personal skills. Curricula vitae A and B were virtually identical. Curriculum vitae A belonged to a woman born in the city of Dili who is 36 years old, has been married for 12 years, and has three children (a boy aged ten and two girls aged eight and five). The woman has also earned a degree in Business Management in 2005 from UNTL, a certificate in Social Development in 2006, obtained in Singapore, and a Master's degree in Tourism obtained in Portugal in 2008. She has also worked from 2008 to 2013 with the United Nations. Between 2014 and 2017, she worked for a telephone service company. She speaks Tetum, Portuguese, and English fluently, and is an advanced user of Excel, Word, and social media. She introduces herself as communicative, organised, having good leadership skills, and likes to work with others as a team. Curriculum vitae B belonged to a man who presented the same information as curriculum vitae A, but with some minor changes. For instance, he has three children (two girls aged ten and eight and a boy aged five), a Master's degree in Tourism, obtained in Portugal in 2007, a

[1] The initial contact was made with the national directors who authorised the research in their respective fields. The interviews, conducted between March and April 2018, were individual and occurred in their own workplaces. In total, 19 civil servants were invited, but 13 responded to the request. The others claimed that they would not be in Díli on the dates that I requested. Among the three members of the staff with Master's degrees, two were male and one was female.

certificate in Social Development obtained in 2008 in Singapore, and he has also worked for a telephone service company between 2008 and 2013, and the United Nations between 2014 and 2017.

Curricula vitae C and D belonged to candidates with less professional experience and academic training. Curriculum vitae C belonged to a man aged 36 who has two children (a boy aged 12 and a girl aged nine) and graduated in Business Management from UNTL in 2010. He did not have a certificate or a Master's degree, and in terms of work experience, he spent five years as an advisor to non-governmental organisations. Curriculum vitae D belonged to a woman aged 36 who has two children (a girl aged 10 and a boy aged eight), graduated from UNTL in 2012, participated in a few selections for public sector without having been approved, and who also worked as an assistant in a private law firm in Dili.

The participants were told that although there was no time limit to make their choices, it is important that they highlight the first curriculum vitae that they considered for the position[2]. All the candidates' curricula vitae were handed out at the same time. However, in order to understand whether the order of the curricula could influence the subsequent choices, the sequence A, B, D, C was randomly offered to four participants; another group of four participants received the sequence B, A, C, D; three participants received the sequence C, A, D, B; two participants received the sequence D, B, C, A.

It took the participants between seven and eleven minutes to analyse and choose a curriculum vitae for the job vacancy. Curriculum B was the first option for ten participants (nine men and one woman). The justification for their choices consisted essentially of stating that the directorial position of that institution would require technical and theoretical training, since he or she should monitor the work of many employees, the management of a large budget, and maintain a liaison with the Ministries of the State, politicians, and entrepreneurs. For this reason, curriculum vitae B displayed the necessary academic training and work experience that made it the best option.

In view of such justifications, I argued that curriculum vitae A possessed

---

[2] Every three minutes, I asked them if they had made their choices. This was done to introduce another stress factor during the choice process and encourage more spontaneous and automatic choices.

the same type of academic training and professional experience as curriculum vitae B. Among those who chose curriculum vitae B, six stated that they found a similarity in academic training and work experience. The remaining four participants read the curricula vitae to compare them. However, despite the similarities between curricula vitae A and B, the participants maintained their initial choices.

To support their opinions, they argued that in order to manage the project in question, it would not be enough to have good academic training and work experience, but it would also be necessary for the director to have certain personal leadership characteristics, to set an example of professionalism, and that he or she should be able to work nights and weekends due to the amount of work and meetings that would be required with political leaders and entrepreneurs. One of the participants argued that if the director was a man, it would be easier to gain the other participants' respect. Another participant stated that in the competitive world, men would not respect women. A third participant's comment went along the same lines. He said that women sometimes feel frightened and cannot confront others or demand that they comply with their orders. In three participants' opinions, women would be more emotionally unstable than men, which could cause some inconveniences at work. Seven participants added that because women have children and family obligations, they could not work late or on weekends very often, or even participate in work lunches and dinners. Of these, two participants stated that there would be "gender differences", giving as an example the alleged limitations women face for having children. Thus, in order not to risk making a mistake in their decisions, they preferred to choose curriculum vitae B. However, everyone recognised that curriculum vitae A was also "good", and in five participants' opinion, she could be selected as an assistant or vice-director of the project.

I made the same remark for the participants who chose curriculum vitae A (two women and one man) by questioning them on the reasoning behind their choices and the similarities between curricula vitae A and B. Their answers were different, but complementary. One of the women participants said that her choice was a way of "valuing women, (...) since there are several men in leadership positions." Another woman participant said that "working

with women is better;" since women are more sensitive and empathetic, and that "we have a different way of doing things." Both stated that a "gender policy" would be necessary, since women would be victims of "social prejudice" and "the patriarchal society," and they would find "too many difficulties" to stand out in leadership positions. A male participant replied that he chose curriculum vitae A because women would be more capable than men "to work with social projects," and they would know "how to hear and help people." From his standpoint, this would not be a "gender" bias, but a reality due to the differences between men and women. I also inquired about what they thought of the impossibility of women working late or on weekends. They replied that this was "true," since – as stated by one of the female participants – "women are the ones responsible for domestic services."

The other female participant who opted for curriculum vitae B said that both curricula were "very good" for the given position. However, she chose curriculum vitae B because she was a woman, and understood very well the difficulties that women face in work environments. She stated that in general terms, women and men have the same qualifications, yet women would be at a disadvantage since they would have to work from home. Additionally, co-workers – male co-workers and the remaining female co-workers – do not respect women or value their efforts or skills.

The justifications given reveal an essentialist thought on the *individual,* and a dualist thought on male/female and woman/man. There is, according to this type of thinking, a binary division determined by the anatomical and psychological differences between men and women. In other words, in addition to the genital differences, women and men have specific personality characteristics and skills that determine the social roles they play. The gender category was mentioned a few times as synonymous with women, or as a set of actions to reduce inequalities between men and women. Regarding the meaning of gender, since the 1980s, numerous studies (Scott 1989; Atkinson & Errington, 1990; Butler, 2004; and Strathren, 2006, for example) have suggested that the way people conceive of gender categories – and the distinctions between women and men – is not only based on biology, but is also part of a complex historical and cultural construction.

According to Butler (2004), gender, as a difference between men and women, would function as a *norm*. This *norm* must not be confused with a rule or law. This is equivalent to saying that *norms* have a contextual character subject to variations that are not always explicit, governing intelligibilities by enabling certain thoughts and behaviours to be constantly updated, re-interpreted, and normalised, thus defining what can or cannot be socially recognised. When regulating relations between women and men, the *norm* shifts the gender relationship from a possible genetic determinism to a socio-historical dimension and power relations.

After the participants justified their choices, I added new information. I commented that curriculum vitae D belonged to the niece of an important politician, a leader of his party, who was respected by everyone. Due to this, five male participants considered that perhaps she could also be one of their choices. For these participants, because candidate D's family was influential and her uncle reputable, she would be able to negotiate with anyone, the other employees would respect her, and she would be able to develop the planned projects. Another three male participants suggested that she could be hired as an assistant or vice-director of the institution. When I pointed out that she did not have the same level of experience and academic training as curricula vitae A and B, the comments were as follows: although she did not have as much experience as the other candidates, she had some, and since she came from a respected family, she could negotiate with the government more easily. One of the participants stated that because she did not have much experience, she would respect the project director and strive to learn from him and do a good job. On the other hand, because her uncle has important contacts, she could facilitate negotiations with political leaders and entrepreneurs.

These arguments seem to contradict their initial responses, in which the technical and theoretical training were the main reasons for their choices. This apparent contradiction may be viewed as a way of adjusting their responses to the increase in the complexity of information that they received. Although their reasoning had to consider new elements, their choices followed a discursive line of thought that would make the criteria choices less rigid and expand them to maintain the validity of their initial ideas. Decision-making processes

involve a limited number of heuristics and rules that have a reference point for the award of positive (gains) and negative (losses) values for each decision (Kahneman & Tversky, 2000). However, despite the apparent rationality, choices also involve emotional, instinctive, and unconscious factors that influence our decisions (Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky, 1982). The increase in information and heuristics to be considered in a given situation may make the decision-making process more complex, tense, and laborious. However, it is not necessarily accompanied by the acceptance of different logics.

After the comments were made by the participants, I informed them that one of the main objectives of the research was to understand some of the conceptions and logic that influence the way people perceive the work done by women and men. I also told them that according to their responses, I had the initial impression that there would be differences in their evaluation of curricula belonging to men and women. The male participants began to mention equal rights, and they were unanimous in stating that women and men have the same abilities. Among them, seven said that Timorese culture shows respect to women; four participants added that the possible differences between men and women would be complementary. For two participants, the existing differences do not mean that one gender was better than the other[3]. Women, according to three of the male participants, would be more obedient and loyal to their hierarchical superiors. Consequently, it would be "easier to maintain control" and "avoid conflicts", since women would follow the orders of their respective directors. On the other hand, the three female participants said that in society, women would be "discriminated" against, "devalued," and "disrespected." One of the female participants stated that "the Timorese culture says that women and men are equal, but men always have more advantages."

This logical movement in the argumentation is partly related to a *perspective view*. Participants can come to terms with and understand different points

[3] The idea of complementarity between the masculine/man and the feminine/woman seems to be very widespread in the Timorese communities. On the social role of women, empowerment and the complementarity in Timor Island (East and West) and other communities in the Southeast Asia see, among others: Traube (1986); Friedberg (1989); Mckinnon (1991); Hicks (2004); Strathern (2006); Andaya (2007); Kammen (2012); Boarccaech (2013).

of view, but this does not mean that they incorporate them or adopt them unconditionally. The preference for choosing men to the detriment of women may be less associated with a difficulty in recognising women's intellectual and leadership qualities, and may be more closely associated to the obstacles that this leadership position may pose to pre-established social stereotypes, cultural logic, and power dynamics.

One of the factors that should be highlighted in this relationship is the dimension of power. According to Foucault (2008), power does not have a specific place or pre-established owners, it flows in society, and is reproduced and disseminated in the relationships between individuals. Power, in this sense, functions as an oppressor and producer of subjectivities. To Butler (2004) – based on the studies by Foucault on power and sexuality – the conceptions of the characteristics identified for each gender would not be a mere manifestation of power, but they would be a specific type of power – with rules and assumptions – that would impact the construction of the subjectivities and the identity of individuals.

Bureaucratic, administrative, secretariat, and welfare work are seen as typically female. Activities involving more elaborate thought and complex decision-making are considered as typically male. An example of how this functions occurred when I was waiting in a governmental office room for an interview. There were three technicians working, and only one of them was a female. All of them had entered public service at the same time, and they performed the same function. When entering the room, the head of the department requested that the female technician submit some documents that he had signed to the National Directorate's office. During the interview with the head of the department, I asked why he had the female technician submit the documents, and not the other male technicians. After smiling, he said that he did this automatically and that he had not thought about it, but that in the future he would try to do it differently. When I spoke to the technicians about what had happened, they said that this was something common not only in their workplace but "in all departments."

On the other hand, women may be appointed to leadership positions, but this is due to the *capital* – as defined by Bourdieu (1987, 1982) – they possess for belonging to families of distinguished position in the social hierarchy. Initially, respect for their authority and acknowledgment of their professional

qualities would not be based on their personal merits, but on family ties that highlight the performance of family men and the level of connections they establish with other families. Although acknowledgement of the individual capacities of women has a certain influence, the power, prestige, social position, family relations, and friendship connections that the men close to them have would be considered first.

As I observed in previous studies, power, associated with leadership, is related to authoritarian behaviour, demonstrations of strength, the absence of doubt, a capacity to solve/avoid conflicts, and maintaining harmony in relations, albeit by using punishment (Boarccaech, 2013; 2017). Both men and women are subject to this kind of logics and, although men who do not meet these requirements may be delegitimised as representatives of this kind of power, women encounter greater social resistance to being recognised as the holders of this power in the first place.

Thus, when women adopt behaviours associated with this type of leadership, they are not necessarily trying to masculinise themselves in order to acquire legitimacy. This posture may be a way of incorporating the power narratives available in society, which were previously appropriated and monopolised by men. This dynamic poses a risk. For example, since women would not fit into these stereotypes, they may disallow themselves. On the other hand, because they try to meet the expectations of power/leadership – together with their personal characteristics and the way they deal with their own aggressiveness – they may take authoritarian stances that reproduce the prejudices that they criticise in men.

The comments made by the participants declared that women and men have the same rights and may both hold leadership positions. Nevertheless, in practice, behaviour and social relations would counter this kind of thinking. Although the discourse of equality or complementarity between men and women will not completely disappear, this is secondary to decision/action conflicts with social perceptions on the role of women in society. To resolve this *cognitive dissonance*, in which ideas contradict the behaviour and the very notion that an individual has of himself (Festinger, 1957), participants resort to generalisations on the difficulty that people have in respecting gender equality, and the need to comply with certain social obligations. Given the increasingly complex signs and heuristics that seem contradictory for conscious thought, participants activate

a *moderator system* to adjust their ideas to a set of social values and practices identified by them as legitimate and culturally contextualised.

Another interesting aspect is that the possibility of accepting a certain project is not necessarily based on proper planning and execution, but on proponents' personal connections. When participants commented that the curriculum vitae D candidate could be a "good choice" due to her family connections, I questioned whether this was an actual influence. One of the participants commented that in Timor "everything happens through family relations." To another participant, these kinds of relations are common, since "people only look after themselves, (...) they only help their family and friends." However, another participant justifies such a practice, stating that when people already know each other "it makes things easier, for they trust each other." Generally, the evaluation of a project appears to be based on interpersonal relations. In a personalised way, the type of relation and the level of established connections is evaluated, but not necessarily the quality, viability, or the importance of the project.

THE (DE) NATURALISATION OF VIOLENCE

For this study of group dynamics, three administrative posts in the city of Dili were chosen at random. At each administrative post, two *suku*[4] were chosen, also at random. During the first contact with the heads of *suku,* they were informed that the activity was part of a survey to understand how people perceive the differences between men and women. Each head of *suku* was responsible for inviting five men and five women of age among the members of their community who knew how to read and write. In total, 60 people (30 women and 30 men), divided into six groups with ten members each, participated in this activity. The meetings were held at the administrative headquarters of the *suku* between May and July 2018.

---

[4] East Timor has 13 municipalities, 67 administrative posts, and 498 *suku*. The administrative posts are administrative divisions within a municipality, which are composed of the *suku*, the smallest administrative division of the national territory.

In addition to the characteristics mentioned above, the groups were formed by people aged between 24 and 50[5]. Twelve participants had a fourth grade education, 31 had finished secondary education, 13 were going to college, four had finished college, and 29 participants claimed to perform labour activities, earning average salaries of USD 130,00 per month[6].

The activity consisted of handing out a worksheet with a small story describing a fictitious situation of intrafamilial aggression to each of the participants. After reading the story aloud, three (randomly chosen) groups were asked to justify in writing the husband's behaviour towards his wife. The other three groups were asked to write down their opinions on the husband's attitude. After completing this part of the activity, they were asked to write another answer again, but this time presenting their own opinion of the story (for the groups that had justified the husband's attitude) or justifying the husband's behaviour (for the groups that had previously written down their own opinions). The story was as follows:

> A woman wakes up in the morning and prepares breakfast for her husband and three children. She then cooks lunch and helps the children get dressed to go to school. After that, the woman takes the three children to school. Two of their children go to the same school, which is close to their home, and the third son, the oldest one, goes to another school, a little further away. After dropping off her three children, she goes to work. She is a saleswoman in a clothing store. At noon, she leaves work, picks up the children at school, goes back home, and heats up lunch for the family. After doing the dishes and leaving the children at her sister's house, she goes back to work. Late afternoon, at around six o'clock, she leaves work, picks up the children at her sister's house, and returns home. At home, she helps her children take a bath and prepares dinner. The food is the same as lunch. Her husband, who is angry at having to eat the same food again, becomes tense, and calls her lazy, saying that she won't pay attention to her family, that she is selfish, and that she is not complying with her obligations at home. Still agitated, her husband physically assaults her in front of their children. His wife is badly injured, and needs to be taken to the hospital.

---

[5] Among the men, 16 were aged between 24 and 35, and 14 were aged between 36 and 50. Among the women, 19 were aged between 24 and 35, and 11 were aged between 36 and 50.

[6] To maintain anonymity, the participants were asked to write down their age, level of education, sex, and if they were formally employed. Among the 29 participants who claimed to have a job at that time, 11 were men and 18 were women.

Regarding the justification for the husband's behaviour, the participants were unanimous in answering that he acted correctly because the wife did not fulfil her obligations to care for the family. In addition, some answers mentioned that in Timorese culture, women must respect their husbands because they are the heads of the family (28 men and 21 women); the woman had served "cold food," "leftovers," or "spoilt food" at dinner (19 men and 18 women). Some noted that it is the husband's responsibility to maintain order and educate the members of his family (15 men and nine women), and that even though the woman works outside the home, she cannot forget to look after her family (nine men and 12 women). Some replied that the woman was selfish and that she thought only of herself; thus, she needed to be punished (eight men and five women). Finally, some said that the woman's behaviour set a bad example for the children (six men and three women).

The participants also added elements that were not present in the original story to justify the husband's behaviour, such as the fact that he had to work and would arrive home feeling tired, and that his wife would not help him (11 men and five women). Others said that the woman's parents were elderly, and that her behaviour dishonoured the education they had provided for her (seven men and 13 women). Finally, some said that the woman did not respect her husband, who worked a lot, and financially supported the family (12 men and five women).

When asked to express their opinions on the story, 16 women disagreed with the husband's attitude, claiming that it was unfair (four times). Others said that the husband did not value the efforts that the woman made to maintain the family (six times). The respondents stated that Timorese culture is a culture of peace, not violence (five times); moreover, women and men are equal before God, and they should help each other (five times). Another nine women agreed with the husband's aggression, claiming that he was only looking after the family, and that sometimes punishment is necessary to establish order and respect. For five women, in Timorese culture, it is the husband's role to look after the family, but the problems could have been solved through a dialogue (of these, three claimed that physical violence should be the last resort). Among the men, 18 agreed with the husband's attitude, by claiming that he had to maintain the family order (eight times), and that he could not lose his wife's respect (five times). It was also stated that if his wife would not obey him, he would set a bad example for his children

(five times). For the seven other men, a husband should oversee maintaining the harmony and education of the family, but their problems could be solved through a dialogue, or the husband could make a complaint to the woman's parents. Only five men completely disagreed with the husband's attitude[7].

As we can see from the justification for the husband's behaviour, these justifications were based on the alleged cultural rules, hierarchical divisions, the maintenance of honour, and the search for family stability, as well as social preconceptions of the role of women and men in society. According to these preconceptions, women must take care of the household and submit to male authority. On the other hand, men would oversee controlling, organizing, and leading the family to maintain harmonious relations. Women who deviate from social stereotypes or do not comply with their alleged family obligations are subject to punishment. The type and intensity of the punishment would be the burden of the men who occupy the position of family leaders. Consequently, aggressive behaviour may be justified as a legitimate way of restoring order and harmony in family relations[8].

As a rule, when aggression is legitimised by cultural aspects to maintain harmonious relations, they have an educational and punitive bias. Behaviours that are deemed deviant or inappropriate are corrected through physical aggression. To be socially tolerated, such aggression must be legitimised and conditioned by several rules that are identified as cultural. This type of conception of violence, as already suggested by Foucault (2007; 2008), may be legitimised in certain contexts to discipline and educate, in which the body is a privileged *locus* where the brands of power relations and knowledge transmission are placed.

Respecting a hierarchy in which men take command positions enables them to assume that they have the right to use aggression for corrective purposes, not only against women, but also against their children and all other members of their families who are below them in the hierarchy. Women are also authorised to be

---

[7] The responses, in numerical terms, did not present any relevant differences between the groups that were first asked to justify the husband's behaviour and those who could freely express their own opinions.

[8] For analyses of violence, conflict resolution, and gender issues in East Timor, the following studies should be investigated: Hohe (2003), Simião (2006), Scambary (2009), Cummins (2010), Trindade (2011), Kovar (2012), Niner (2012), Boarccaech (2013), and Wigglesworth et al. (2015).

aggressive against those who are below them in the family's hierarchical structure[9]. This aspect of the Timorese social dynamic contributes to the aggressive behaviour involving logics that transcend relations between men and women. On the other hand, they present the characteristics that are typical in this relationship. There are general components (values, ethics, cultural norms, etc.), specific components (typical of relations between men and women), and singular components (each individual's characteristics) that regulate the practices and meanings of aggressive behaviour between men and women.

However, aggression as a legitimate, contextualised resource for the punishment of deviant behaviour is not exempt from contradiction and dissatisfaction. While certain violent behaviours may find support in social rules, these very behaviours, in a moral and ethical nature, may be disapproved by the people who participate in this social group. This may be seen in the different responses on the husband's aggression towards the woman. In addition, another indication was when participants were asked to justify the husband's attitude. Some female participants, through smiles and facial expressions of annoyance, displayed discomfort with the scene described. However, no participant openly contested the initial orientation. It is common sense that some social rules may legitimise certain aggressive behaviours but, from an individual's perspective, these same rules may be interpreted in different ways, even delegitimising such behaviour.

On 7 July 2010, by Law 7/2010, the National Parliament enacted a law against domestic violence. The meaning of domestic violence, the types of violence, and the legal protection mechanisms for victims were defined in the Law. Article 2, paragraph 1 of the Law states the following:

> For the purposes of this law, domestic violence shall be considered any act or sequence of acts committed in a family context, with or without cohabitation, by a member of the family against any of its members, when there is ancestry, namely physical or economic, in the family relationship, or by a person in relation

---

[9] In a study that I conducted with *Humangili* of the island of Ataúro (Boarccaech, 2013), I found that women are also feared because they have the ability to curse people, causing disease, misfortune, and even death. This is another dimension of power relations between women and men. If men use physical punishment to transmit and mark their hierarchical position, women may reach the body of men through the strength of their minds and by making contact with the supernatural.

another, with whom they had an intimate relationship, of which they cause or may cause either damage or physical, sexual or psychological suffering, economic abuse, including threats such as intimidation, harassment, aggression, or deprivation of liberty. (Jornal da República, 2010).

In June 2018, a survey using a questionnaire was conducted with 100 people (50 women and 50 men) who were randomly chosen. The following questions were asked: a) what does domestic violence mean?, and b) are you in favour of or against domestic violence? All participants said that they did not agree with domestic violence. On the meaning of domestic violence, the answers varied between the following responses: when a man physically assaults his children and his wife for no apparent reason (81 times); when a man uses excessive violence, causing physical damage to his wife and their children (57 times); when a man makes his wife and children do something that they do not want to do (32 times); and disrespect among the members of the family (13 times)[10]. Despite the approval of Law 7/2010, the awareness campaigns, and the creation of a governmental/non-governmental network to provide support to victims, the conception of domestic violence is largely related to physical aggression and men who disproportionately use either strength or their authority on family members.

[10]The persons who answered the questionnaire were aged between 20 and 30 (25 women and 26 men); 31 and 40 (21 women and 17 men); and 41 and 55 (four women and seven men). Of these, 28 women had finished secondary school, 15 were going to college, and seven had a college degree. Regarding the men, 20 had finished secondary school, 18 were going to college, nine had finished a university course, and three had studied until the fourth grade of elementary school. The responses per age group were as follows: a) physical aggression for no reason (81 times) was the response of 25 women and 16 men between the ages of 20 and 30; 21 women and 11 men aged between 31 and 40; and four women and four men aged 41 and 55, respectively. (b) Excessive use of violence with physical damage (57 times) was reported by 16 women and ten men between the ages of 20 and 30; 20 women and five men between the ages of 31 and 40; and two women and four men aged 41 and 55, respectively. c) A man forcing his wife and children to do something that they do not want to do (32 times) was the response of five women and seven men between the ages of 20 and 30; 12 women and four men between the ages of 31 and 40; and one woman and three men aged 41 and 55, respectively. d) Disrespect between family members (13 times) was the response of two women and one man between the ages of 20 and 30; four women and one man between the ages of 31 and 40; and two women and three men between the ages of 41 and 55.

Analysing the notion of domestic violence from the standpoint of the logical structuralist relationship between a signifier and a signified may lead one to believe that this concept, once defined and released, would result in a linear and automatic understanding. Thus, the difficulty in understanding in the Timorese context could be related to certain factors, such as: a) resistance to a concept foreign to the local way of life that would have been introduced by human rights, women, and gender movements; b) there would be little clarification of the population about what domestic violence means; and c) Law 7/2010 presents a broad and diffuse conception of domestic violence, which could cause confusion and misunderstandings.

However, when shifting the focus of the analysis, we may reach further conclusions. Thus, if we take the 'violence' and 'domestic' categories as signs, they would form a new sign by being grouped into 'domestic violence'. This sign (signifier) in relation to an *object* (the referent to which the sign refers), while represents a previously social defined meanings can be given different signified (*interpretant*) by those who observe it. The signified intended as a priori (from the relation between sign and object) does not exist in an ontological manner, and does not have an intrinsic, immediate relationship with their signifier, but are part of a set of narratives, views of the world, and socio-historically contextual intentions. Therefore, the signified associated with a certain sign may not be evident in other social contexts.

Another factor of complexity in this process is that a signifier leads us to other signifiers, and so forth[11]. This system, which involves signifiers and the signified, enables a vast set of *semioses* which may be contradictory and unpredictable. By nominal designation (spoken, written, standardised, legal), domestic violence may be perceived as a signifier that groups, concedes, and receives different sensibilities in the same category. Thus, in addition to providing new insights about domestic violence, at the same time, it serves as a reference point for existing perceptions and sensibilities.

[11] For an interesting debate on the processes of semioses, see Peirce (1977), Eco (1995), and Derrida (2008).

In an attempt to adjust the different heuristics and possible rational, symbolic, and emotional contradictions between thoughts and behaviours, individuals activate the *moderator system* to make sense of a certain idea or practice, thus minimizing internal conflicts. A frequent resource, as mentioned above, is to interpret or reinterpret its acts through a notion of culture that does not have a uniform meaning either. In some people's opinions, Timorese culture entitles the heads of the family – the men – to use physical punishment, whereas this would be a peaceful culture in other people's opinions. Physical aggression may be used as a man's prerogative to educate family members; however, for others, the heads of the family could use other resources without resorting to aggression. Aggressive behaviour may be seen as an indication of a loss of control and a man's failure to maintain harmony in his family. An apparent contradiction is that despite the fact that physical violence is disapproved of, the authority of who makes use of it is not denied if it is used within a certain context.

Aggression events are not always perceived as violent acts. To define whether a certain behaviour is violent, one must consider the context in which it occurs, the victims and aggressors perceptions of violence, the moral, ethical, and cultural set of laws and values governing the group, as well as their ideas of justice, the immediate, medium, and long-term repercussions of these events in their lives, on the people surrounding them, and the social context. This makes understanding acts of violence even more difficult, but it also provides the analysis with greater density, and works as a reference point (albeit neither impenetrable or infallible) to common sense, unconditional relativism, or the imposition of meanings.

In the particular case of Timorese communities, the use, submission, and legitimisation of the system of aggression (physical, emotional, psychological, etc.) is due to several factors that are interconnected. Some examples are: maintaining power relations; a not very flexible notion of the social roles to be played; the difficulty of mobility in the social structure, in which change and the 'other' are regarded as threats; intrafamilial and interfamilial dependence relations; a patriarchal and authoritarian view of society; the punitive conception of education; how violence is viewed (intensity, regularity, and forms of demonstration); the idea of social order and

harmony; the notions of body; the way they relate to their own sexuality; and the personal characteristics of each individual. In other words, the extension of the concept of violence in a general way, as well as domestic violence in a specific way could lead to changes in their vision of the world regarding the rational and symbolic logics they employ to codify their immediate experiences, as well as to changes in the social dynamic itself.

Dealing with this issue in that way implies granting the right to the actors on the scene (individuals, social movements, governments, and non-governmental institutions, among others) to express themselves and assume complexity as a phenomenon relevant to the study of relations between men and women. In addition, the understanding of the tension caused by the dialectic between the multiple *language-games*[12] may contribute to the planning of prevention and monitoring campaigns, and may make room so that individuals feel legitimised in participating in this debate. It may foster changes in the perceptions around domestic violence, in the logical and behavioural patterns of violence, as well on how people relate socially.

CUSTOMARY JUSTICE AND CULTURAL PATTERNS

In East Timor, the difference between what is commonly called customary justice (also known as traditional or informal justice) and the justice of the State (or formal justice) remains. Although the difference between the two systems may seem obvious (with specific representatives, rules, and places where they occur), in practice this relation is more nuanced. This is because the values, the world views, procedures, methods of punishment, the way responsibility is assigned, the religious affiliation, the agents responsible for representing these systems, among other factors, eventually mix up and influence each other. In addition, the expression

---

[12]*Language-games* is a concept proposed by Wittgenstein (1994). It suggests that the language is dynamic and flexible and the meanings attributed to something (words, objects, feelings, etc.) are directly related to our pratical experience, our motivations and actions, our social relations, the type of knowledge/information we have, the specific objectives of each communication interaction, the customs, rules and cultural codes of the group to which we belong, in short, to the *forms of life*.

'traditional justice' is not homogeneous, because the rules and the trial rites may vary between the communities (Boarccaech, 2013; 2017). In an interesting debate on the coexistence between modern and traditional institutions of governance in the villages of East Timor, Cummins (2010) suggests that none of these expressions would be precise, because they would depend on what we define as being formal and informal, traditional and non-traditional, and on how we understand the relationship between modernity and tradition.

In this study, I use these terminologies as an analytical category that is contextualised, permeable, and open to redefinition. This does not solve the difficulties and the semantic limitations; on the contrary, it is a way of recognising them as part of the analytical process. Thus, here the term customary justice (and its co-considers) is used to designate the justice system considered by its practitioners as ancient, inherited from the ancestors, with its own representatives in communities (despite presenting exchanges and influences with other systems outside the community). The justice of the State – despite its long, diffuse, and non-linear path that goes back to the Portuguese and Indonesian times – is the system that was structured and made official as of the Independence, in 2002.

Since customary justice occurs within communities, with no official records on the types of disputes, the sentences pronounced, or the frequency with which it is put into action, it is difficult to measure its occurrence. However, many studies suggest that several situations of violence and crimes committed in communities are judged on a local level, not reaching the State justice (Swaine, 2003; Simião, 2006; Marriot, 2008; Nixon, 2009; Cummins, 2010; Kovar, 2012; Boarccaech, 2013; Niner, 2017; among others). In the following section, I describe a few situations that I have witnessed which directly or indirectly allude to traditional judgment on women's behaviour.

In 2010, I attended a traditional judgement on the island of Ataúro[13]. After several months of unsuccessful negotiations between the heads of both families, the case of a young woman who had been impregnated by a man who was already

---

[13]In *Hresuk* language, spoken in the Makili village of Ataúro Island, this traditional judgement is called *Re Ukun*. It brings together the *Haha Opun* (those responsible for preserving the stories and community tradition) and *Lela'it Peraik* (the heads of the community's family groups) to judge conflicts in the community.

committed to another woman was being judged. The man claimed that he bore no responsibility for what had happened, because it was the young woman who seduced him. For that reason, he disagreed with the marriage that was being imposed on him, but in respect to the young woman's family he accepted to indemnify them with money and objects, as well as to assume the child's paternity. However, the traditional leaders of the community were inclined to force him to marry.

As a last resort to justify his arguments of having been seduced, the man removed a small sheet of paper from his pocket and handed it to a representative of the judges. According to him, the young woman gave him this piece of paper during a mass at the local Catholic Church, and it would serve as proof that she seduced him. On the piece of paper was written in Tetun, "you found love, but you won't correspond". After analysing the handwriting on the paper, the leaders of the community decided that the young woman was responsible for seducing the man, and therefore the only guilty party.

The young woman, in the leaders' opinion, knew that the man was engaged, but still seduced him. She was also responsible for damaging the man's relationship with his fiancée's family. Another aggravating factor is that a rumour started to circulate in the community that the young woman was not a virgin; thus, it was impossible to identify the father of her child. The man was acquitted, but on the grounds of respect for the young woman's family, he agreed to pay them compensation[14].

Another situation occurred in 2008. At that time, a non-governmental organisation received a 13-year-old girl who had fallen pregnant after being sexually abused by the local *Matan-doo*k, a healer and mediator with the supernatural world. According to her family, the girl stole a pair of sandals, and he said that she was under the influence of evil spirits. To perform a healing ritual, he requested some animals, bundle of corncobs and manioc. As part of the healing process, the girl was also required to spend a few weeks at the *Matan-dook's* house. Thus, the girl stopped going to school and went to clean up and perform household chores in his home. During this period, the girl was sexually assaulted and fell pregnant. The girl felt sick and fainted upon returning home. Next, she was taken to a local clinic, where the nurses concluded

---

[14] For a description and analysis of the case, see Boarccaech (2013).

that she was pregnant, and asked about what had happened. After listening to the girl's account, the clinic team reported the case to an organisation for the protection of victims of violence. The girl was later taken to a shelter, and a lawsuit was filed against the *Matan-dook*.

Since she had left the house and agreed to report the case to the police, the girl was reprimanded by her own family and banished from her community. The family claimed that she had dishonoured her parents – who would have already solved the situation – and disrespected the traditional rules that state that their representatives must deal with such matters. Approximately two months after arriving at the shelter, the girl received a visit from a police officer. The officer claimed to be on duty and part of the girl's family. During the conversation, the police officer threatened her in front of the shelter officials and demanded that she withdraw the lawsuit against her attacker. According to him, if the girl insisted on the complaint, she would never return to her community again, she would be viewed as a "damage" woman (*estragada*) because she was no longer a virgin, she would have to raise her child by herself, and no man would want to marry her. The police officer also said that the matter had already been judged by the local leaders, and the aggressor had already been convicted of indemnifying the girl's family. However, compensation would only be paid after the withdrawal of the judicial process. In this case, it may be concluded that the girl went from being the victim to the aggressor, since she allegedly disrespected the customs, rules, and hierarchy of the local power.

In 2015, a woman decided to divorce her husband after she found out that he was cheating on her with someone else. The husband refused to accept the separation by claiming that she continued to be the *Feto Boot*[15]*,* and that he had done nothing wrong. His wife did not give in to her husband's arguments, and demanded that he either end the extramarital affair or leave the house. Nevertheless, claiming to be the head of the family, the husband refused to leave his house. Given the husband's refusal to either end the extramarital

---

[15] Expression in Tetun which means Feto (woman) and Boot (great or, in this case, "the main") and used to designate the first wife who would have a hierarchical ascendancy in relation to the other wives.

affair or leave the house, the woman, taking advantage of a moment when her husband had left for work, moved with her children to the house of one of her sisters. After finding out that his wife had left his house, the husband accused her of abandoning the house and destroying his family. He went to see her and removed their children, taking them back to live with him.

The leaders of the husband and wife's families reunited to solve the conflict. After investigating the situation, the heads of the families concluded that the husband had no responsibility for the separation, since he had never stopped fulfilling his obligations of supporting the family, and he did not wish to get divorced. On the other hand, his wife would be made responsible for the current conflict, for she was unaccountable, and had left the house. They decided that the husband would not have to pay compensation to his wife's family because he did not fail to respect her and would always honour his commitments to his wife's family; thus, they gave him custody of the children. The woman was pressured by her own family to return home, and she was constantly reminded that she was the one responsible for the separation and the loss of custody of the children.

In 2013, a man was convicted and arrested for having committed sexual violence against a nine-year-old girl. He was a police officer. After the sentence was pronounced, he was expelled from the force and taken to prison. In the second week after his arrest, three prison guards led him to an isolated room and physically assaulted him. After one of the guards who did not participate in the aggression phoned the police, there were more than 40 police officers in front of the prison establishment within a few minutes. Heavily armed – several of them had guns in their hands – the police officers threatened to break into the prison if the prison guards did not open the main gate and release the former officer. The situation became tense, and it was only brought under controlled after the intervention of two State ministers. In the following weeks, several prison guards were stopped in transit checks when they were commuting to or from work (six guards had their vehicles searched, and 11 received transit fines).

According to information from the prison guards, the girl who had been sexually assaulted was the daughter of a friend of one of the prison officials. The official who coordinated the aggression against the former police

officer said that he had disrespected the determinations of traditional justice by refusing to pay compensation to the girl's family. Due to this gesture of transgression of the customs and disrespect for the sentence pronounced by the traditional leaders, the case was brought to the courts. However, the conviction of the police officer would not be enough; he should also be physically punished for the offence to the customs and rules of the community. These arguments were not put forth as a result of the violence suffered by the girl – this would have already been resolved by the local leaders' sentence – but by the police officer's offence, since he did not compensate the victim's family and disrespected the authority of the traditional justice system. I talked to some of the police officers who participated in that situation. To corroborate their behaviour, they claimed that it would be inadmissible to assault a police officer because this would mean to dishonour the entire institution. In addition, they said that although the sexual assaults were a crime, in the case of their former colleague, there was still controversy since the evidence was inconsistent[16].

Another example occurred in Ataúro in 2007. A man murdered a woman he had accused of witchcraft. According to him, the woman had cast a spell that made his son sick. Although he had asked her to remove the spell a number of times, she did not do so. The man found no other solution than to murder her by hitting her on the head with a piece of wood and then throwing her body off a cliff. His community did not formally reprimand him. According to the community leaders, the murder was an act of despair by a father worried for his son. As mitigating circumstances, they stated that the man had asked the supposed witch to remove the spell on several occasions. This man continued to live in the community without suffering any sanction or warning from the local leaders for the crime he had committed[17].

---

[16]However, this case has other factors that also influenced aggression. For example, the prison guard who had planned the aggression and the former police officer lived in the same suku, and they already had personal disagreements before the crime and conviction.

[17] In this example, there is a religious component that influenced the attitude of the aggressor and the community leaders (Boarccaech, 2013). These religious aspects are evidence of the multiple influences that may affect the decision-making process.

These examples are not presented in this study to question the customary justice system. I kept track of numerous other situations in which customary justice found interesting alternatives to prevent and solve litigation (Boarcacech, 2013). It must be noted that trials, whether they are from the State or traditional, are subject to formalities and rituals that must be observed. However, they may be influenced by judges' previously conceived ideas and certainties. The judges are not exempt from cultural constraints, tensions among various interest groups, and their own vision of the world.

To illustrate that this may occur in both justice systems, I quote a recent example of a judgment by the State justice system involving a woman. In 2017, a man asked his wife if he could have an affair with another woman. Due to her silence, he physically assaulted her, then forced her to have sexual relations with him. The woman then began to cry, and her husband assaulted her again. Due to her injuries, she had to be taken to the hospital for treatment. The case was brought to the Court, and during the trial, the husband admitted all the facts exposed in the case, and his wife confirmed the version of the story, including the sexual assault. Consequently, the husband was sentenced to pay a USD 7.50 fine. The prosecutors in charge of the case accused the defendant of a simple offence against physical integrity (Article 145 of the Penal Code), and found it to be a general instance of domestic violence (described in Articles 2.2 (a); 3 (b) and 35 (b) of the Law Against Domestic Violence). The State Attorney's Office and the Court of Justice did not consider – or mention in the case – that the crime was also categorised in Articles 2.2 (b); 3; 4; 35 and 36 of the Law Against Violence, which specifies the types of aggression, provides aggravating factors, and makes the sentence more severe. According to a *report* by the Judicial System Monitoring Program (2018, p. 2):

> (…) the prosecutor and the court were aware of the evidence of rape in this case, but the prosecutor and the court intentionally ignored this evidence because they consider rape in the family sphere as a common and acceptable practice in East Timorese society. This is justified through the prosecutor's final recommendation which stated that rape is an acceptable act because the defendant and the victim were husband and wife. (…) In addition the judge had no reaction to the relevant facts (evidence) about the crime of rape that occurred in this case.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, although we do not have precise statistics on this subject, it may be inferred that many situations of violence against women are not reported to the police, since they would be resolved by the customary justice system. The cases that can be extrapolated from the customary justice system and that involve lawsuits would be events in which agreements between families were not reached, or where the local justice system was not able to find solutions or control mechanisms that were sufficient to tackle the situation.

The customary justice system would conduct trials in which a crime/ transgression in itself is only one of the elements to be considered. In an analysis conducted to provide accountability and inflict appropriate punishment, the following aspects would be relevant: the context in which a crime occurred; the past history of the persons involved; the behaviour and discourse of the victims and aggressors who could have contributed to the crime; the domain they have on cultural codes; their respect for the rules and local hierarchy; the position they occupy in the local hierarchy; and the narrative ability to defend oneself and to hold someone accountable. Thus, the classification of a crime as a factor independent of the constraints that caused it to occur opens up space for the relativisation of the crime. This may alter the roles of those involved, and a victim may become the aggressor, the aggressor may become the victim, or they may simultaneously be both aggressor and victim.

Depending on the social status and the level of influence and relations that women's families have, they may be more vulnerable to partial decisions. Such vulnerability may be expanded to minorities and groups deprived of power. The work to reverse this involves creating control mechanisms, the possibility of acquiring the resources and questioning the decisions made. Most importantly, it involves creating a long-term strategy to diversify the societal vision of the world that may directly influence the educational and judicial processes, the way people exercise citizenship and civic participation, and what they understand as culture.

REFERENCES

Andaya, B. (2007). Studying women and gender in Southeast Asia. *International Journal of Asian Studies, 4*(1), pp. 113-136. https://doi.org/10.1017/S147959140700054X

Atkinson, J., & Errington, S. (Orgs.). (1990). *Power & Difference*: Gender in Island Southeast Asia. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Boarccaech, A. (2013). *A Diferença entre os iguais*. São Paulo: Porto de Ideias.

Boarccaech, A. (2017). Power, culture and social order: perspectives and manifestations in Timorese society. *Diálogos*. vol. 2, Dili: UNTL, pp. 29-50. https://doi.org/10.53930/27892182.dialogos.2.95

Bourdieu, P. (1987). *A economia das trocas simbólicas*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Bourdieu, P. (2002). *O Poder Simbólico*. 5ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil.

Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing Gender*. New York, London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203499627

Cummins, D. (2010). *Local Governance in Timor-Leste: The Everyday Politics of Mutual Recognition*. A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of Doctor of Philosophy. School of Social Sciences and International Studies University of New South Wales.

Derrida, J. (2008). *Gramatologia*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Eco, U. (1995). *Os limites da interpretação*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Evanston, 111: Row Peterson. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503620766

Foucault, M. (2007). *A história da sexualidade* v. 2: o uso dos prazeres. Rio de Janeiro: Graal Editora.

Foucault, M. (2008). *Vigiar e Punir*. Petrópolis: Vozes.

Friedberg, C. (1989). Social relations of territorial management in light of Bunaq farming rituals. In: Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land en Volkenkunde. *Rituals and Socio-Cosmic Order in Eastern Indonesian Societies*. Part I Nusa Tenggara Timur 145, n. 4, pp. 548-563. https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003246

Hicks, D. (2004). *Tetum ghosts & Kin. Fertility and Gender in East Timor*. Long Grove, Waveland Press.

Hohe, T., & Nixon, R. (2003). *Reconciling justice: "traditional" law and State judiciary in East Timor*. United States Institute of Peace. https://doi.org/10.1080/1467880032000151626

Jornal da República. (2010). *Lei N. 7/2010 de 7 de Julho* – Lei contra a violência doméstica. Parlamento Nacional, Timor-Leste.

Judicial System Monitoring Programme. (2018). *The courts need to select the appropriate provisions of the law and charge the crime of marital rape*. Baucau, 20 April 2018.

Kahneman, D., Slovic, P., & Tversky, A. (1982). *Judgment Under Uncertainty: heuristics and biases*. Cambridge University Press. Cap. 34: On the study of statistical intuitions. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511809477

Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (2000). *Choices, values, and frames*. New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803475

Kammen, D. (2012). Queens of Timor. *Archipel* 84, pp. 149-173. https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.2012.4367

Kovar, A. (2012). Approaches to domestic violence against women in Timor-Leste: a review and critique. *Human Rights Education in Asia Pacific*, V. 3. Dec 2012; pp. 207-252.

Marriott, A. (2008): Justice in the Courts, Justice in the Community: Bridging Timor's Legal Divide. In: D. Mearns (Ed.), *Governance in Timor-Leste*: Reconciling Local and National. Darwin: Charles Darwin University Press.

Mckinnon, S. (1991). *From a shattered sun*: hierarchy, gender and alliance in the Tanimbar islands. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Niner, S. (2007). The Reassertion of Customary Practices in Timor-Leste and the Implications for Traditional Handcrafts Production. In: Palmer, L. et al. *Exploring the Tensions of Nation Building in Timor-Leste*. SSEE Research Paper, n. 1, pp. 41-48.

Niner, S. (2012). *Barlake: an exploration of marriage practices and issues of women's status in Timor-Leste*. Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community, Globalism Research Centre, RMIT, Melbourne, pp. 138-153.

Nixon, R. S. (2009). Non-State Actors as Agents of Order: Suco Justice and Dispute Resolution Systems in East Timor. In: W. Binchy (Ed.). *Timor-Leste: Challenges for Justice and Human Rights in the Shadow of the Past*. Dublin: Clarus Press.

Peirce, C. (1977). *Semiótica*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Scambary, J. (2009). Anatomy of a conflict: the 2006–2007 communal violence in East Timor. In: *Conflict, Security & Development*, 9: 2. https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800902925184

Scott, J. (1989). Gender: a useful category of historical analyses. *Gender and the politics of history*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Simião, D. (2006). Representando o corpo e violência: a invenção da violência doméstica em Timor-Leste. *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, v. 21, n. 61. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-69092006000200007

Strathern, M. (2006). *O gênero da dádiva*. Campinas: editora Unicamp.

Swaine, A. (2003). *Traditional Justice and Gender-based Violence*. International Rescue Committee Research Report. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1440231

Traube, E. (1986). *Cosmology and Social Life: ritual exchange among the Mambai of East Timor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Trindade, J. (2011). *Lulik: The core of Timorese values*. Paper presented at the Communicating New Research on Timor-Leste Conference, Dili.

Wigglesworth, A., et al. (2015). Attitudes and Perceptions of Young Men towards Gender Equality and Violence in Timor-Leste. *Journal of International Women's Studies,* vol. 16, n. 2, January, 2015.

Wittgenstein, L. (1994). *Investigações filosóficas*. Petrópolis: Vozes.