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Abstract: *Tara bandu* is a traditional ceremony in Timor-Leste that enshrines a customary law with official recognition since independence, which generally applies to the spatial scale of the smallest administrative division of the territory (*suco*) and several years of timespan, rooting in tradition (*lisan*) concerning natural resources management and also relations among people. There is evidence related to the concepts of *adat* (tradition in Indonesia) and *pemali* (taboo) in Southeast Asia and Austronesia, suggesting that precursors of *tara bandu* should exist before the Portuguese arrival in the early XVI century. Yet, there was a subsequent diachronic process of hybridization of static iconic devices and other traditional Timorese practices with the vocalized Portuguese colonial *bandos*, evolving to a choreographic ritual with several semiotic dimensions: the sacrificial animist performance addressed to the ancestor's spirits and a supernatural environment (*lulik*), dancing and singing and other artistic traits, including Catholic rites, then focusing on signing written documents endorsing commitments. The main objective of this paper is proposing a semiotic characterization of the hybridization processes leading to current *tara bandu* ceremonies using Peirce's typology, rooting in the static and iconic device named *kero* (*sensu* Forbes) herein discussed. Contemporaneously, *tara bandu* is a salient event anchoring communities in defining participatory land use plans including agreements on property boundaries, rules of engagement and also interdictions and sanctions. *Tara bandu* is mentioned nowadays as an example and case-study of bottom-up strategies for environmental peacebuilding processes.

Keywords: Customary law; Portuguese colonial *bandos*; Peirce's classes of signs; hybridization; spiritual ecologies.

TARA BANDU: SOBRE A HIBRIDIZAÇÃO DE UM SIGNO

Resumo: *Tara bandu* é uma cerimónia tradicional em Timor-Leste que consagra um direito consuetudinário com reconhecimento estatal desde a independência, que geralmente se aplica à escala espacial da menor divisão administrativa do território

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(suco) e vários anos de escala de tempo, enraizando na tradição (*lisan*), visando a gestão dos recursos naturais e também nas relações entre as pessoas. Embora existam evidências relacionadas aos conceitos de *adat* (tradição, na Indonésia) e *pemali* (tabu) no Sudeste Asiático e na Austranésia de que precursores de *tara bandu* deveriam existir antes da chegada dos portugueses no início do século XVI, ocorreu um subsequente processo diacrónico de hibridização de dispositivos icónicos estáticos e outras práticas tradicionais timorenses com os bandos coloniais portugueses, evoluindo para um ritual coreográfico com várias dimensões semióticas: a performance animista sacrificial dirigida aos espíritos dos ancestrais e a um ambiente sobrenatural (*lulik*), danças e cantos e outras manifestações artísticas, incluindo ritos católicos, finalizando em assinar documentos escritos estabelecendo compromissos. O objetivo principal deste artigo é propor uma caracterização semiótica dos processos de hibridização que levam às atuais cerimónias de *tara bandu* utilizando a tipologia de Peirce, enraizada no dispositivo estático e icónico denominado *keru* (sensu Forbes), aqui discutido. Contemporaneamente, *tara bandu* é um evento saliente que vincula as comunidades na definição de planos participativos de uso da terra, incluindo acordos sobre limites de propriedades, regras de engajamento e também interdições e sanções. *Tara bandu* é mencionada atualmente como um exemplo e estudo de caso de dispositivo(s) ascendente(s) (*bottom-up*) contribuindo para processos de construção da pacificação social e ambiental.

Palavras-chave: Lei costumeira; bandos coloniais portugueses; classes de signos de Peirce; hibridização; ecologias espirituais.

Unlike the laws of physics, which are free of inconsistencies, every man-made order is packed with internal contradictions. Cultures are constantly trying to reconcile these contradictions, and this process fuels change. (Harari, 2015, p. 182)

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on *tara bandu*, a traditional ceremony present in Timor-Leste, a former Portuguese colony until 1975, now celebrating twenty years of independence after more than two decades of Indonesia occupation. We will be dealing with the hypothesis that the current ritual concept, design and performance, embodies a process of diachronic hybridization between native ancient practices and the Portuguese colonial *bandos*.

Research based on archeological, linguistic and cultural evidence, suggests that the earliest inhabitants of the island were Papuan-language speakers, whose groups have interacted with and even being displaced by Austronesian newcomers, first arrived in the region about 3000 years ago (McWilliam & Traube, 2011) and evidence concerning painted art rock in the neighboring islands of Kisar and Timor shows a shared iconographic system that suggests the materialization of a common ideology, extending back to the Neolithic ca. 3500 years ago and the influx of Austronesian settlers into the Wallacean archipelago (O'Connor et al., 2017). Yet, quite recent research focused in Wallacea, points out that ancestry in the southern islands also reveals contributions from Mainland Southeast Asia that seem to predate the arrival of Austronesians, suggesting that the Neolithic dispersals into Island Southeast Asia are associated with the spread of multiple genetic ancestries (Oliveira et al., 2022).

The Portuguese arrived in the island of Timor about 1514 (Thomaz, 1998, p. 594), or early 1515 (Leitão, 1948, p. 60), in their way searching for the Moluccan (or Maluku) islands famed for the profitable and strategic commerce of spices – cloves, nutmeg and mace – and began also trading sandalwood, yet with a specific difference: while the spices trade was monopoly of the crown (at least until 1539), the commerce of sandalwood never had such limitation, being open to private and foreign merchants. Previously, Javanese chronicles reported that the island of Timor paid tribute to the Majapahit kingdom in East Java (Paulino, 2012).

Since the middle of the XVII century, there was a relatively stable Portuguese presence in Timor, mainly in the territory known today as the Ambeno-Oecussi enclave. The first sworn in and effective governor, António Coelho Guerreiro, was appointed in 1701 in Macau and then hosted at Lifau in 1702 (Sousa, 2018, p. 124). This date is relevant concerning the subject of this paper because the Portuguese colonial *bandos* were ostensive acts of communication typically issued and ordered by the governors, and the term *bando* gave birth to the Timorese word *bandu*.

After independence in 2002, local actors revived and adapted ritual ceremonies, including *tara bandu*, to give new form to state-supported customary practices for forest and other natural resources protection and

management whereby communities swear under a sacred oath, often accompanied by animal sacrifice, not to eat particular foods or cut down specific plants or trees (Scambray & Wassel, 2018), which could also be broadly interpreted as a practice regulating a range of place-based social and environmental relationships (Palmer, 2016). A very recent and wide overview in anthropological studies carried out in Timor-Leste after independence is available and systematized according to different schools of thought and universities (Fidalgo-Castro, 2022).

The customary law *tara bandu* is recognized in *Lei de Bases do Ambiente* (Decree-Law No. 26/2012 of the 4th of July), Article 1 (Definitions) therein stating: [*Tara bandu*] it is a custom that is part of the culture of Timor-Leste that regulates the relationship between humans and the environment.'And, in Article 8, specifically:

The state recognizes the importance of all types of *Tara Bandu* as a custom that is part of the culture of Timor-Leste and as a traditional regulatory mechanism for relationship between humans and the environment around them³.

The *lulik* concept – considered a local term correlated with *taboo* and referred to what should be considered sacred, holy, forbidden and dangerous – is central to building social contracts between the Timorese, demanding that nature must be respected, and applies to sacred places and persons who perform the rituals and also to sacred trees that cannot be cut without asking permission (Guterres, 2014, p. 13). In Timor-Leste, and before that in Portuguese Timor, leadership and authority involved not only the paramount ruler (e.g. *dato* in Tokodede, *liurai* in Tetum) renamed *rei* and *régulo* in Portuguese language, but also ritual speakers (*lia na'in*: the owner/custodian of the words) and the guardians of sacred objects (*dato lulik*) among other (Kamen, 2015, p. 38).

Tara bandu, as it occurs nowadays, can be interpreted as a hybrid semiotic framework expressed as a choreographic argument (Casquilho & Martins, 2021) which originated from the local Timorese animist and regulatory practices concerning natural resources management associated with spirit ecologies (e. g. Palmer & McWilliam, 2019) and spiritual landscapes (Bovensiepen, 2009),

³ Translated from the Portuguese version.

anchored in the *lulik* concept and respect for the spirits of ancestors, but also embodying the Portuguese colonial bandos and Catholic rites, resulting in an original ritual performance with several dimensions and a specific binding effectiveness among those involved.

The main traits of this paper are: reviewing a brief account relative to the roots of tradition in Timor-Leste (*lisan*) and neighboring Indonesia (*adat*), including some relevant notes on the Portuguese presence and influence; sketching a semiotic characterization of the hybridization processes leading to current *tara bandu* ceremonies, using Peirce's typology; and mentioning the relevance of *tara bandu* as a binding procedure relative to the stakeholders, consecrating a customary law. This paper intends to contribute to the discussion of considering a future categorization of *tara bandu* as a case of intangible heritage of the lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) world.

SOME HISTORIC AND CULTURAL NOTES CONCERNING TIMOR-LESTE

Yuval Harari (2015, p. 54) mentions that, long predating the Agricultural Revolution, the first permanent settlements in history might have appeared on the coasts of Indonesian islands as early as 45,000 years ago.

Recent archeological findings report two new engraving sites from the Tutuala region of Timor-Leste comprising mostly humanoid forms carved into speleothem columns in rock-shelters, considered dating from the terminal Pleistocene and early Holocene in southeastern Wallacea (O'Connor et al, 2021), while in another text is mentioned the discovery of at least 16 hand stencil motifs in Lene Hara Cave, where evidence of human occupation is estimated dating from ~43,000 cal BP, considered consistent with the pattern found in neighboring regions of Island Southeast Asia and Australia, and recognized as part of Pleistocene painting traditions (Standish et al, 2020).

Also, at Laili Cave, in northern Timor-Leste, which is said to preserve the oldest human occupation trace elements in this insular region – earlier than the other early Pleistocene sites known in Wallacea with a sequence spanning

11,200 to 44,600 cal. BP – accordingly to Hawkins et al (2017), the vestiges revealed variability in subsistence strategies over time, which appears to be a response to changing landscapes and concomitant local resources.

James Fox (2011) points out that the terms for the kin categories that are used across Timor for the first ascending consanguineal generation (father, father's brother, mother's brother, mother, mother's sister, etc.), links the Austronesian social formations found on Timor to earlier forms of Austronesian social organization that are still present in Taiwan and western Austronesia. Regarding eastern Indonesia, especially Flores island, Timor, and the islands of Maluku, it was considered that this area preserved elements of the oldest forms of Indonesian society (Fox, 2004a), particularly in various encompassing systems of marriage exchange and in the reliance on complex dual cosmologies.

In Timor-Leste, as elsewhere in Austronesia, like Meitzner-Yoder and Joireman (2019) pointed out, landscape knowledge is connected to emplaced spiritual entities and this relationship enacts the strength and durability of land claims in customary land systems involving precedence, and this link is conceptualized as a concatenation of ties and relationships defined by reference to their proximity to a common point or origin (Barnes, 2011). The *knua*, considered an original settlement of a tribe or clan is also a main reference (e.g. Paulino, 2012).

Animism is considered to be the belief that places, animals, plants or other natural phenomenon has awareness and feelings, and so animists believe that there is no barrier between humans and other beings and they can communicate through speech, song, dance and ceremony (Harari, 2015, p. 61). Already Freud (1918, p. 128) had mentioned that animism is a system of thought and that the human race has developed, over the ages, three great representations of the universe: animist, religious and scientific, and that the first, not yet being a religion, contains its foundations.

When mentioning the Fataluku tradition, McWilliam (2011) reports that largely invisible spirit agents take on a variety of forms: they include the powerful *mua ocawa* (in Tetum: *rai na'in*) spirit owners of place; the *chat chatu* nature spirits that inhabit trees, springs and the sea; the bloodied and

vengeful souls of those who have died bad deaths (*ula papanlula ucan*); as well as the elusive and feared shape-shifting witches (*acaré*) who can entice and consume the unwary.

The notion of *rai na'in* in Tetum (or, for instance, *rea netana* in Naueti language) is understood as ‘source of the land’ or ‘master of the land’, and exists in varying forms throughout Timor-Leste and the Austranesian cultural sphere, holding rights to the allocation and apportionment of land and natural resources (Trindade & Barnes, 2018): for example, Daralari claims to emplaced authority are based on narratives of origin, sometimes associated to *tempu rai-diak* (tranquil time) referred to an idealized past and the existence of a stable social order regulated by the rules of *ukun* (authority) and *bandu* (forbidden).

Regarding Southeast Asia, one can read the following:

Despite its probable Arabic origin, the term *adat* resonates deeply throughout the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. Often defined as ‘custom’ or ‘customary law’, the word refers, broadly speaking, to the customary norms, rules, interdictions, and injunctions that guide an individual’s conduct as a member of the community and the sanctions and forms of redress by which these norms and rules are upheld (Sather, 2004, p. 123).

Ritual ceremonies and traditional authorities occur in other islands of Indonesia, albeit with some specific characteristics: in Savu (Sabu), a small island located between Sumba and Timor, the two highest-ranked priests at Seba are named the *deo rai* “lord of the Earth”, and *apu lodo*, “descendant of the Sun” (Fox, 2004b), and the word *rai* applies for a territorial domain like the same word in Tetum.

LULIK

The core of *lulik* concept concerns regulating human relations with divinity through the intermediation of nature and invocation of the spirits of the ancestors (Araújo, 2016). Trindade (2016) considers that the *lulik* refers to the spiritual cosmos that contains the divine creature – *Maromak* in Tetum, meaning bright, luminous, and considered originally a female concept – and

the spirit of the ancestors together with the spiritual root of life, including the rules and regulations that dictate the relationships between people, and among them and nature.

McWilliam et al. (2014) pointed out that the meaning spectrum of *lulik* goes far beyond the usual concept of ‘sacred and prohibited’, therefore mentioning, from an outsider’s perspective, that *lulik* and its equivalents in other local living languages in Timor-Leste – for instance, *tei* in Fataluku, *po* in Bunak, *falún* in Makassae, *luli* in Kemak and Nauti – refers to a whole range of objects, places, topographic features, categories of food, types of people, forms of knowledge, behavioral practices, architectural structures and periods of time. Also, regarding the Oecussi enclave dominated by the Meto ethnic group, Meitzner-Yoder (2011) mentions the term *nuni* as equivalent to ‘taboo’, or *lulik*, which sometimes serves as a mnemonic device for the history of family migration. In Oecusse, *Usi-neno* is the designation for the divine being, equivalent to *Maromak* in Tetum.

REMARKS ON THE PORTUGUESE PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE IN TIMOR

Ancient chroniclers of the XVI century, for instance the Portuguese navigator Duarte Barbosa, writing around 1516, said that the merchants⁴:

(...) sail from this city of Malacca to all the islands that are all over this sea, and to Timor, from where they bring all the white sandalwood, which among the Moors is very esteemed and very valuable (Barbosa, 1966, p. 203).

The map elaborated by the Portuguese navigator and cartographer Francisco Rodrigues who participated in the first voyage to the Moluccas, dates back to ca. 1512, though the sketch was presumably based in Javanese cartographic information (Leitão, 1948, p. 51), and is labeled saying “the island of Timor where sandalwood is born” (e.g. Casquilho, 2014).

⁴ Translated from the Portuguese version.

Ptak (1983), refers to the existence of earlier Chinese mentions to the island Timor, dated ca. 1250 and 1345, there being named as Ti-wu or Ti-men and, in the treatise named Tao-i-Chi-Lueh ca. 1350, a Chinese chronicler reported that in the mountains of the island grow no other trees but sandalwood, which was very abundant and the wood being traded in exchange for silver, iron, porcelain and fabrics. Also, Timor is mentioned in a Javanese poem dated from 1366 (Hägerdal, 2012, p. 15).

The chronicler of the circumnavigation of Magalhães and Elcano, Antonio Pigafetta wrote that, having arrived in Timor in 1522, he saw a boat from the Philippines (Luzon) carrying sandalwood; he also drew a sketch of the island albeit with an atypical triangular shape – as shown in Figure 1 – depicting several places, some of which we still can recognize the names.

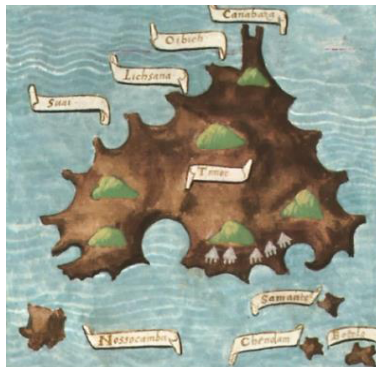


Figure 1. Old map of Timor, at the 1522/1525 manuscript of Antonio Pigafetta's diary (Source: Wikimedia Commons⁵)

Pigafetta also reported that the white sandalwood is found in that island and nowhere else, and pointed out:

(...) when they go to cut the sandalwood, the devil (according to what we were told), appears to them in various forms and tells them that if they need anything they should ask him for it. They become ill for some days as a result of that apparition. (Pigafetta, 1906, pp. 166,167)

⁵ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Old_map_timor_by_pigafetta.JPG

One could presume that the term “devil” is a European biased misconception of a spiritual reference, linked to the *lulik* concept.

The Portuguese presence in Lifau was stabilized since 1652/53 (Tavares, 2019, p. 24). With regard to the emergence of the Catholic religion in Timor, there are some salient and prior events: in 1556, friar António Taveira had converted hundreds of Timorese (e. g. Leitão, 1948, pp.11,12) and, almost a century later, succeeding to an incursion of a king of Makassar who retained about 4,000 Timorese captives for slave trading, a reaction induced the baptism of the queen of Mena in June 1641, followed by the king of Lifau and hundreds of people (Morais, 1944, p. 111). Yet, those prior events didn't entail a global adherence to Catholicism, since by the end of the Portuguese colonization it is estimated less than 30% of the population followed that religion.

Narrating from a Eurocentric perspective, Artur Teodoro de Matos (1974, pp. 34-36) wrote that the Timorese traditional religious beliefs system consisted of a set of superstitions, based on a mixture of fear and adoration for the spirit of the dead, materialized by stones, birds, animals and even streams of water or objects endowed with mysterious magical, beneficial or evil power, which they call *lulik*, what means sacred and intangible; also, the author reports that the rites of the traditional animist religion were designated *estilos*⁶ and consisted essentially of animal sacrifices accompanied by certain prayers, and were made in all serious occasions of existence, for example whenever the Timorese entered into a pact of friendship and mutual help with the purpose of joining forces to fight a common enemy.

Alfred Russel Wallace, the eminent naturalist, who stayed at Díli – the capital of the Portuguese colony since 1769 – and its surroundings for about four months in 1861, in his essay concerning the Malay Archipelago, identified the traditional cultural practices he had observed naming them *pemali*⁷ and equating with the concept of *taboo* prevailing in the islands of the Pacific (Wallace, 1890, p. 149). Also, in the late nineteenth century, the Portuguese governor Affonso de Castro (1867, pp. 315-317) links *pemali* with the sacred house – *uma-lulik* or *uma-lisan* in Tetum – mentioning that Timorese *estilus*

⁶ Then appropriated and expressed in Tetum like *estilus*.

⁷ In fact he uses the word “pomali”, but the proper designation in bahasa Indonesia is *pemali*.

are the set of rules established by tradition and observed by communities of the island. The Tetum word *estilu*, adapted from the Portuguese word *estilo* (meaning style), is referred to traditional ceremonies incorporating a ritual sacrifice, associated with the concepts of *lisan* and *ukur* relative to tradition and traditional practices (Costa, 2000, p. 230), what can be correlated with the term *adat* usual in neighboring Indonesian islands, like in the island Flores, associated with diarchic concepts of governance and dual cosmologies (e.g. Viola, 2013, p. 16). In addition, Boarccaech (2020) mentions that *lisan* has a wide and fluid spectrum meaning, being applied to places and objects and for identifying the sacred and the profane, to differentiate people and their families and, at the same time, to refer to the extended family and what connects people to each other in the same group.

TOWARDS A SEMIOTIC CHARACTERIZATION OF TARA BANDU

Tara bandu is an expression in Tetum language – considered *lingua franca* and co-official, among about fifteen to twenty local languages in Timor-Leste (e. g. Taylor-Leech, 2009) – which means literally “hang the prohibition”: *tara* means hanging, normally from a rope, and *bandu* signifies prohibition (Costa, 2000, pp. 49, 311).

Meitzner-Yoder (2007b) helps clarifying the subject with a focus on Oecussi enclave terminology: *tara bandu* is initiated by a ritual involving spoken prohibitions, animal sacrifice and a feast, and terms for these prohibitions are known as *kelo* in local language. In other languages in Timor, one has the following examples: Tokodede – *temi kdesi*; Makasae – *lubhu* (or *badu*); Bunak – *ucu bilik* or *ucu ai-tahan*; Tetum Terik – *kahe abat*; Mambae – *tar-badu*; Fataluku – *lupure*.

There are reports mentioning that *tara bandu* is similar to other local wisdom in Indonesia known as *lubuk larangan* in Jambi at the island of Sumatra – a site of the ancient Srivijaya kingdom – though focusing more on areas around rivers, and registered as an Indonesian intangible legacy: *lubuk larangan* is considered unique in Indonesia (Benny et al., 2021).

Notwithstanding, McWilliam (2011) mentions the existence of a comparable complex on Java, where the spirits of the place are designated *penguasa*, and the lord of the land (*rai na'in* in Tetum) is named *tuan tanah*. It is also known that the government of Indonesia banned – or, at least, strongly demotivated – the practice of *tara bandu* during the occupation of Timor (Carvalho, 2011, p. 61).

Next, we will discuss that *tara bandu* is a complex choreographic ritual, emerging from hybridizations of static and mute iconic frameworks of the Timorese tradition (*kero/lorok/bunuk*) and the Portuguese choreographic and vocalized colonial *bandos*. The ritual also incorporates animist rites including animal sacrifices present in other Timorese *estilus* associated with agricultural harvests and fertility rites – like the *sau batar* ceremony linked to the harvest of corn – and, mainly in the post-independence period, combining a new dimension: an expression of the Catholic liturgical rites.

THE “KERO” ICONIC DEVICE

Thomas Sebeok (2001, p. 104) mentions that the magic efficacy of the kind of icon called *effigy* has long been recognized in ritual experience, and that the English word *fetish* was directly adopted from the Portuguese word “feitiço” – meaning charm, sorcery – originally applied to objects used by the people of West Africa coast as talismans and regarded by them with superstitious dread. Fetish(ism) is an example of semiosis – defined by Peirce as the action of signs – that overlaps several sign categories: the term was first coined by Charles de Brosses in 1757 and proposed as a general theoretic term for the primordial religion of mankind (Pietz, 1988), with a cornerstone in people attributing personality and intentional power to the impersonal realm of material nature.

In the late XIX century, the Scottish explorer and naturalist Henry Forbes spend several months in Timor-Leste (from late 1882 to 1883), travelling and reporting what he had seen or was told; when he was going to visit the rajah of Samoro in whose territory stood the Peak of Sobale [Soibada], he saw something that he depicted in a sketch (Figure 2), then stating:

This ghastly sign-post, called a kero, had been erected as a warning to all thieves and offenders of the dire punishment that would be mercilessly meted out to them (...) who had been convicted of stealing fruit, as the bunch of cocoa, and pinang-nuts hung on a railing below them indicated. The law of the different kingdoms is a *lex non scripta*, and has been handed down from generation to generation. The Leorei⁸ is judge as well as king, but he acts only, however, on the rare occasions when a case is brought to him (...) (Forbes, 1885, pp. 472-73).

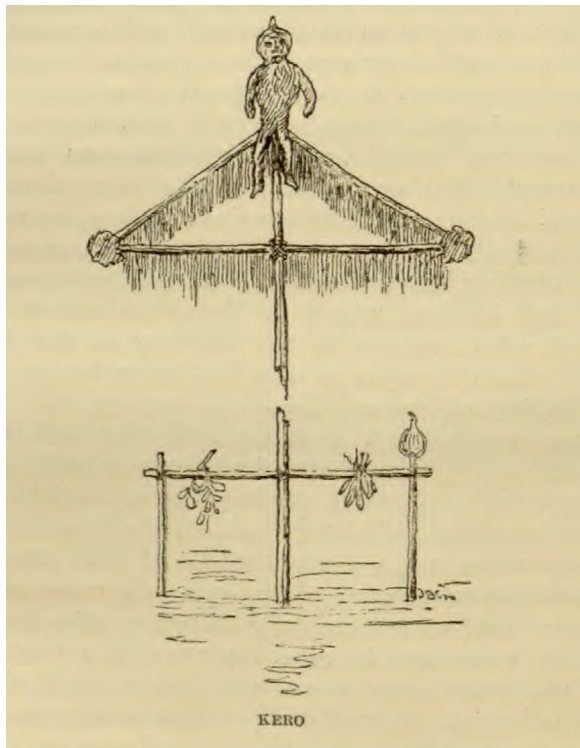


Figure 2. The “kero” sketched by Henry Forbes (1885, p. 472)

The word *kelo* is the proper designation for *tara bandu* in Oecussi local language⁹, and applied to extensive areas of many different individual owners, while an individual prohibition on specific trees is called *bunuk*¹⁰

⁸ The current designation is *liurai*.

⁹ Known as *Meto* or *Baikeno*.

¹⁰ Or simply *banu* for prohibition.

and only a *tobe* – empowered spiritual leader, in other places named *lia na'in* – can institute or lift a *kelo*, while any individual can place a *bunuk* (Meitzner-Yoder, 2007a).

Also, those terms can be considered associated to the Tetum term *horok* – this last one is translated into Portuguese as “feitiço” (Costa, 2000, p. 164) – a substantive meaning sorcery in English, and also prohibition; yet, as of today, both terms are still in use in Timor-Leste but with somehow different meanings: *horok* is used mainly to state a prohibition in an iconic framework at the spatial and social scale of a family property (like *bunuk* in Oecussi); while *kerok* (*gero* in Kemak), at least in some places, denotes a mantra used to prevent negative situations, like heavy rain and flooding.

In this text we will use the term *kerok* in the sense of the sketch depicted by Forbes shown in Figure 2. In fact, we are dealing with a language of iconic signs, disposed in a particular, vectorial way. Charles Morris (1938, p. 35) clarified that a language in the full semiotic sense of the term is any intersubjective set of sign vehicles whose usage is determined by syntactic, semantic and pragmatic rules; he also highlighted that syntactical rules determine the sign relations between sign vehicles relative to their disposition, while semantic(al) rules correlate sign vehicles with objects through meaning, and pragmatic(al) rules state the conditions in the interpreters under which the sign vehicle becomes a sign.

A description made by the Portuguese military José dos Santos Vaquinhas in a text written in 1885 – transcribed by Ricardo Roque (2012, p. 582) – shows that he was referring to the kind of *kerok/horok* framework, though he named it *bando*, as he wrote¹¹:

(...) orders issued by the chiefs for the knowledge of the people are usually by means of *bandos*, and when these orders have only effect in a particular place, and so that ignorance is not alleged in the location where they are given, next to the paths they are hung on a pole, or tied to a coconut tree or any tree, certain and certain objects, which by themselves indicate the species of the order; for example, a coconut leaf, a tree ram, a wooden sword, a rope and an egg, and other

¹¹ Translated from Portuguese.

combined utensils, they serve to indicate the object of the order, of any prohibition, and even the importance of the fine that transgressors have to pay.

Also, referring to Timor, Alfred Wallace stated:

(...) a prevalent custom is the *pemali* exactly equivalent to the 'taboo' of the Pacific islanders, and equally respected, and it is used in the commonest occasions, and a few palm leaves stuck outside a garden as a sign of the *pemali* will preserve its produce from thieves as effectually as the threatening notice of man-traps, spring guns, or a savage dog, would do with us. (Wallace, 1890, pp. 149-150).

APPLYING PEIRCE'S TYPOLOGY OF SIGNS

The sketch of Figure 2 shows a vectorial structure like an arrow pointing upwards standing for an implication: whether someone steals the fruits shown hanging in the lower level of the structure, the punishment would be being impaled or decapitated, like is depicted in the upper level forming a triangle, with two effigies of heads at the lateral corners and an impaled figure at the central position. Vector and target are signs positively correlated (Casquilho, 2010): in this case, the *kero* is a vector that concatenates icons conveying a message, and the target is people to whom the message is addressed.

Charles Sanders Peirce conceived a Theory of Signs under the general scope of logic as semiotic. Peirce's general concept of sign was defined as follows: a sign or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity (Buchler, 1955, p. 99).

A sign may be simple or complex; anything or phenomenon, no matter how elaborated, may be considered as a sign from the moment it enters into a process of semiosis (Everaert-Desmedt, 2020): this process involves a triadic relationship between a sign or *representamen* (a first), an *object* (a second) and an *interpretant* (a third). For instance, Boarccaech (2021) addressed the Peircean concept of *interpretant* – the mental effect of the sign in the interpreter – when referring to the multidimensional meaning(s) of *lisan*, in the case with a focus on the Humangili community in Ataúro island.

However, signs are almost always a mixture of types and, at most, one can elucidate the dominant type conveying a hierarchic articulation. Using Peirce’s terminology, the ten categories of signs he has elaborated depicted in Figure 3, are anchored in a combination of triadic references, referred to: (i) the *sign* itself (*qualisign*, *sinsign*, *legisign*); (ii) the *object* (*icon*, *index*, *symbol*); and (iii) the *interpretant* (*rheme*, *decision*¹², *argument*).

The following figure shows the articulation herein proposed concerning the hybridization process: from a *dicent indexical sinsign* concerning the subject of Figure 2 to an *argument* (*symbolic legisign*) relative to *tara bandu* as it occurs nowadays.

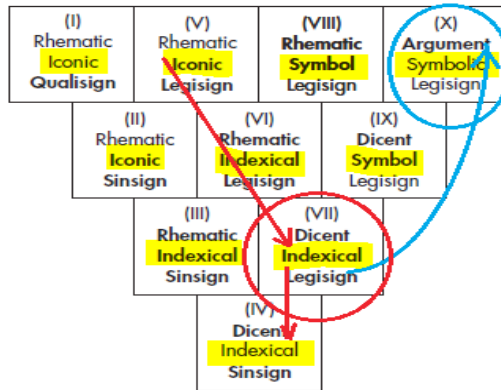


Figure 3. Peirce’s Ten Classes of Signs (adapted from Buchler, 1955, p. 118): in red, the characterization of the “kero” depicted in Figure 2; in blue, the proposed evolution by hybridization of the sign *tara bandu* into a choreographic argument

Retrieving Figure 2, one can say that the sketch of *kero* reveals a *dicent indexical legisign*, since it establishes a law associated with an implication: as previously mentioned, when read upwards, stealing the fruits entails punishment and, either the object(s) forbidden (the fruits), or the sanction(s), are revealed in an iconic way by direct similitude with the object. Remembering Peirce’s words, a *dicent indexical legisign* is any general type or law which requires each instance of it to be really affected by its object in such a manner

¹² Or *dicent sign*.

as to furnish definite information concerning that object; it must involve an *iconic legisign* to signify the information and a *rhetic indexical legisign* to denote the subject of that information; each [particular] replica of it will be a *dicent sinsign* of a peculiar kind (Buchler, 1955, p. 116).

In the “Sarzedas document” - transcribed by Affonso de Castro and containing a set of instructions issued in 1811 directed by the Count of Sarzedas, Governor of the State of India, to the Governor of Timor Cunha Gusmão - in paragraph 50 is made reference to the enslavement of Timorese due to their failure to pay the fines relative to *bandos* issued by local kings (Castro, 1867, p. 202). Also, Ricardo Roque (2012, p. 581) tells us that in 1895 the *liurai* (king) of Manufahi had proclaimed a *bando* forbidding all his subjects to reach an agreement with the Portuguese government.

ON THE PORTUGUESE COLONIAL BANDOS

It does not seem easy finding explicit references to the Portuguese colonial *bandos* issued in Timor, but one can refer to some (Figueiredo, 2011, pp. 210, 284, 380): in 1785 there was a letter of Vieira Godinho asking the Governor of India for a delivery of coins appropriated for small transactions to be used in Timor, and to be accompanied with the draft of the corresponding *bando*; also, it is known that governor Manuel Saldanha da Gama has used *bandos* to announce cash prizes for those who would establish coffee plantations with minimum requirements, ca. 1855; the same governor, ca. 1852-53, ordered a proclamation saying that those who, after the publication of the *bando*, still continue to marking his slaves would be subject to a punishment imposed by the government.

Ricardo Roque (2012, p. 572), referring to Timor, states the following: in the kingdoms, the governor’s words were never just words, they constituted a heterogeneous ceremonial collective, called *bandos*, which brought together things invested with special authority (drums, flags, rifles, papers) and people invested with the stature of spokespersons (officials and delegates) or guardians (soldiers); also, *bandos* took place as a liturgical action of reading aloud an order from the governor, accompanied by the sound of a drum.

Concerning the etymology of *bando*, Adrian Poruciuc (2008) elucidates the subject: the word *bando* roots from Indo-European verb *bhā* meaning ‘to speak’, then becoming the Frankish and the old Germanic term *bann* and recorded in late Latin as *bannum*, meaning ‘proclamation’; the term was associated with primitive Indo-European references to archaic religious-juridical notions, including title(s) of nobility and coin, then Latinized in medieval documents as *banus*, the root for several senses including ‘order under threat of punishment’; later appears *ban* meaning ‘proclamation, confiscation, prohibition’ in Old French and Old Provençal, then entering neighboring Romance idioms; also, Fr./Prov. *ban* preserved the archaic meaning of ‘public announcement’, but it also acquired secondary meanings such as ‘prohibition of harvesting’. Also, the word ‘band’, meaning a group of people, can be considered derived by metonymy.

It was a common practice for the Portuguese colonial power to rule issuing *bandos*, with different objectives. In Figure 4, one can see the apparatus of a Portuguese colonial *bando* in early XIX century at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as illustrated by Thierry Frères (1839), based on a drawing of Jean Baptiste Debret.

Figure 4. A Portuguese colonial *bando* in the first quarter of XIX century, Rio de Janeiro



Using once more Peircean concepts and terminology, such a ceremony is not anymore of iconic nature, but symbolic, where *symbol* stands for concepts established by convention and habit; it could be named a choreographic *argument*, using the X class of signs of Peirce's classification like depicted in Figure 3, anchored in the principle of compositionality of meaning which states that the meaning of every complex expression is determined by the meanings of its parts plus the mode of their combination (Peregrin, 2012). Remembering Peirce words: a sign whose *interpretant* represents its object as being an ulterior sign through a law, then its object must be general, that is, the *argument* must be a *symbol*; as a *symbol* it must further be a *legisign*, incorporating a law (Buchler, 1955, pp. 117-118).

ON HYBRIDIZATION

In relation to the Timorese *bandus*, one has already seen that the Portuguese referred to the *keru* device naming it *bando*. From the testimony made in 1943 by another colonial military, Captain José Simões Martinho – also transcribed in Roque (2012, p. 583) – describing the customary practice in the first half of the 20th century, he told¹³:

(...) the *bando* – which no longer has easy compliance because it had become a function of any insignificant chief and even the owner of some mango trees – consisted in two stakes of approximately two meters high, supporting, horizontally placed, a stick from which hung the notice or edict; this was easy to read: a coconut still tender, for example; a small rope; a paddle; a goat foot and some eggshells indicated that it was prohibited to harvest coconuts, under penalty of imprisonment (rope), of slapping a few slaps (paddle) and to pay a fine (goat and eggs); the number of eggs it was sometimes indicated by a string with knots, one corresponding to each egg.

Thus, Captain Martinho mentions that such a regulatory injunction, the Timorese *bandu*, had lost pragmatic relevance through the trivialization of its use. Such a framework was typically iconic, static and mute. However, nowadays, *tara bandu* ceremonies have several dimensions associated, and the

¹³ Translated from Portuguese.

dynamic components, including sound and drums, are undoubtedly present, as one can see illustrated in Figure 5, below.

Also, If a law is meant to have compliance it should be considered relevant, then one should recall that Relevance Theory, which is a cognitive psychological theory, claims that the use of ostensive stimulus may create precise and predictable expectations of relevance, relevance therein being defined in terms of a trade-off of cognitive effects and processing effort (e.g. Wilson, 2017): other things being equal, the greater the cognitive effects and the smaller the processing effort, the greater the relevance, while every ostensive act communicates a presumption of its own relevance.

Figure 5. An aspect of a tara bandu ceremony; Hera, Timor-Leste, 2017 (photo: authors)



In fact, one can read in Forbes (late XIX century) that the drummer and the standard or flag – colonial tools and symbols, also remembering that the Portuguese word for flag is *bandeira*, derived from *bando* – were already assimilated and incorporated in the Timorese tradition as, when visiting the rajah (*liurai*) of Turskain in the slopes of Rusconna mountains, he noted¹⁴:

(...) the katjeru, or royal drummer, is a hereditary official of high and coveted rank in the kingdom, for they hold that when Maromak made Timor he gave the people a standard-bearer to lead them to war, and a katjeru to walk beside him ‘like man and wife’. (Forbes, 1885, p. 442)

In Table 1 below, some differences between the *kero/bandu* concept and the colonial *bando* are contrasted.

Table 1. Contrasts between the *kero/bandu* and the colonial *bando*

Characteristics	<i>kero/bandu</i>	colonial <i>bando</i>
Kinetics	Static	Dynamic
Acoustics	Mute	Sonorous
Words	Absent	Present
Main perceptive sense	Vision	Hearing
Predominant sign type	Icon/Index	Symbol
Semiotic classification*	<i>Dicent</i> <i>indexical</i>	<i>Argument</i> (choreographic)
	<i>legisign</i>	

* Using Peirce typology of categories

Hybridization of costumes and injunctions is a common feature in post-colonial regimes and one can mention some references: a hybrid turn more often engages with community, customary or more generally societal efforts regarding security, justice, peace, welfare, conflict resolution or governance (Brown, 2018), and a hybrid order refers to contexts where differing life-worlds are each co-represented to significant extents, with the focus on customary and modern (Grenfell, 2018).

¹⁴ The word “katjeru” is derived from the Portuguese word with a similar acoustic (“caixeiro”), meaning drummer.

- In Table 2 we list the main sequential phases of a *tara bandu* ceremony concerning participatory land use planning.

- In Figure 6, one can see a goat being sacrificed: the animist and sacrificial pole is attached to a cross indexing Catholic religion, thus forming a noticeable hybrid sign; it is from the horizontal axis of the cross that items are pending (hanging) symbolizing interdictions.

- In the same *tara bandu* ceremony, like depicted in Figure 7, the Catholic priest intervenes with a speech – a kind of homily – in another hybridization dimension of the ritual.

Table 2. Main choreographic dimensions of a current tara bandu ceremony

Choreographic Dimension	Scope
Traditional songs and dances, normally performed by youth	Welcoming guests, namely representatives of the authorities, sponsors and others
Chewing betel leaves and areca nut in communion	A reconciliation and thanksgiving commitment by the community
Catholic ritual	A Catholic mass and/or a priest discourse (homily)
Speeches of local authorities and others	NGO participants and invited international agencies for cooperation can also speak, whether they have sponsored the initiative
Signing documents by <i>Chefe de Suco</i> (village), <i>Chefe(s) de Aldeia(s)</i> (helmets) and authorities as binding procedures among people	
Animal sacrifice in the sacrificial pole/altar	Dedicated to the spirits of ancestors and binding to <i>lulik</i>
Community confraternization	A festive meal shared among all



Figure 6 – A goat being sacrificed in a Tara Bandu ceremony at Batara suco, municipality of Manatuto, 2015 (photo: authors)

Figure 7 – The homily of the Catholic priest in the tara bandu of Batara suco, 2015 (photo: authors)



FINAL NOTES

Tara bandu currently incorporates multicultural dimensions: in addition to the ancient animist practices, there are also traits of the colonial *bandos* and rites of Catholic liturgy, thus becoming an elaborated symbol and a semiotic hybrid. Work in sociolinguistics and anthropology often centers on how cultural level phenomena are reinforced, and even constructed, by discourse but also internal representations and thoughts (Yus, 2010). Babo-Soares (2004) highlights that Timorese exegeses depict the sequence of events in life in a configuration of *ai-hun* (tree-trunk), or ‘tree’, which in their minds, can be called *ai* (tree) only if it has *abut* (roots-origin) and *tutun* (tip-end).

In this text, one point is also remembering that the Portuguese presence and influence in Timor-Leste is another relevant dimension of understanding Timorese cultural frameworks, namely through hybridization processes. The notion of hybridity proposes an alternative lens that aims to move beyond normative notions and beyond dichotomous thinking that articulates states and non-states as discrete and independent actors and institutions (Jackson & Albrecht, 2018) and, as a metaphor, the expression relates to linguistic compositions from different languages or, more generally, everything that is composed of different or incongruent elements (Ackermann, 2012).

Tara bandu was reactivated and replicated after Timor-Leste independence in 2002 and is considered a community-based natural resource management process anchored on traditional sociopolitical structures (Browne et al, 2017), often directly related to events in the agricultural calendar, particularly crop production.

Tara bandu is mentioned currently as an example of positive bottom-up environmental based peacebuilding process, in what is considered a recent, and promising, field of action and research that have the potential to facilitate outcomes in several contexts (Miyazawa & Miyazawa, 2021; Ide et al., 2021), used to resolve both environmental and social issues while demonstrating a degree of hybridization between transnational and local norms and practices.



Figure 8 – Tara bandu ceremony in Orlalan, 2016, Manatuto municipality (photo: authors)

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