

**The Audiovisual Documentation of Crimes of Political Violence
in
Timor-Leste**

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Tasi Tolu, Timor-Leste

May 2016

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Media & Communication.

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Abstract

The Audiovisual Documentation of Crimes of Political Violence in Timor-Leste is a research-driven interdisciplinary work that aims, through documentary filmmaking and critical writing, to develop methods for representing the relationship between the past and the present in Timor-Leste.

An estimated 204,000 East Timorese died during Indonesia's 24-year occupation of Timor-Leste (Staveteig 2007). Since its independence in 2002, the need to remember victims of the occupation has been expressed in a range of commemorative rituals and memorialisation practices. Moreover, survivor and witness testimony has become central to transitional justice processes, forensic investigations and documentary filmmaking. Despite the impression of a consistent collective narrative, remembrance of the occupation and the resistance is dynamic and complex. A close examination reveals that unfulfilled expectations, shifting allegiances and political priorities have informed both personal testimony and public commemoration. Michael Leach (2008) has observed these 'fault lines' in Timor-Leste's official historiography, and Lia Kent (2011) has discussed the tensions between local and state-orchestrated commemoration. Damien Grenfell (2012) has pointed out how remembering the dead reveals an intricate interplay between modern, customary and traditional epistemologies. These writers present a nuanced understanding of remembrance. However, documentary filmmaking about Timor-Leste has rarely addressed this complexity.

The written exegesis explores the challenges and benefits of developing alternative documentary approaches to represent the occupation and its legacy in the present day. It reflects on 15 years of filmmaking in Timor-Leste, beginning with a documentary about the formation of this new nation, *East Timor – Birth of a Nation: Luolo's Story* (2002). This work was followed up with a film about an international forensic investigation of the infamous 1991 Santa Cruz massacre, *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010). Both films are revisited in the light of theoretical and community concerns. Grounded in

Timorese perspectives, I address debates about evidence, testimony and memory, and examine how these views informed the making of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016), the documentary that forms part of this thesis. I conclude by arguing for a reflexive, expressive and consultative documentary filmmaking approach that is able to balance divergent understandings of place, death and time.

Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work of this thesis entitled *The Audiovisual Documentation of Crimes of Political Violence in Timor-Leste* has not previously been submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in this thesis.

The research presented in this thesis was approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee, reference number: 5201001500

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Student ID: 42216222
May 2016

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Anna Broinowski, who suggested I undertake this PhD at the department of Music, Media, Communications and Cultural Studies at Macquarie University. The scholarship and additional funding I obtained from the university was essential for the production of the creative component of this thesis, the documentary film *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*. I would also like to thank Dr Maree Delofski, my supervisor before her retirement, for her encouragement and enthusiasm. Special thanks goes to Professor Kathryn Millard who supported my application, was my associate supervisor and later became my principal supervisor. Her insights and guidance were invaluable. The thoughtful feedback of Dr Karen Pearlman, my other associate supervisor, was crucial in the later stages of the thesis.

The Spirits of Tasi Tolu would never have been made without the dedicated work of Dr Soren Blau and her team of forensic scientists. Dr Blau's work in Timor-Leste was the origin and inspiration for this research project. In Dili, Luigi Acquisto and Stella Zammataro of FairTrade Films provided essential logistical support and shared their wealth of local experience. Gaspar Sarmiento and Bety Reis went beyond their roles as interpreters; they were sensitive facilitators who helped me understand cultural practices and gain access to the lives of the East Timorese subjects.

Lurdes Pires translated the interviews but also offered valuable knowledge about local expressions and context. Dr Richard Jones's perceptive advice towards the end of this process kept me on track. In addition, he filmed some critical footage in Timor-Leste when I was in Australia. Jamie Saxe composed a superb soundtrack that engages with the film's themes with subtlety, impact and emotional range. Penelope Ralph provided meticulous proof reading skills. I could not have completed the thesis without the astute critical eye, support and almost endless patience of my partner Max Sharam.

The thesis is dedicated to Domingos Monteiro and the people of Tasi Tolu, who opened up their lives, memories, feelings and thoughts to me with courage and generosity.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 *Untying the Black*

Kore-metan means ‘untying the black’ in Tetum, the co-official language of Timor-Leste. It signifies the end of the mourning period when relatives of the deceased are able to stop wearing their black clothes. On this day families celebrate the journey of the dead person’s spirit to the land of the ancestors with rituals and feasts. Like many ceremonies in Timor-Leste, it has elements of indigenous and Catholic beliefs and practices.

On September 6, 1999, in the town of Suai on the south coast of Timor-Leste, Indonesian army, police and local militiamen massacred 27 men, women and children who were sheltering in the local church compound (CAVR 2013, p. 1320). Three of the victims were priests who were attempting to protect the people under their care. The violence was part of a coordinated effort by the Indonesian authorities to derail the United Nations-sponsored independence referendum (ibid, p. 2384). Following the announcement on September 4, 1999 that 78.5% of the population of Timor-Leste had voted for independence (ibid, p. 316), the Indonesian armed forces and its proxy militias went on a rampage. The massacre in Suai was a final and pointless act of spite and violence before the perpetrators escaped over the border into Indonesian West Timor.

Exactly one year later, I was in Suai to film the day of mourning and remembrance for the anniversary of the massacre. The destruction was still evident. The only accommodation available was a tent pitched inside one of the numerous burnt-out buildings throughout the town. New Zealand peacekeepers patrolled the streets in armoured personnel carriers. Early in the morning, dozens of local people gathered at the church compound to light candles next to small, improvised stone shrines for the dead and to quietly recite prayers. As the day progressed, there were more formal public ceremonies, masses, and even a re-enactment of the massacre where

young actors played the militia and Indonesian soldiers, and others the Timorese victims.

At dusk, a crowd gathered for an outdoor screening of a recently completed documentary, Sophie and Lyndal Barry's *East Timor, Long Road to Freedom* (2000). The film told the story of FALANTIL, the guerrilla army that resisted the Indonesians for 24 years. Although there were over a thousand people in the audience, the only screen available was a tiny TV set powered by a noisy diesel generator. Despite these difficulties, this was the most engaged audience I had ever seen. The viewers murmured, and appeared to swell and heave in unison when critical events were shown. The reaction was most acute when footage of the 1999 referendum violence in Dili was shown. The murmur became a roar as waves of people moved closer to the screen and others parted to let them through. The emotion was intense and the potential for a terrible accident obvious, but the people moved harmoniously. The physicality of the audience left a deep impression. They were not passively viewing. Their experience was embodied, active and responsive. The participants had integrated audiovisual technology into a local ceremony of mourning, remembrance and renewal. This event became a motif of my own journey of speaking with film across cultures and to represent memories of the occupation in Timor-Leste.

1.2 Birth of a Nation

I remember seeing images of burning buildings, militia members hacking victims with machetes, lines of people waiting to vote despite threats and intimidation, children being passed over a razor wire fence into the UN compound. Images like these had brought me to Timor-Leste. Filmmakers and video journalists, such as Max Stahl, Mark Davis (*A License To Kill* 1999), Carmela Baranowska (*Scenes From An Occupation* 1999) and Sophie and Lyndal Barry, exposed the terror campaign of the Indonesian-backed militia around the 1999 independence referendum. Like many people, I watched their reports on television. They revealed an ongoing

genocide just to the north of Australia that most of us had forgotten about, or chosen not to look at.

It wasn't the first time that journalists and filmmakers had forced the international community to notice Timor-Leste. Max Stahl's video (which I will discuss in more detail later) of the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre had shocked the world. However, apart from a dedicated group of activists, journalists and East Timorese exiles, wider interest in Timor-Leste had since subsided. This new footage cut through the compassion fatigue, which Stanley Cohen (as cited in Hoskins & O'Loughlin 2010, p. 191) defines as 'all the connotations of overload, normalization and numbing' that occur with repeated media coverage of war, conflict and catastrophe. Many people were outraged, and more importantly, they cared again about the plight of the Timorese. There were large protests in capital cities and the Australian government took notice. There was a clear, if not explicit link, between that footage and the Australian-led UN military intervention force that arrived on September 20, 1999. It appeared to be a rare occasion, when the 'CNN Effect' (Hoskins & O'Loughlin 2010, p. 103)—the idea that media images may provoke public outrage and policy makers to act—was more than a myth.

In 2000 I was in Suai, researching a two-part documentary series called *East Timor – Birth of a Nation* (2002) for Film Australia and ABC TV, an episode of which I co-directed with Luigi Acquisto. The series investigated, through the stories of two individuals, how a nation was created out of the ashes of a brutal occupation. These two films were journalistic with elements of the expository and observational documentary modes (Nichols 2010 p. 31). While researching and making this project, I noticed the widespread respect of the East Timorese for journalists and filmmakers, and the recognition of their importance in the independence struggle. Even in the most remote mountain village, people had surprising knowledge of the Western media's reportage of the Indonesian occupation. From Max Stahl's Santa Cruz footage and Jill Joliffe's foray into the mountains to document the battles of the FALANTIL guerrillas, to the filmmakers and journalists who reported on

the violence around the 1999 referendum, the East Timorese grasped the role of the media in the resistance struggle. Footage, often smuggled out of the country, had not only shaped the international community's understanding of the conflict and kept it alive in geopolitical discussion, it had also helped to inform the East Timorese, isolated and misinformed by the Indonesian authorities.

Never in my experience as a filmmaker had my work been so valued and appreciated by the local subjects and participants. The East Timorese also recognized the risks that journalists had taken to report on Timor-Leste; the deaths of Roger East and the Balibo Five in 1975¹, and the Dutch journalist Sander Thoenes in 1999 (CAVR 2013, p. 2936), were remembered by many. The idea of broadcast journalist as witness and evidence gatherer was also tied to a profound and widespread notion that filmmaking had an essential role in preserving the historical significance of key events. As recently as 2013, Domingos Monteiro, an East Timorese farmer, said to his neighbours during filming:

You are all in the film as he is filming and recording here. Like a story for the future, it will be history. One day I will be dead but new generations can still see this very same place and learn (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016).

The notion that I had something valuable to contribute influenced my ongoing connection to Timor-Leste and my return, in 2008, to direct another film for ABC TV, *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010). This documentary, commissioned as a science program, followed a forensic team's search for the missing victims of the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre. My work with these forensic scientists continued to bring me back to Timor-Leste for another five years.

¹ Roger East was an Australian journalist allegedly killed by Indonesian forces in Dili during the 1975 invasion. The Balibo Five were the five Australian broadcast journalists killed by Indonesian forces in the town of Balibo while covering the early stages of the invasion.

1.3 Beginnings

Over a decade of making films in Timor-Leste, I had been given access to some extraordinary events and people. I interviewed both celebrated leaders, and village elders who had never seen a TV camera. I was present at the birth of a new nation. In 2000, I documented the run-up to the first democratic election since independence, and followed the FRETILIN political party's campaign across the country. From 2006 to 2008, while working with the forensic team investigating the Santa Cruz massacre, I met Timorese families who had never given up the search for the graves of their missing relatives.

While the films I had made were critically well received, screened at numerous festivals and were nominated for awards, towards the end of this time I began to feel that the depth and breadth of the situations I experienced were not adequately reflected in the final products. I wanted to extend my filmmaking beyond broadcast conventions. The prevailing industrial model of Australian television documentaries imposes strict running lengths of 56-58 minutes, favours voice-over narration performed by a professional actor or journalist, includes a sympathetic central character—ideally Australian—and clear narrative trajectories in which opportunities for reflexive or essayist strategies are limited. Instead, I was increasingly interested in digressions from linear narrative form. A desire to pause and reflect on my filmmaking, and to revisit and analyse the films I had made in Timor-Leste, would be the rationale for developing a new approach. Crucially, I set out to engage more thoroughly with the scholarship relevant to my practice and to use this to inform my methodology.

1.4 Background

In 2011, I was commissioned by the International Forensic Team (IFT), led by forensic anthropologists Dr Soren Blau from Australia, and Luis Fondebrider from Argentina, to produce interactive educational films for East

Timorese forensic investigators. It was part of the final stage of a training program that the team had begun with local forensic police and mortuary staff in 2006. The training was tied to actual investigations that the anthropologists were pursuing, commencing with the Santa Cruz massacre investigation that I had previously documented. A new investigation, which would be the basis of case studies for the training films, was focused on a location just to the west of Dili called *Tasi Tolu*, in English, Three Lakes.

Tasi Tolu was allegedly the site of a series of extrajudicial executions and clandestine burials of independence activists by Indonesian security forces between 1975 and 1999, the period of Indonesia's occupation of Timor-Leste. After 1999 the site was re-occupied by dispossessed East Timorese, who farmed the land and fished in the lakes. Then in 2011, a Singaporean company leased the area from the government of Timor-Leste and instigated plans to build the *Pelican Paradise* golf course and hotel resort. The property developers have promised employment opportunities for local people but thousands of residents will be displaced. Concerned about the claims of human remains in Tasi Tolu, the East Timorese government commissioned the IFT to investigate the area prior to the commencement of construction.

This scenario brought together many of the elements that I was interested in exploring in a documentary film. It focused tensions about how the past is remembered and commemorated in Timor-Leste in a contested space. It combined the forensic sensibility, which according to forensic architect Eyal Weizman (2012, p. 6), is 'an object-oriented juridical culture immersed in matter and materialities,' with the subjective and affect-laden realm of memory and witness testimony. I named the proposed film *Waiting for Paradise*, to underline the uncertainty in which all of the participants appeared to be living, and the existential problems that post-independence Timor-Leste faced now that the liberation struggle was over. The film's title was later changed to *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, to reflect the discoveries I made in the process of its making about the role of the dead in the lives of the principal Timorese subjects.

1.5 Difficult Memories

In Timor-Leste, memories of the Indonesian occupation from 1975 to 1999 continue to haunt those individuals who experienced or witnessed acts of violence. For many, the loss of family members, some of whom remain missing, has been an ongoing source of suffering. Since independence, the need to remember the past and rebuild social life has led to a range of local, official and institutional practices. Community based commemoration and memorialisation has been used to honour the dead and missing. These rites are most commonly linked to indigenous beliefs about the ancestral spirits, and involve both customary and Catholic ceremonies. Official commemorative acts staged annually have enshrined certain historical events and locations within nation building narratives. Memory has also been central to the transitional justice process. The Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) conducted public hearings and collected 8,000 witness statements. Many of these were compiled and referenced in the massive *Chega!* Report, first published in 2005.

The resistance struggle has been a unifying narrative but since independence competing memories have created tensions and played a role in escalating serious conflicts. Michael Leach (2008) argues that state historiography has privileged a few veterans and 'heroes' of the resistance and excluded the majority of the population, thereby fracturing a cohesive national identity. Lia Kent (2011) points out that local commemoration practices take place within a framework different to that of official discourses of justice and nation-building. For some researchers (Robins 2012; Toome 2013) Timor-Leste has been the focus of their critiques of transitional justice institutions founded on a therapeutic paradigm of truth telling. Damien Grenfell (2012) has interpreted the cultural complexity of remembrance in Timor-Leste as the interplay of modern, customary and traditional epistemologies. These writers have presented multifaceted understandings of remembrance in Timor-Leste that are linked to overlapping, and sometimes contradictory, identities.

I have encountered these dynamics in my own work as a filmmaker in Timor-Leste. During the making of *Luolo's Story* (2002), I saw many examples of informal and spontaneous acts of testimony. Witnesses came forward to tell their stories in ways that may be characterised as performative, embodied and situated. These were acts presented for the camera, often in locations of significance. They had features of formal testimonial procedures but were also strongly embedded in local storytelling traditions and spiritual understandings. In this thesis, I argue that these social dynamics shifted over time due to a range of cultural and political factors including; disappointment with the transitional justice process, the lack of accountability for perpetrators of human rights abuses and the revival of customary rituals. I perceive this as a transition from 'spontaneous' testimony to a language of collective rights framed by indigenous beliefs and practices. Insights into this process were provided by my fieldwork.

Working with the IFT revealed a potential clash between a forensic paradigm that required evidential knowledge, and the testimony of local witnesses founded on indigenous ontologies. Soren Blau and Naomi Kinsella (2013) observe that 'epistemological differences in 'knowing' are clear when considering claims of 'truth' about the location and identification of the missing in Timor-Leste' (p. 5). In making *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010), I discovered that the narrative conventions of an investigative broadcast documentary presented difficulties for exploring this tension. Within the non-fiction filmmaking tradition that privileges the evidence based procedures of empirical science and analytic history, witness testimony that may be factually inaccurate, that expresses a spiritual worldview, or that produces radically divergent interpretations of events present serious challenges.

The Audiovisual Documentation of Crimes of Political Violence in Timor-Leste emerged from a need to develop new documentary film strategies to examine memory and history arising from the production of the documentary film *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016). It draws on practice-based research during the filming and editing of the documentary, the experience of making films in Timor-Leste for over ten years, and the close reading of key texts in a

number of relevant fields including memory and Holocaust studies, political and cognitive science, cultural and film theory, sociology and ethnography.

1.6 Research Question

How can documentary film practices offer knowledge about memory and history in Timor-Leste?

1.7 Methodology: Creative Practice

I set out to treat the making of the film *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* as a form of historical inquiry on screen. As David MacDougall (1997, pp. 292-3) says of visual anthropology, 'It can never be either a copy of written anthropology or a substitute for it...for that very reason it must develop alternative objectives and methodologies that will benefit anthropology as a whole.' My practice-based research focused on developing cinematic techniques and narrative strategies aimed at accommodating diverse understandings of the past in Timor-Leste. This involved researching a range of documentary practices and approaches, including reflexive and performative modes, as discussed by Bill Nichols (1991, 2010) and David MacDougall (1998, 2005). Sarah Pink (2007, 2009) has outlined a multisensory ethnography derived from phenomenological notions of embodiment and emplacement. Critical reading of Pink's approach informed the development of part of my own methodology for working with participants and witnesses. Research also included documentary films that deal with past political violence, such as the documentaries of Rithy Pahn (2004), Claude Lanzmann (1985), and Joshua Oppenheimer (2012). The essayist form of filmmaking, exemplified by Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* (1955), was also an important reference.

While *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* is not a conventional historical documentary, it does examine historical events. However its focus is on the processes of public history making and remembrance. It also considers the limits of historical knowledge. In contemporary Timor-Leste, inquiry into what is being commemorated and what has been forgotten is essential to any

understanding of how the history of the occupation is, and will be, represented. The thesis seeks to examine this situation, and proposes how the film *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, acts as a 'counter-memory' which can offer alternative narratives. As Roxanna Waterson (2007, p. 70) has observed, 'Film's power to extend the trajectories of memory beyond the lifespans of individuals has already secured its importance as a vehicle of memory'. My intention was to make a film that, by examining struggles of memory and history in Timor-Leste, offers a platform for the voices of the participants to be recorded and preserved.

1.8 Central Aim and Motivation

Using film as a vehicle for the communication of historical knowledge was a central aim of the documentary work. My main motivation was to make a narrative film that was able to engage an international audience but would be of particular value and relevance to the East Timorese. The written form, let alone academic scholarship, is beyond the reach of most people in Timor-Leste, where text-based literacy remains low, particularly among older generations. Filmmaking has the ability to reach across cultural and linguistic barriers, demonstrated in Timor-Leste itself by the popularity of recent travelling film screenings.² The perceived historical importance of audiovisual imagery is reflected in the mission statement of CAMSTL, the audiovisual archive established by Max Stahl in Dili in 2003:

Timor-Leste is the first nation to liberate itself through the power of audiovisual images (UNESCO 2012).

CAMSTL, with the support of the French media archive *Institut national de l'audiovisuel* (INA), has digitised thousands of hours of video footage. The

² Cinema Lorosa'e, an initiative of Sun Theatre Yarraville in Melbourne, Australia, is a travelling film festival which opened for its first season in August 2011, and has now completed five years' free screenings across Timor (Cinema Lorosa'e 2016). Other travelling screenings have been organised on a less regular basis, usually for specific films such as *Balibo* (2009) and *A Guerra da Beatriz* (2014).

significant role of audiovisual media in Timor-Leste's history has important implications for using documentary film to represent understandings of the occupation, and for connecting with a Timorese audience

1.9 Key Sources

Documentary films have frequently explored memory in post-conflict societies in the context of a struggle between the survivors' need for truth and justice, and the denial and impunity of perpetrators. In *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, I set out to investigate the mechanisms and processes of remembrance in Timor-Leste through different understandings of the occupation—local, customary, traditional, modern, official and forensic. The scholarship of Damien Grenfell (2011), Lia Kent (2011) Michael Leach (2008, 2015), Jose 'Josh' Trindade (2011), Andrew McWilliam (2005, 2011) and Elizabeth Traube (2007, 2011) around identity, remembrance and official historiography in Timor-Leste has been crucial for this research.

The written component of this thesis both informs, and was informed by, the making of the film *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*. In it, I discuss concepts of history and memory in documentary films dealing with genocide or periods of political violence. I explore, using examples from my own practice, how narratives and representations of the past are formed and communicated in society. While its focus is Timor-Leste, this research has implications for other states emerging from conflict. The thesis seeks to contribute to a body of work exploring history and memory in Timor-Leste via practice-based documentary filmmaking and critical writing. It examines how the filmmaking process generated particular discoveries about remembrance and commemoration of the occupation in Timor-Leste.

In the field of memory and Holocaust studies, the testimony of the survivors of political violence has been a significant area of study. Marianne Hirsch and

Leo Spitzer (2009) have discussed the rethinking of historical understandings of truth beyond evidentiary documentation towards bodily affect and the meaning of events for witnesses. The genre of video testimony provides the silences, gestures, and the dialogic aspects of oral history promising deeper 'embodied forms of 'truthfulness'' (Hirsch & Spitzer 2009, p.162). Shosannah Felman and Dori Laub (1992) have proposed that factually inaccurate testimony can offer insights into the impact of violent events and complex ways that survivors make sense of a traumatic past. However there are risks, pointed out by Dominick LaCapra, of the 'sacralization' (2001, p.93) of the trauma narrative in survivor testimony. I articulate the formation of my own approach to this field of enquiry.

The thesis examines a range of methods for understanding the past; from visual evidence and material traces to narratives, memorials, rituals and personal recollections that persist in the present day. Using examples drawn from the making of *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010) and *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016), I discuss witness and survivor testimony in forensic contexts. I argue that customary beliefs and practices in Timor-Leste do not necessarily negate the possibility of factually reliable testimony, however this is not placed as the only or privileged form of remembrance or knowledge of the past. Moving away from empirical frameworks towards local understandings provides the cultural context in which remembering takes place. I observe how representing this in documentary film has led to the exploration of specific techniques and narrative forms.

The Audiovisual Documentation of Crimes of Political Violence in Timor-Leste also asks how documentary film can contribute particular understandings via its capacity to record memory traces inscribed and embodied in places and participants. I analyse particular embodied, emplaced and performance-based practices in non-fiction filmmaking and propose how they be used to explore the relationship between collective and personal memory.

I propose a hybrid documentary form that can communicate across cultures by orchestrating a range of voices and points of view. Laura Marks (2000, p. 25) suggests that an intercultural cinema requires an 'archeological' approach, whereby 'artists must first dismantle the official record of their communities, and then search for ways to reconstitute their history, often through fiction, myth, or ritual.' This strategy is more than the juxtaposition of various participants' responses. As MacDougall (1995, p. 223) notes, 'the conventions of filming and editing do not simply direct us to different visual points of view in a film but orchestrate a set of overlapping codes of position, narrative, metaphor and moral attitude.' The written thesis explores a range of participatory, performative, essayist and reflexive techniques. By outlining the methodology of the film's production, I offer a set of solutions to the various problems of presenting memories of political violence. Between history and memory, I propose, after Jelin, that: 'it is in the tension and the cracks between one and the other where the most creative, provocative, and productive questions for inquiry and critical reflection emerge' (Jelin 2003, p. 59).

1.10 Structure of the Thesis

The written thesis is divided into five sections that examine the broader theoretical debates and situate them in relation to my fieldwork in Timor-Leste.

In the first chapter, *Testimony and Documentary Evidence*, I explore the use of witness testimony in forensic investigations, truth commissions, historiography and documentary filmmaking. I question the use of the trauma as a privileged paradigm for understanding the recollections of survivors in Timor-Leste and elsewhere (Robins 2010; Toome 2013). Instead, I consider an interpretive framework derived from Damien Grenfell's (2011) social schema for remembering the dead in Timor-Leste. Grenfell's application of Paul James's 'constitutive abstraction' (2006) is a valuable method for examining the cultural context and meaning of remembrance in Timor-Leste and how this has shifted over the last 15 years. Finally, I reference *East*

Timor – Birth of a Nation: Luolo’s Story (2002) and *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010), the first two broadcast television documentaries I made in Timor-Leste, to look at the ethical, aesthetic and epistemological challenges of using witness testimony.

Chapter Two, *Space, Occupation, Memory* interrogates theories of collective and social memory (Halbwachs 1992; Connerton 1989) to discuss the politics of memory in Timor-Leste in the context of Indonesian colonisation, neoliberal nation building and the recent wave of economic development. Efforts to preserve key buildings and locations of significance from the period of Indonesian occupation are part of a public need to preserve memory in physical spaces (Winter & Sivan 2000). However, in Timor-Leste there are conflicting priorities between state-produced ceremonies and local requirements for memorialisation (Leach 2015). I then look at the politics of forgetting (Lee & Yeoh 2004) and ask why it is that some sites, such as Tasi Tolu, are overlooked in official commemorative culture. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the role of audiovisual media in preserving memories of the occupation and how this has contributed to enshrining certain locations, such as the Santa Cruz cemetery, as sites of memory and ritual practices.

Staging Embodied Memories of Political Violence, Chapter 3, uses the documentaries *S-21, The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003) and *The Act of Killing* (2012) as case studies to explore notions of embodied memory as a form of testimony about political violence. I proceed to look at theories of embodied cognition that support the interconnection between mind and body in recollection (Glenberg 1997; Lakoff & Johnson 1999). This chapter examines ‘memory provocations’—situations and methods that enable participants to ‘perform’ memories. I discuss these theories in relation to my own use of ‘performative’ interview techniques in Timor-Leste.

Finally, in *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu: Case Study*, I look at the development of my filmmaking methodology for *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016) and examine

how the documentary evolved in response to the study of key films and theoretical texts. Crucial to this chapter is a consideration of memory as the interaction between people, place and film (Pink 2007, 2009). I compare the 'forensic landscape' (Cyr 2014) and Augé's 'non-places' (as cited in Smith 2009, p. 34) of global capitalism with the embodied and emplaced knowledge of local people. I reflect on the alteration of my practice-based research in response to the events encountered in the field, and to pragmatic filmmaking problems.

1.11 Boundaries

It is important to note that this thesis is not a work of visual ethnography, although theorists from this field were included in its source literature. Because my expertise is filmmaking and not cultural anthropology, this investigation is not explicitly about creating ethnographic knowledge. Also, while I examine the challenges of witness testimony in the context of a forensic investigation, an in-depth analysis of the theory and practice of forensic anthropology is outside the scope of this thesis. Finally, I do not offer a comprehensive history of Timor-Leste. In examining certain key events and historical debates, this thesis seeks to elucidate the complexity of memory and historical commemoration in Timor-Leste through an exploration using documentary filmmaking.

Chapter 2 – Witness Testimony and Documentary Filmmaking in Timor-Leste

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I investigate the use of witness testimony in forensic investigations, truth commissions, historiography and documentary filmmaking. I question the use of the trauma as a privileged paradigm for understanding the recollections of survivors in Timor-Leste and elsewhere (Toome 2013), and consider instead an interpretive framework that derives from Grenfell's (2011) social schema for remembering the dead in Timor-Leste. This theory has been valuable in examining the cultural context and meaning of remembrance. I discuss *East Timor – Birth of a Nation: Luolo's story* (2002) and *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010), the first two broadcast television documentaries I made in Timor-Leste. Insights gleaned from these case studies reveal a shifting relationship between the filmmaker and participants over time which points to the influence of larger political and cultural transformations. I argue that widespread disappointment with the transitional justice process and the revival of customary culture were key factors in this alteration. These were important considerations in the development of the filmmaking methodology employed in *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016).

Testimony has featured in all my documentary work in Timor-Leste. It has been essential as a means to examine and understand the Indonesian occupation and its legacy. In testimony, witnesses provide the affective dimension of individual experience as well as a form of evidence about past events. Dominick La Capra (2001, p. 86) has observed, in relation to Holocaust testimony, that 'the interviewer in survivor testimony is in a position comparable to the oral historian, and one important role for testimonies is to serve as a supplement to more standard documentary sources in history'. However, testimony in documentary film is more than a talking head or a 'speech act', it has also, as Shoshana Felman observes, 'the uniqueness of the performance of a story' (Felman & Laub 1996, p. 206).

As an act of public remembering, testimony connects filmmaking with broader debates about witnessing and traumatic memory.

In the field of memory studies, personal testimony is also understood as a social process. For a memory to be transmitted, it must first be articulated or recalled through collective frameworks of understanding (Fentress & Wickham 1992, p. 47). My filmmaking practice has provided me with the opportunity to observe the use of testimony in a range of situations in Timor-Leste. Truth commissions, forensic investigations and documentary films frame testimony within judicial, scientific and therapeutic paradigms that are sometimes aligned, and at other times at cross-purposes with the aspirations and cultural practices of local people.

A number of questions about the use of testimony in documentary filmmaking arise, which include: What are the ethical challenges of working with survivors of violence? How reliable is witness or survivor testimony about past events? How does memory, and in particular, traumatic memory work? Is trauma a useful paradigm for discussing testimony in Timor-Leste? How can documentary filmmaking accommodate different understandings of the truth of past events?

In order to answer these questions, I broaden my investigation to include the use of testimony in other contexts where survivors of trauma have recounted their experiences. The role and value of witness testimony in historical accounts, particularly in Holocaust historiography, has been controversial (LaCapra 2001; Felmann & Laub 1992; Browning 2000). Some therapeutic modalities have promoted the healing benefits of narrating traumatic memories for victims of political violence (Cienfuegos & Monelli 1983). This idea has migrated to transitional justice institutions such as truth commissions. Theories and debates within these fields offer insights into the ethical and epistemological challenges of working with survivors of violence and integrating their testimony into documentary filmmaking. Such theories also indicate ways in which non-fiction film intersects with other systems of knowledge, characterised by Nichols (1991, p. 3) 'as discourses of sobriety'

which include science, economics and politics. This discussion calls to account documentary filmmaking's agency in the world; to what extent can or does it interact with politics and offer a specific form of historical knowledge?

In the context of a forensic science, eyewitness testimony is viewed as useful but potentially unreliable and inaccurate, and therefore lacking the status of physical evidence. Psychologist Elizabeth Loftus's research in the 1970s led her to identify the 'misinformation effect'. Her term refers to the distortion of memory of past events when witnesses receive false information from other sources:

Misinformation has the potential for invading our memories when we talk to other people, when we are suggestively interrogated or when we read or view media coverage about some event that we may have experienced ourselves (Loftus 1997, p. 51).

Loftus's finding has been influential in casting doubt on the legal value of eyewitness testimony. Yet even inaccurate testimony can offer important insights into the way that memories transform under the influence of cultural, political and collective forces. As Roxana Waterson and Kwok Kian Woon (2012, p. 22) observe:

When we turn our attention to contexts of transmission, in which memory often has a strongly performative quality, then 'truth' may not be at issue so much as our attempt to understand *why* certain memories, embodied in certain kinds of representation, have salience for people in the present, and *how* they are transmitted from one person to another to become part of the fabric of social life.

I have noted that audiovisual practices which seek to offer alternative understanding of past events need to move away from empirical models of documentary film-making and explore expressive, embodied and situated understandings. Michael Renov (1993, p. 32) declares that the expressive is the most undervalued and suppressed tendency in non-fiction filmmaking. Realist strategies, which legitimise the indexical aspects of the image, have been institutionally privileged. As I discuss later, other aesthetic and narrative models can provide a way of representing the complexity of cultural experience in Timor-Leste. Reflecting on my research, I conclude that to treat

testimony within the narrow criteria of accuracy, or even to use trauma as a framework for reading remembrance is to risk reducing or misinterpreting the memories of participants.

2.2 Testimony and the Witness

The period of the late 20th and early 21st centuries has been called the 'era of the witness' (Wieviorka 2006) or 'age of the witness' (Winter 2006). Jay Winter has identified two modern 'memory booms', one following the First World War and a second, centred on the survivors of World War II—particularly those of the Holocaust—which began in the 1970s and 1980s 'when the victims of the Holocaust came out of the shadows, and when a wide public was finally, belatedly prepared to see them, honour them, and hear what they had to say' (2006, p. 27). Previously, the focus of Holocaust research had been on the perpetrators, brought into enduring focus at the Nuremberg Trials. Gradually, according to Winter (ibid, p. 30), the voice of the victim or survivor emerged as the witness of a concealed truth:

[T]hese people spoke of things we could only see through a glass, darkly, but through their voices we may be able to reach out to those who did not return from the camps.

The recollections of Holocaust survivors brought the 'limit experience' of mass genocide into historical consciousness, as discussed by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub in their influential book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992, p. 205), and raised the crisis of representation induced by the paradoxes around witnessing atrocity.

One of the key events in the transfer of interest towards survivor testimony was the impact of Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem in 1961 (Jelin 2003, p. 63). This was the first trial ever televised, and one of the first major events ever videotaped. Nightly, a compilation of the day's 'highlights' was prepared and disseminated to the world's broadcast media. The testimony of survivors,

according to Wieviorka (2006b, p. 88), communicated the experience of the Holocaust in a new way:

With the Eichmann trial, the witness became the embodiment of memory [*un homme-mémoire*], attesting to the past and to the continuing presence of the past. Concurrently, the genocide came to be defined as a succession of individual experiences with which the public was supposed to identify.

During the trial, chief prosecutor Gideon Hausner summoned 111 witnesses. Their testimony did not necessarily offer legal evidence of Eichmann's guilt. Rather, the witnesses told personal stories of atrocity and survival that would cumulatively form part of a strategy to present a collective narrative of the Holocaust.

The primacy of witnesses in the Eichmann trial was controversial. Hannah Arendt (1963, p. 7) described the event as a 'show trial', which had the explicitly political purpose of legitimising the state of Israel. Arendt claimed the emotional outbursts of the still-traumatised witnesses were inappropriate in a courtroom, 'as witness followed witness and horror was piled upon horror, they sat there and listened in public to stories they would hardly have been able to endure in private' (ibid, p. 9). While for Arendt these personal stories detracted from the balanced analysis of historical facts, the trial has been claimed by others, such as Felman (2002, p. 123), as the turning point at which the voice of the witness-survivor was given legal validation and public recognition:

The Eichmann trial legally creates a radically original and new event: not a rehearsal of a given story, but a ground-breaking narrative event that is itself historically and legally unprecedented.

Marianne Hirsh and Leo Spitzer (2009) have highlighted Arendt's and Felman's divergent perspectives on the Eichmann trial as indicative of a shift in the interpretation of Holocaust testimony, and link it to a cultural transition from history to memory. For Felman, the significance of the Eichmann trial lies in the attention that it brought to the affective experience of the survivor, transmitted as much through non-verbal and embodied responses as oral

testimony. Felman points to the breakdown during the trial of one witness, Yehiel Dinoor, a concentration camp survivor who wrote under the pseudonym K-Zetnik, as marking the shift from proof to transmission in Holocaust testimony.

2.3 Witness Testimony in Historiography

Felman's position is supported by Geoffrey Hartman, co-founder of the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimony, who states (1996, p. 138) that:

Survivor testimonies do not excel in providing *vérités de fait* or positivist history...their real strength lies in recording the psychological and emotional milieu of the struggle for survival, not only then but now.

The power of survivor testimony is the human face and voice that it gives to victims of historical events, as 'the immediacy of these first-person accounts burns through the 'cold storage of history'' (ibid, p. 139). Witness testimony contributes a necessary voice to historical accounts of political violence as part of a 'democratisation of historical actors, an attempt to give voice to the excluded, the unimportant, the voiceless' (Wieviorka 2008b, p. 392).

John Durham Peters points out that the witness is imbued with both legal and religious definitions. As a privileged source of information, witnessing is an ancient concept inherent to most legal systems. To 'bear witness' was to publicly affirm religious faith or conviction, linked in early Christianity to martyrdom by way of the Greek *martus*, meaning 'a witness' (Peters 2001, p. 713). The philosopher Jacques Derrida (2000, p. 190) also separates proof from witnessing, writing that:

Whoever bears witness does not bring a proof; he is someone whose experience, in principle singular and irreplaceable (even if it can be cross-checked with others to become proof, to become conclusive in a process of verification) comes to attest, precisely, that some 'thing' has been present to him.

In the context of survivor testimony, the witness has the capacity to bring the historical trauma into presence for the addressee or listener.

However, 'the turn to memory' has divided historians. Some, such as Raul Hilberg (1996) have questioned the validity of relying on the veracity of witness testimony. Other theorists, like Charles Maier (1993) and Kerwin Klein (2000), have criticised the preoccupation with memory as detrimental to historiography by replacing analysis and narrative discipline with a politicised culture of memorialisation. On the other hand, Dominick LaCapra has argued for a critical interaction between memory and history (1998, p. 11). For LaCapra, testimony is a crucial source of history albeit one with risks.

Testimony offers insights into the experiential dimension of historical events absent from conventional historical sources. However LaCapra (ibid, pp. 11-12) claims that the challenge to history posed by survivor testimony occurs in the encounter between the witness and the historian in that:

[I]t raises the issue of the way in which the historian or other analyst becomes a secondary witness, undergoes a transferential relation, and must work out an acceptable subject-position with respect to the witness and his or her testimony. Transference here implies the tendency to become emotionally implicated in the witness and his or her testimony with the inclination to act out an affective response to them.

The danger of this 'affective response' is its effect on the capacity of the historian to critically evaluate the meaning and veracity of witness testimony. In filmmaking also, empathy with survivors can induce an 'activist' paradigm, in which another of Renov's tendencies, 'to persuade' (1993, p. 28), takes precedence over analysis.

The second risk that LaCapra (2001, p. 92) sees is the notion of traumatic memory as an 'unrepresentable excess'. The prominence of the trauma story in post-Holocaust discourse maintains that traumatic events exceed representation and therefore cannot be transformed into language or narrated. When such events are narrated, 'it is not the record of the event

that is witnessed but, instead, the trauma itself is transmitted through nonverbal accompaniments of the telling' (McKinney 2007, p. 288). According to Ana Douglass and Thomas Vogler (2003, p. 5), this leads to identifying the excess with the 'real':

[T]he traumatic event, as that which violates expectations and traumatises the perceiving subject, is that which cannot be anticipated and reproduced. It thus allows a return to the real without the discredited notions of transparent referentiality often found in traditional modes of historical discourse. This combination of the simultaneous undeniable reality of the traumatic event with its unapproachability offers the possibility for the reconciliation between the undecidable text and the ontological status of the traumatic event as an absolute signified.

A consequence, La Capra observes, is the sacralization of testimony that may divert attention from the representable aspects of testimony, such as the daily life of victims and at worst, create a hyperbolic aesthetic of the sublime.

The more complicated challenge posed by LaCapra (1996, p. 19) is how even factual inaccuracies in survivor testimony can offer insights into the inner experience of victims of violence; how this may help to understand memory; and, in turn, contribute to historical knowledge:

Even in its falsifications, repressions, displacements, and denials, memory may nonetheless be informative—not in terms of an accurate empirical representation of its object but in terms of that object's often anxiety-ridden reception and assimilation by both participants in events and those born later.

These issues raised by LaCapra are equally applicable for filmmakers who work with survivors of political violence. In *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (1996), I deal directly with some of the challenges of testimony. I propose that engaging with the complexity of individual memories requires filmmakers to depart from notions of journalistic impartiality, and explore the cultural understandings that inform the content of testimony and the social context in which the testifying takes place.

2.4 Judicial Testimony

In Timor-Leste—and most conspicuously in South Africa—truth commissions have relied on the testimony of survivors and sometimes of the perpetrators of political violence to address past abuses and facilitate a process of democratisation and nation building. A dominant narrative of transitional justice has been that public truth telling will lead to individual healing and, in turn, foster national healing and reconciliation (Hayner 2001; Minow 1998). However, debates about the effectiveness of imposing a global ‘therapeutic ethos’ and the ability of transitional justice mechanisms to integrate or accommodate local practices of remembrance and reconciliation continue (Robins 2012; Colvin 2006; Pupavac 2004). Truth commissions have also been criticised for becoming substitutes for justice, leading to a culture of impunity (Nevins 2005; Cohen 2002; Hirst & Varney 2005; Hirst 2008). In Timor-Leste, the inability or unwillingness of the local leadership and international community to pursue prosecution of Indonesian perpetrators of human rights abuses has been a source of serious tension and disappointment for many Timorese.

2.5 The Mediatisation of Witness Testimony

If the first memory boom was characterised by commemorative rituals for the victims of the 1914-1918 Great War and the consolidation of national identities, it is the mediatisation of witness testimony and oral history that has been identified as the key driver of the second memory boom (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010, p. 107). From the late 1970s, a series of prominent and well-funded archives of Holocaust testimony were established in Israel and the USA—the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimony at Yale, the USC Shoah Foundation Institute and the Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem. The first of these, the Fortunoff Video Archive was begun in 1979 as a project to record video testimony of Holocaust survivors. The collection at Yale now holds more than 4,400 testimonies and over 10,000 recorded hours of videotape. These archives

were founded on the notion that the recorded testimony of witnesses and survivors are an essential source of historical knowledge. They provide an alternative perspective to the written documentation of the perpetrators but they also have a humanitarian role to, 'perpetuate the personal stories' (Yad Vashem 2016). The use of recorded survivor testimony to create audiovisual archives has been transported to a number of post-conflict societies, including Cambodia, Rwanda and Timor-Leste, with varying results. In some countries, such as Timor-Leste, despite good intentions and enormous efforts, the cost of maintaining audiovisual archives and creating the technological infrastructure to exhibit the collection has, to date, severely limited their scope.

Digital technologies, mobile devices and the internet are radically and rapidly transforming and enabling access to vast audiovisual archives. NGOs and human rights organisations, such as Witness, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, regularly employ witness testimony as an instrument of political activism. The emergence, abundance and accessibility of media have created, according to Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2010), a third memory boom. Now, they argue, memorialisation and mediatization are instantaneous, and often preconfigured into conflicts. At the same time, the appearance of footage can disrupt official narratives, a salient example being the distribution of unauthorised mobile phone images of Saddam Hussain's execution.

With this constant data stream, other problems have surfaced. Rhys Kelly (2008, p. 20) has pointed out that while digital technologies broaden the possibilities for the distribution and dissemination of testimony, 'the web might encourage forms of spectating and consumption that are deeply problematic in relation to human suffering, and which inhibit a properly active and ethical response'. Saturation and compassion fatigue are cited as byproducts of the proliferation of audiovisual representations of political violence in the 'new media ecology' (Hoskins & O'Loughlin 2010, p. 2). In fact, it may now be the scarcity of important audiovisual imagery that reinforces its value and impact. In Timor-Leste during the occupation,

videotapes of news foreign news reports and current affairs programs were smuggled into the country and circulated among clandestine networks. As I discuss later, these audiovisual artifacts encouraged and consolidated the ongoing resistance struggle.

2.6 Testimony and Documentary Film

The practice of using recorded testimony of witnesses and participants is a staple feature of television news, current affairs programs and documentaries. Witness testimony, filtered through and legitimised by media institutions, is perceived as authoritative and authentic, engaging audiences emotionally and arousing affective responses. While the interview form can be traced to the early period of synchronised sound, prototypically in Edgar Anstey's *Housing Problems* (1935), the contemporary notion of testimony in documentary filmmaking, Sarkar and Walker (2010, pp. 1-2) suggest, involves 'the migration of the testimonial scene from documentary film...to the humanitarian digital video archive—and back again.'

Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) is regularly cited as a landmark film that makes extensive use of testimony from survivors, as well as from bystanders and perpetrators, to represent the Holocaust as both a historical event and an experience re-lived in the present.³ Lanzmann's approach was controversial; he has been accused of retraumatising survivors to extract a vivid recall of their holocaust experiences (Winston 2012). In this respect, *Shoah* highlights tensions between the sacralization of the trauma story and the need to provoke the enactment of trauma (Hirsch & Spitzer 2009). However, within these tensions Lanzmann radically expanded the language

³ It is important to note the differences between audiovisual archive projects and the use of testimony in documentary production. The Shoah Foundation has specific guidelines for interviewers of Holocaust survivors http://dornsife.usc.edu/vhi/download/Interviewer_GuidelinesAugust10.pdf that emphasise a non-intrusive and gently guiding methodology completely at odds with the confrontational style of Lanzmann's *Shoah*.

of documentary testimony into performance, re-enactment and mise en scène.

Sarkar and Walker apply the term 'documentary testimony' (2010, p. 9) to first person accounts of witnesses or survivors of political oppression and human rights violations, usually presented in the interview format. They argue that documentary studies have sometimes undervalued the first person account as another form of 'talking head' (ibid, p. 2), by not linking its use in documentary to wider networks of human rights and transitional justice initiatives. In fact, testimony as an act of public remembering has become a 'privileged contemporary mode of transmission and communication' (Felman & Laub 1992, p. 6). In my own work in Timor-Leste, it would have been unthinkable not to include the voices of participants reflecting on their experiences under Indonesian rule. The power of witness testimony in documentary to give a 'voice to the voiceless' (Gugelberger & Kearney 1991), and advocate for social justice for survivors of political violence has become a primary discourse in documentary studies and documentary film production.

Annie Goldson (2014, p. 5), commenting on her own film, *Brother Number One* (2011), argues that just as the use of testimony in documentary 'provides viewers with information, the emotion that accompanies testifying engages viewers empathetically.' Goldson emphasises that testimony can be presented in a number of modalities other than the formal interview, including 'informal', 'interactive', 'spontaneous', and 'emotion as testimony' (ibid, p. 5). For Goldson, testimony is both 'unique and personal' and operates in conjunction with other voices to construct, as in a courtroom, 'an objective account of events' (ibid, p. 3). Goldson's categories, however, offer an uncritical notion of testimony, in which the affective, embodied or performative aspects provide empathetic engagement with the linguistic content.

The privileging of witness and/or survivor testimony in documentary films as a source of 'objective' knowledge can be problematic on a number of levels.

In her investigation of the psychotherapeutic practices employed for survivors of political violence, Kelly McKinney points out that memory, particularly of past trauma, 'is anything but the objective, unassimilated, literal record of some kind of event' (McKinney 2006, p. 287). As I will discuss, my work in Timor-Leste with a forensic anthropology team demonstrated that testimony has questionable value as empirical evidence. Witness testimony raises fundamental questions about the reliability of individual memory. Firstly, from the perspective of contemporary psychology and cognitive science, individual memory is increasingly conceived as malleable (Brown et al. 2012) and prone to error (Loftus 2005). For theorists of social memory, individual memory functions within a collective framework; the understanding of events—what is remembered and what is forgotten—is culturally determined (Halbwachs 1992; Connerton 1989). In Timor-Leste, spiritual beliefs about the presence of ancestors in daily life can strongly feature in personal recollections. Furthermore, testimony never occurs in an ideological vacuum. The political context in which testimony takes place and the relationship between the subject and the listener/filmmaker can radically change how and what participants remember. Finally, video testimony is a mediated text. The way testimony is filmed and structured within a narrative can radically alter its affective power, along with its authority and legitimacy as a 'truthful' recollection of events.

There is also the danger or tendency, as McKinney (2007, p. 290) points out, in relation to a range of practitioners and which applies equally to filmmakers, to idealise victims and to fit their testimony into acceptable discourses:

When processes that disavow culturally abhorrent or unsettling fantasies and desires of the victims, privilege 'accurate' memory, and sacralise trauma begin to coalesce and become mutually reinforcing, a powerful momentum is created.

Even in Western paradigms of human rights and justice, there is the risk of framing complex cultural practices in reductive narrative templates. As Patricia Foxen (2010, p. 359) has observed about Mayan practices of remembrance:

The politico-legal instrumentality of the human rights concept—based in a broader Western discourse on individualism and rationality—often veils the untidiness, complexity and cultural agency through which people experience, interpret and remember the past.

By reflecting on my own practice in Timor-Leste, my aim is to further our understanding of ‘the heterogeneity of variegated experiences and interpretations of lived events’ (Wilson 1997, p. 833), as it relates to documentary screen practice. This requires a schema for understanding and presenting the layers of memory that are revealed to a documentary filmmaker when working with participants. Formulating an approach that can encompass fantasy, performance, inaccurate testimony and spiritual beliefs alongside forensic or empirical concepts of evidence is a serious challenge. The risks are extreme relativism, narrative incoherence or the construction of a hierarchy of ontologies. Later in this thesis, I will discuss the methods I employed to grapple with these challenges in the making of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016).

2.7 Interviewing Survivors in Timor-Leste

While directing documentaries (*Luolo’s Story* 2002; *Anatomy of a Massacre* 2010) in Timor-Leste, I have interviewed multiple survivors and witnesses of violence. Similar to other interview situations, I have found the survivor/interviewer relationship to be complex, operating as it does within a wider network of perceptions, beliefs, cultural practices, alliances and political affiliations. As Antze and Lambeck (1996, p. vii) state:

Memories are never simply records of the past, but are interpretive reconstructions that bear the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural assumptions, discursive formations and practices, and social contexts of recall and commemoration.

Interviewing survivors, in comparison with other filmed interview subjects, presents some specific challenges. While negotiating the danger of retraumatising participants, one has to be careful of making assumptions about the psychological fragility of the victim or survivor.

For survivors of violence, speaking about violent events and having this testimony recorded by a documentary crew may be an act of empowerment. The healing potential of giving testimony is a dominant theory informing human rights discourses and activist documentary filmmaking, in that 'providing testimonies allows survivors to narrativise their traumas, begin to find meaning in incomprehensible experiences, and realise a modicum of voice, perhaps even an attenuated sense of agency' (Bhaskar & Walker 2010, p. 17). However, based on my own experience, this can never be assumed. The status of the exchange is highly dependent on both the context in which testimony is delivered and the evolving relationship between the witness and the filmmaker.

Over the time I spent making films in Timor-Leste, my approach to filming testimony gradually changed. Different films required different techniques but I also needed to develop new procedures in response to a noticeable shift in subjects' attitudes to giving testimony and participating in the filmmaking process. This, I argue, in the case of Timor-Leste, was partly due to the changed needs and priorities of people following independence, but it was also a consequence of changing perceptions about official testimonial practices and judicial institutions (Trindade 2008; Kent 2011; Robins 2012). Broadly speaking, this shift can be characterised as the transition from spontaneous testimony to a language of collective rights and the revalorisation of indigenous beliefs and practices.

2.8 Case Study 1 - *Luolo's Story*

East Timor – Birth of a Nation: Luolo's Story (Sully & Acquisto 2002) narrates the story of Francisco Guterres, nicknamed 'Luolo', a commander in East Timor's guerilla army who spent 24 years fighting the Indonesian occupation. When Indonesia withdrew in 1999, Luolo left his mountain camp and began the difficult transition from soldier to politician. The documentary follows

Luolo, now president of the political party FRETILIN,⁴ as he prepares for the first democratic election in Timor-Leste and tours the country during the election campaign. While making this documentary, my co-director Luigi Acquisto and I travelled in the FRETILIN convoy, entering remote villages where few, if any, Western journalists or filmmakers had been. During the election tour there were two notable occasions when witnesses of violence specifically requested an interview from us.

In 2001, in the town of Vicecque three women approached us after a FRETILIN rally at a sportsground. The women spoke the *Makasae* dialect, which our interpreter did not understand. Despite this difficulty, the women were able to communicate their desire to be interviewed. Surrounded by a dozen children, the three women sat on a bench and spoke, one after the other, for about 40 minutes, calmly but with determination. The 'interview' was in fact a survivor testimony recording, notwithstanding that we did not know what they were saying at the time. While operating the camera during the recording, my eye was fixed to the eyepiece but once, when I looked up at the scene, I saw that the children gathered around the three women were listening intently and quietly crying. The women did not shed a tear nor lose the even quality of their voices. Their demeanor remained stoic, and following the interview, the women thanked us and left. Later, the translation of the testimony revealed that the women were recounting the events of the 1983 Kraras massacre. Prior to this incident, FATANTIL⁵ guerrillas had attacked an Indonesian military post in Kraras, killing 14 soldiers. A series of Indonesian reprisals followed. On September 17, 1983 Indonesian troops rounded up all the males they could find in the area. The soldiers marched

⁴ FRETILIN, *Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente*, is a political organisation which was central to the independence struggle in Timor-Leste. Although it has become the largest political party since independence, it has not held government since 2007.

⁵ FALINTIL, *Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste*, began in 1975 as the military wing of the East Timorese political party FRETILIN. Following the Indonesian invasion it became a guerilla army.

141 men and boys to a river bank near Kraras and opened fire. Only four of them escaped with their lives. Lalerek Mutin, the place to which the surviving residents of Kraras were transferred, later became known as the 'village of widows' (CAVR 2013, p. 1969). The testimony of the three women revealed that they had lost their husbands, fathers and sons in the massacre. During Indonesian rule the women could not speak publicly about the events of that day for fear of imprisonment or death.

While they did not reveal their reasons for recounting their stories to us, the women's agency in this situation is clear. They sought out a foreign film crew, probably the first they had seen, and requested only to speak—they did not ask anything else of us. Despite the traumatic nature of their memories, they controlled their emotions to tell us their stories in a clear and precise way. Unlike a conventional documentary interview, this unsolicited recording placed the filmmakers in the position of operators of audiovisual recording devices. It was our perceived status as privileged foreign journalists that enabled the recording to take place, but the woman had used this opportunity for their own purposes. Even with the unknown content of their testimony, the affective power of their performance was unmistakable. We knew at the time that this footage would need to be closely examined. The filmmaker's control returned in post-production when the translated testimony was placed in a sequence.

During this period of filming, I recall another noteworthy example of witnesses requesting to be filmed in order to tell their stories. In the village of Bikale, a husband and wife took us to a tomb in the middle of a field. With the help of other villagers, they removed a coffin from the tomb and opened the lid to reveal the cloth-wrapped skeleton of their son. The father explained that pro-Indonesian militia killed his son before the 1999 independence referendum. He was dismembered with machetes and his remains were scattered around the field, probably in a deliberate attempt to disrupt customary burial rites. The father later collected his body parts and placed them in the coffin. As well as describing these events, the father positioned

the coffin, without instruction by us, so we could see and film the skeleton inside. The murdered son's mother then described some of the events around his death:

Before the referendum all the boys fled because the militia was going to kill them. My son was not involved in politics, he studied in Indonesia for five years. When he returned they took him. He didn't last three months. Seven of our boys and three of our girls who were educated were killed. This was a great loss (*Luolo's Story* 2002).

In both cases described above, as filmmakers we were placed in the position of secondary witnesses—of witnessing the witnesses.

An important contextual element in both these examples of survivor testimony described here is that we, as filmmakers, were travelling in a FRETILIN convoy. Our perceived alliance with a popular political party, strongly associated with the resistance movement and the successful independence struggle, would have influenced the decision of witnesses to come forward and speak to us. In the subsequent documentary I made in Timor-Leste, *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010), it was my association with a foreign team of investigators, among other factors, that again shifted the relationship and affected negotiations between interviewer and witness. I examine this change in more detail later in this chapter.

In retrospect, I better understood the political context that enabled these earlier interactions. In the period from 2000 to 2002 in Timor-Leste there was a largely positive conception of the foreign filmmaker or *journalista*. During the occupation the few Western journalists who were able to enter Timor-Leste predominantly reported on human rights abuses perpetrated by the Indonesian authorities on the East Timorese. Documentaries, news reports and articles enabled Timor-Leste to remain, if not a focus, at least on the radar of the international media. Among some older Timorese there was an awareness of the sacrifices journalists had made in order to tell the story of the invasion, although they may not have necessarily recognized the names of Roger East and the Balibo Five. Most significantly, journalist Max Stahl's

footage of the November 12, 1991 Santa Cruz Massacre is considered by former president José Ramos Horta (*Anatomy of a Massacre* 2010), among many others, to have had a crucial role in the struggle for independence. One year after the 1999 UN Intervention in Timor-Leste, I saw a worn and well-used VHS copy of *In Cold Blood: the Massacre of East Timor* (1992), the Yorkshire Television production that featured Max Stahl's footage, in a modest house in the town of Lospalos on the remote eastern tip of Timor-Leste. This was an indication of how widely this footage had been secretly disseminated around the island.

In 2001, without the fear of reprisals from Indonesian authorities, recounting stories of abuses to the media still carried the weight of a statement to the world from within a collective context of national suffering and political struggle. As I will discuss later in more detail, this narrative of the independence struggle shifts in post-independence Timor-Leste, arguably to be appropriated by political elites for the promotion of themselves and their policies and, in the process, disenfranchising many Timorese from a sense of shared national identity (Leach 2008). Examples of spontaneous testimony such as these did not occur when I returned in 2008-9.

While any actual benefits for these witnesses cannot be measured, and to make the claim of any healing effect is presumptuous, their spontaneous and unsolicited impulse to appear in the film demonstrates a local example of witnesses' and survivors' need to speak publicly about past atrocities and to have their testimony recorded. Within this culturally specific context, the act of testifying can be seen as part of a transition from victim to survivor, or 'agent of the present' (LaCapra 1992). It will be seen how this desire to speak shifted significantly between the time I made *Luolo's Story* (2002) and *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010).

2.9 A Social Schema for Remembrance

Underlying these 'modern' interpretations of this testimony are less obvious but equally significant 'customary' and 'traditional' beliefs and practices.

Damian Grenfell has outlined an ontological schema for social memory in Timor-Leste derived from Paul James's sociological framework of 'constitutive abstraction' (James 2006; Grenfell 2011). In this framework, categories such as 'customary', 'traditional', 'modern' and 'post-modern' are both material and discursive forms. James writes that this 'process of *abstraction* is constitutive of social relations and social being rather than just an activity that occurs in people's heads' (James 2006, p. 320). Grenfell applies this schema to show how different ontologies coexist and are embodied in mortuary rituals and practice for commemorating the dead in Timor-Leste.

In Grenfell's schema, the customary refers not simply to indigenous beliefs and practices but to key elements of social life. In this category direct, embodied relationships based on kinship take precedence over abstract affiliations. Customary communication is primarily oral. Production from agriculture and fishing is mainly subsistence, with a strong emphasis on barter and reciprocal exchange. The customary in Timor-Leste is structured on a metaphysical relationship between the human and the spirit world. Ritual life and *adat* (customary laws and prohibitions) are deeply concerned with maintaining balance between these two realms. Authority is invested in *lia-na'in* (customary law men).

The traditional in Timor-Leste refers to Catholicism and its particular rituals inherited from Portuguese colonialism, with a priestly authority that is not aligned by familial ties or kinship. As Grenfell (ibid, p. 98) observes, 'traditional patterns of remembrance are underpinned by a broader community of faith.' Mythologies of sacrifice in the figure of Christ and the Stations of the Cross inform commemorative rituals and memorialisation of the victims of the occupation (a point on which I will elaborate in a later chapter). Allegiance to Catholicism, weak during Portuguese rule, was imposed on the population during the occupation as part of the Indonesian state *Pancasila* policy to suppress indigenous customs and beliefs in favour of theist religions. Catholicism attained and retained popularity not through authoritarian coercion but because of the sacrifices of individual priests and

nuns who gave protection to civilians, and the support for the resistance provided by the clergy (McWilliam 2011, p. 377). However, adherence to Catholic traditions has not extinguished the importance of customary practices, particularly in rural areas.

The modern is a social formation based on more abstract relationships. As Benedict Anderson (1991, p. 6) observes, 'all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined.' In this category, the secular replaces religious and spiritual authority. According to Grenfell (ibid, p. 98), this is the category in which concept of 'nation' is formed, and 'remembering is differentiated within the context of the modern nation as it occurs across a secular, territorially and temporally bound community of strangers.' National identity in Timor-Leste is strongly linked to the narrative of the liberation struggle. However, Elizabeth Traube (2011) has shown that formations of national identity reconfigured through indigenous mythologies during the occupation have provided an alternative to imported notions of nationhood.

In Timor-Leste customary beliefs and prohibitions profoundly influence discussions of death and the dead. While the majority of East Timorese identify as Catholic, customary beliefs are widespread, even among the elite of Dili. Central to the customary worldview is the need to maintain equilibrium between the realm of the spirits and the domain of the living:

Among the Timorese, this real life/non-physical life is translated into their view of the world, their cosmology and the world where they live...whereby the secular is inhabited by living things and the cosmos by the sprits and the ancestors (Babo-Soares 2004, p. 22).

For the survivors of the violence of the militia and Indonesian armed forces, a recurring source of distress has been the inability to perform the correct mortuary rituals for their dead family members. This is particularly acute when bodies are missing, since mortuary rituals require the burial, and sometimes reburial, of remains. Moreover, violent or 'bad' deaths are also

understood as disruptions to social and cosmological relations (Robins 2010). The deceased victims' spirits are believed to be 'wandering ghosts' and must be treated in 'ritually prescribed ways to render them spiritually harmless' (McWilliam 2006, p. 110).

Grenfell (2011) argues that while remembering the dead in Timor-Leste occurs at the intersection of the customary and the traditional, it is also overlain with modern memory practices, particularly when associated with the occupation and the resistance struggle. The testimonies at Viqueque and Bikale, described earlier, operate then on a number of coexisting ontological levels: the demand for justice; the spiritual need to bury the dead in the appropriate way; and to honour those who died in the struggle for independence. To understand these meanings provides a more layered reading of testimony in Timor-Leste than does its frequent framing within the trauma paradigm and the 'therapeutic ethos' that accompanies it.

2.10 Trauma and Testimony

Interviewing survivors of political violence clearly requires sensitivity, given the grief and distress that is provoked by asking participants to recall and recount certain events. While acknowledging this risk, therapeutic methods have been developed that propose the narrating traumatic experiences, spoken within a collective context of political struggle, can contribute to healing. Procedures based on these ideas have been adopted by clinicians in Chile and Bosnia for survivors of torture and violence. Nevertheless, a number of researchers have questioned the benefits of imported testimonial and public truth-telling processes in Timor-Leste. (Robins 2010; Toome 2013; Kent 2011; Silove et al. 2006). Developing a documentary filmmaking methodology in Timor-Leste has required the consideration of the 'trauma paradigm', as well as the claims of the healing benefit of testimonial projects.

Trauma so predominates in contemporary theories of witnessing and testimony that it has become 'the paradigm for the historical event' (Douglass and Vogler 2003, p. 5). Alongside the interest in trauma within cultural

studies, a 'therapeutic ethos' has emerged which pathologises victims of political violence and war-affected populations using a 'bio-psychological model' (Toome 2013). In this context, a new mental health specialty has been developed to treat survivors suffering the psychological effects of traumatic experiences (McKinney 2007). Western models for the treatment of trauma have also informed humanitarian interventions and transitional justice institutions in what has been characterised as the 'therapeutic security paradigm' (Pupavac 2004). Underlying the trauma paradigm in these fields is the notion that narrativising traumatic memory has healing benefits. Truth commissions have extended these therapeutic objectives towards collective goals of attaining historical 'truth', justice and reconciliation.

2.11 Traumatic Memory

Various interpretations of the trauma narrative are now commonly used in treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and for victims of violence. The concept can be traced to early 20th century psychiatry. In 1919, the French psychiatrist Pierre Janet (as cited in Leys 2000, p. 111) linked psychological health to the ability to construct narratives of lived experience:

Memory, like belief, like all psychological phenomena, is an action; essentially, it is the action of telling a story... The teller must not only know how to [narrate the event], but must also know how to associate the happening with the other events of his life, how to put it in its place in that life-history which each one of us is perpetually building up and which for each one of us is an essential element of his personality.

For Janet, the traumatic experience itself can rupture a survivor's ability to tell the story of the event. 'Traumatic memory' refuses to be integrated into 'narrative memory'. Rather than remembering the traumatic event, it is re-lived in intense emotional reactions, nightmares, horrifying images, physical pain or aggressive behaviour. Janet (as cited in Van der Kolk & Van der Hart 1995, p. 160) further stated that:

It is only for convenience that we speak of...a 'traumatic memory'. The subject is often incapable of making the necessary narrative which we call memory regarding the event; and yet he remains confronted by a

difficult situation in which he has not been able to play a satisfactory part.

Dutch psychiatrists van der Kolk and van der Hart claim Janet as a key influence on their own work with sufferers of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In their interpretation of Janet, trauma is also essentially non-verbal and non-social in that 'it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody: it is a solitary activity' (1995, p. 153). The process of recovery requires the transformation of the trauma into narrative memory allowing it to be verbalised and communicated. As Janet (cited in Leys 2000, p. 111) wrote:

A situation has not been satisfactorily liquidated, has not been fully assimilated, until we have achieved, not merely an outward reaction through our movements, but also an inward reaction through the words we address to ourselves, through the organisation of the recital of the event to others and to ourselves, and to the putting the recital in its place as one of the chapters of our personal history.

The disruptive power of the traumatic memory is linked to an inability to both communicate it and to place it within an autobiographical narrative. In the therapeutic context, telling the entire story of the traumatic event and assigning it to narrative memory is thereby the final stage of healing, which can lead to 'complete recovery', according to Van der Kolk and Van der Hart (ibid, p. 176):

Traumatic memories are the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language. It appears that, in order for this to occur successfully, the traumatised person has to return to the memory often in order to complete it.

Thus, the process of transforming the trauma into a coherent narrative that can be recounted becomes the therapeutic act.

Increasingly, this trauma model and the therapeutic retelling of traumatic memories have become mainstream clinical theory and practice (Silove et al. 2006, p. 1223). The procedure of 'flooding' or re-living the traumatic experience in therapy with the guidance of a therapist is a technique

designed to help patients cope with the recurrent suffering caused by past events. Exposure therapy, in particular ‘prolonged exposure therapy’, is a favoured therapeutic technique for treating PTSD (Foa, Keane & Friedman 2000; Foa 2011) that is currently used by the US military to treat their returning soldiers suffering the disorder.

2.12 Critiques of the Trauma Paradigm

In recent years, a number of researchers have suggested that Western psychological models should not be applied universally (Zarowsky 2004; Summerfield 1997). Derek Summerfield has argued that therapeutic practices developed in affluent societies are rarely successful in impoverished settings. Firstly, material or political conditions are frequently a far more significant factor in prolonging distress than are personal psychological problems. Indeed, as Summerfield (1997, p. 14) suggests:

The notion that war collapses down in the head of an individual survivor to a discrete mental entity, the ‘trauma’, that can be simply tackled by Western counselling or other talk therapy seems largely ridiculous.

In addition, the focus on the individual in psychotherapy is culturally specific and is less relevant in contexts where suffering is understood as a collective and social experience. Christina Zarowsky (2004, p. 189), for example, observed that in Somali refugees, the focus of their emotional disturbance was social rupture and injustice, rather than private distress.

In Timor-Leste, emotional distress and mental illness are understood within local idioms such as such as *hanoin barak* (‘thinking too much’), or the less polite *bulak* (‘crazy’) (Silove et al. 2005, p. 196). Such symptoms are often understood to arise from a failure to observe customary practices or ritual duties (Robins 2010, p. 63; Silove et al. 2008, p. 1207; Stead 2012, pp. 242–3). In his assessment of the families of the missing in Timor-Leste, Simon Robins (2012, p. 54) observes that ‘the world of the spirits drives the needs of families of the Missing more than any other single factor.’ In this social and

symbolic system where individuals and communities have developed their own methods for understanding and dealing with the aftermath of violent experiences, 'it also appears that some of the emotional and psychological issues arising from what a Western approach would consider trauma and loss are ascribed to the action of spirits' (ibid, p. 52). One family interviewed by Robins claimed that 'The spirit of the victim made our life have no movement' (ibid, p. 52). Victoria Kumala Sakti (2013, p. 440) suggests that in attempting to understand the emotional effects of unresolved conflicts and 'bad deaths', 'emotion expressions cannot be conflated with universalised psychological concepts such as trauma, [and] post-traumatic stress disorder.'

There is a danger of romanticising indigenous forms. As Volker Boege observes, customary practices in post-conflict societies where 'violence permeates the everyday life,' often 'contradict universal standards of human rights and democracy', 'are geared towards the preservation of the 'good old' order', and 'are open to abuse' (Boege 2007, p. 16). There is, however, an equal risk of denigrating or dismissing customary practices as tribal or primitive. Toome (2013) suggests that while it may be desirable to introduce Western health and psychological concepts and treatments, this would need to be negotiated within customary practice. When health is embedded in relational and collective understandings, the re-establishment of communal rituals may be more therapeutic than biomedical interventions that treat entire communities or nations as traumatised.

Toome (2013) argues that the pathologising of trauma in Timor-Leste has underestimated the resilience of individuals and communities and draws attention away from social and political solutions. The institutions of transitional justice there have also been criticised for insufficiently engaging with local practices of remembrance and mourning (Robins 2010; Kent 2011). Furthermore, the emphasis on oral testimony may lead to the devaluation of non-verbal and performative forms of commemoration and social healing.

Jacqueline Siapno (2012, p. 435) has researched dance and martial arts in

Timor-Leste, observing the way that traditional dance forms such as the *sau satar*, or corn harvest ritual, are 'performances of resilience'. She writes that 'Practising and exercising *soro tais* or any of the dance forms every day is an exercise of survival, strength and embodying peace' (ibid, p. 435). Re-establishing patterns of daily, social relations and ceremonial life, including re-building *uma lulik* or spirit houses, as well as honouring the ancestors by identifying and burying the dead, are ways of speaking 'beyond trauma' for communities in Timor-Leste.

2.13 The Testimony Method

Recognising the collective dimension of conflict and state repression, therapeutic practices that prioritise the transformation of survivor testimony into historical and political narratives have been developed. In the early 1970s Chilean health professionals began treating individuals who had suffered under the military dictatorship using the 'testimony method' (Cienfuegos & Monelli 1983). In this approach, the therapist recorded testimony onto audiotape, which the therapist and patient then transcribed into a written document. This de-medicalising of the procedure was found to be beneficial on a number of levels. Firstly, private suffering was placed in the context of political struggle:

The therapeutic process of testimony helps patients to integrate the traumatic experience into their lives by identifying its significance in the context of political and social events as well as the context of their personal history (ibid, p. 50).

Secondly, individual testimony was translated into a written document that would have evidential value for future prosecutions:

Communication of traumatic events through testimony may also have been useful in the present study because it channeled the patients' anger into a socially constructive action-production of a document that could be used as an indictment against the offenders (ibid, p. 50).

In the testimony method, the clinician's role is expanded into the discourse of human rights and bearing witness to political violence. It has since been

adapted for similar narrative-based therapies for treating survivors of war and state repression in other situations.

Renos Papadopoulos (1998, p. 472) describes creating a context of 'therapeutic witnessing' during his work with a group of Bosnian ex-prison camp inmates:

Thus, ultimately, the healing of these painful experiences due to atrocities may not lie in devising sophisticated therapeutic techniques but in returning to more traditional forms of healing based on assisting people to develop appropriate narratives. The healing effect of storytelling, in its multiple variations, has always been a well-known phenomenon.

Other applications of the method have included oral history projects such as Stevan Weine's work with Bosnian refugees. Weine has focused on the clinician's role in witnessing 'historical reality' in which there is an additional redemptive and political imperative to prevent future conflict. In the 'psycho-historical' approach, therapists actively shape their patients' testimony into acceptable master narratives. This may require therapists to steer 'survivors' stories away from ethnic hatreds toward a perspective that values universal human rights above all else' (Weine et al. 1998, p. 1724). Weine acknowledges that in this method survivor testimony is subject to 'myth, revisionism and ignorance' (Weine & Laub 1995, p. 251) that need to be corrected.

In the context of political violence and denial by perpetrators, the use of inaccurate testimony or divisive language risks discrediting witnesses, and supporting the denial of persecutors. However, the intervention of outsiders to establish the 'true' meaning of testimony is equally questionable, particularly when this involves both the sanitation and, as La Capra (2001, p. 93) calls it, the 'sacralization' of survivor memory into permissible narratives. This is a particular concern in cultures where customary worldviews are prevalent. In those cases, the imposition of Western redemptive narratives risks becoming another form of colonisation in the guise of liberal peace building.

Nevertheless, Western discourses and formal judicial processes are not necessarily incompatible with customary understandings. Patricia Foxen (2010, p. 364) points out, in her examination of K'iche' Mayan memory practices, that indigenous people have the ability to balance a variety of worldviews and explanations for past brutalities:

For Mayans of the post-war era, this process is influenced by the pragmatism of global discourses (e.g. human rights, ethnic movements, etc.) as well as the messiness of local, subjective histories and interpretations; by 'traditional' and 'modern' world-views and moral frameworks; and by the friction and overlap between individual 'private' memories and collective 'public' memories.

Understanding the complexities of memory requires an approach capable of framing 'truth' outside of the institutions in 'which memories are formally narrated' (ibid, p. 363).

In Timor-Leste, testimony operates in a way analogous to other remembrance practices, in which customary, traditional and modern frameworks can function simultaneously, but with varying degrees of prominence. The balance between these understandings must inevitably shift in response to social and political change. As well as the spontaneous restitution of customary practices following the end of Indonesian repression (Grenfell 2011, p. 97), I argue that the popular expectations of—and subsequent disappointment with—the transitional justice process has had a fundamental impact on testimony and remembrance practices in Timor-Leste.

2.14 Transitional Justice and the Therapeutic Ethos in Timor-Leste

In mid-2001 the United Nations mandated the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (Comissao de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliacao, or CAVR), to undertake a nationwide truth-seeking process, organise community reconciliation hearings and make recommendations to the government of Timor-Leste. With a non-judicial remit and unable to

summon the most serious perpetrators of violence in Indonesia, CAVR was limited to a truth-seeking and reconciliation role. Like other truth commissions before it, CAVR (2005, p. 9) adopted the narrative of national healing through truth telling:

Many nations have come to the consensus that in order to leave the evils of the past behind and move forward and in order to heal the wounds inflicted in the past, it is necessary to open these wounds and cleanse them.

During its work from early 2002 until October 2005, the commission collected nearly 8,000 statements; conducted more than 1,000 interviews; held 52 victims' hearings; and eight national public hearings. The CAVR harnessed the need of many people to speak publicly about events and experiences about which they had kept silent for many years, sometimes decades.

CAVR's final report *Chega!* was submitted to parliament in October 2005. The report covered the entire period of the conflict from April 1974 to October 1999, and included political violence that occurred prior to the invasion. *Chega!* presented evidence of accountability, including substantial findings of responsibility against Indonesia and its security forces. It recommended, among other things, the re-establishment and improvement of the serious crimes process, and establishment of an international tribunal, should justice fail to be delivered by other means.⁶

There is substantial literature about the transitional justice process in Timor-Leste and CAVR in particular. Much of the literature acknowledges the work of CAVR while criticising the failure of the East Timorese government and international community to act on its recommendations (Kinsella & Pereira

⁶ Despite criticism of the transitional justice process in Timor-Leste, *Chega!* The Report of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste (CAVR 2013) is the definitive account of the 1974-1999 period. It has been noted that this publically available and downloadable resource is invaluable for researchers interested in the Indonesian invasion and occupation (Kingsbury 2009, p. ix). Importantly for this thesis, *Chega!* is a work of institutional historical scholarship whose primary source is witness testimony.

2010; Nevins 2005; Cohen 2002; Hirst & Varney 2005; Hirst 2008). An institution that promised national healing through truth telling but was unable to bring the most serious perpetrators to justice was bound to disappoint. Without the power to summon witnesses from Indonesia, there was no possibility of a cathartic reconciliation between victims and perpetrators, outside of the Community Reconciliation Program (CPR), which dealt only with minor crimes committed in 1999. While I focus on CAVR, other transitional justice mechanisms were implemented in Timor-Leste, including a second truth commission, the Commission for Truth and Friendship (CTF), which Indonesia and Timor-Leste created bilaterally in 2005; and the serious crimes process (the Special Panels and the Serious Crimes Unit) to investigate serious human rights violations committed in 1999. Despite the work of these institutions, no high-ranking perpetrators have faced the courts in Indonesia or Timor-Leste.

Some commentators have also questioned the healing claims embedded in the transitional justice discourse of CAVR. Truth commissions propose a therapeutic paradigm in which the publicly offered testimony of victims and perpetrators provides opportunities for individuals and nations to heal (Minow 1998, p. 61). However, as Pupavac points out, the transformation of Western psychological models designed to treat individuals with 'mass psychotherapy' (Pupavac 2004a, p. 159) in which catharsis and closure are projected onto post-conflict societies is problematic on a number of levels. Pupavac writes that 'international emotional management may be jeopardising local strategies, destabilising communal ties and increasing individuals' vulnerability' (ibid, p. 162). Just as Western psychotherapeutic models may be inappropriate for treating individuals in non-Western cultures, pathologising nations by using a trauma paradigm may be equally alienated from local understandings and needs.

The cathartic aspirations of CAVR may be questioned on the basis of the predominant focus of many East Timorese on justice and compensation. Lia Kent (2006) observes that despite the best intentions of the CAVR, East Timorese political leaders have ignored its recommendations while

appropriating the rhetoric of forgiveness and reconciliation in order to argue against the establishment of an international criminal tribunal to prosecute members of Indonesia's military. President Xanana Gusmao postponed making the *Chega!* Report public, and later criticised its 'grandiose idealism' (Kingston 2006, p. 281). Gusmao argued that the Timor-Leste government could not act on the report's recommendation to pursue justice without international support for a tribunal—to do so would threaten Timor-Leste's stability and leave it dangerously vulnerable. Ramos Horta later said that 'the last thing that Australia and the United States wants is an international tribunal against Indonesia' (*Anatomy of a Massacre* 2010). Other commentators have recognized the risks for Timor-Leste if it attempts to pursue justice against high-ranking Indonesians without the support of key international players: 'Timor-Leste's political leadership is severely constrained by the need to maintain a working relationship with Indonesia...the pursuit of justice is, first and foremost, an international responsibility' (Nevins 2005, p. 212). Nevertheless, the promotion of reconciliation without accountability or justice has fostered disappointment and resentment among many Timorese people.

During the filming of *Anatomy of a Massacre* during 2008-2009, the view that it was the responsibility of Timor-Leste's government to pursue Indonesian perpetrators of human rights abuses and war crimes became clear in interviews with the families of the missing:

Antonio Da Silva: If they were killed by the army, they must be brought to justice. The leaders can reconcile with each and be good neighbours, but that doesn't mean that we should forget about the justice that needs to be put forward.

Mariano Do Rego: Talking about justice, in our point of view military killing civilians is not good. So, for us, the process of justice can remain in the future but more important is the process of finding the remains of our families. First we would like to have the remains and then do the justice. It is in the hands of our government or the leaders of Timor-Leste (*Anatomy of a Massacre* 2010).

The popular resentment of the East Timorese leadership's policies of

reconciliation towards Indonesia is identified by Michael Leach (2012) as one of the 'fault lines' that has emerged since liberation.

Simon Robin's victim-centered evaluation of Timor-Leste's transitional justice process offers a damning critique of CAVR's approach and outcomes. Truth commissions, according to Robins (2012, p. 22) 'objectify the victims to support the broader aims of the state.' Despite CAVR's rhetoric of offering a platform for healing through public testimony, most victims 'remain as silenced now as during the conflict, despite the fetishisation of the testimony that emerged' (ibid, p. 104). While some victims appreciated the opportunity to confront perpetrators of non-violent crimes through the Community Reconciliation Process (CPR), many East Timorese believed that reconciliation and truth telling would be a step towards a broader process of justice. Without the anticipated justice, locals felt that public truth telling had merely 're-opened their wounds' (Kent 2004, p. 45), and left them unresolved.

Lia Kent has argued that CAVR's proclaimed 'grand narrative of forgiveness and redemption' (2011, p. 438) is not necessarily translatable into local concepts of truth, justice and commemoration, and that 'individuals and local communities are attempting to 'remake a world' in ways that may differ markedly from the formal goals of official transitional justice institutions' (ibid, p. 439). Communities around Timor-Leste have found ways to mourn, express grief and commemorate the dead and missing using customary and traditional practices and beliefs:

Local practices of memorialisation and commemoration can be understood as highly localised and deeply personal attempts to 'remake a world' by remembering the past, mourning the dead and respecting and honouring the ancestors (ibid, p. 442).

In towns like Suai and Liquica, communities have initiated practices that every year commemorate massacres that took place following the 1999 referendum. The annual mass and procession to the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili to commemorate on the November 12, 1991 massacre is another

example; one with special significance.

2.15 The Santa Cruz Massacre

The Santa Cruz massacre occurred on November 12, 1991 when Indonesian armed forces fired on 3,500 East Timorese protestors at the Santa Cruz Cemetery in Dili. There was also allegedly a second massacre which took place at a military hospital where, it has been claimed, injured protestors were poisoned and crushed to death by military vehicles (CAVR 2013, pp. 1010-1011). The barriers to any independent investigation at the time of the massacre made it impossible to know precise numbers of the dead and missing but *Chega!* estimated the number of missing individuals to be around 200 (ibid, p. 1012). A significant feature that distinguishes the Santa Cruz massacre from others is that members of the foreign media were present, and it was filmed by the British journalist Max Stahl. The footage was received internationally as critical evidence of the Indonesian repression in East Timor (CAVR 2013, p. 265).

The Santa Cruz massacre, described as ‘perhaps the most notorious single act of violence by Indonesian authorities’ (Rae 2003, p. 115), is significant for the Timorese because of the number of young people killed. The tragedy is seen as a turning point in the ‘struggle for international recognition’ (CAVR 2013, p. 265) and ultimately, independence. In 2004, November 12 was declared a public holiday (National Youth Day) in Timor-Leste. Decades after the massacre, its commemoration is no less significant, with thousands of people, including the president and prime minister of Timor-Leste, participating in the re-enactment of the procession from Motael Church to the Santa Cruz cemetery. The November 12 commemoration of the Santa Cruz massacre embodies a number of ontological categories, and combines customary and traditional rituals with modern commemorative practices. The commemoration encompasses nation-building narratives with demands for justice, collective mourning, and intimate family rituals for honouring the dead. Importantly, it is founded on a deeply embedded media memory.

2.16 Case Study 2 - *Anatomy of a Massacre*

The broader debates around the value of public truth telling and the political challenges of implementing justice have had noticeable effects on my filmmaking practice. From the time of making *Luolo's Story* in 2000-2001, there was a shift from spontaneous testimony being offered to a more guarded response by participants when they were asked to give testimony during the filming of *Anatomy of a Massacre* in 2008-2009. There was also a discernible suspicion, often overtly stated by East Timorese participants, about whether Western journalists and filmmakers had any substantial benefits to offer in return for their participation.

While participants expressed their disillusionment with both official processes and the Western media, there remained the awareness that testimony could be an empowering act and a political instrument, although this was linked increasingly to community-based activism. As Kent (2011, p. 434) has observed, East Timorese victims' groups had found ways to adapt the language of human rights to demand recognition and support. This has been the case with the 12th November committee's⁷ active lobbying for government funding and support for the search for missing victims of the Santa Cruz massacre and for the creation of a permanent memorial.

Along with the adoption and adaptation of 'modern' narratives of commemoration, communal demands for justice and recognition have included the insistence that customary rites and processes are respected and followed. During the filming of the forensic archeology process with the IFT, a representative of the families of the missing approached the team's leader, Dr Soren Blau, and explained that while the families supported the

⁷ The 12th November Committee is a survivor's group led by former members of the clandestine civilian movement including Gregorio Saldanha, one of the organisers of the original protest march to the Santa Cruz cemetery on November 12, 1991.

investigation, the bodies would not be found unless the correct rituals were followed and the spirits were asked for guidance:

According to our tradition, they are the victims of the 12th of November. We have come to dig and find their bones but without the ritual we will not be able to find them (*Anatomy of a Massacre* 2010).

Work was suspended until an evening ritual was performed with about 80 relatives of the missing under the supervision of local spiritual leaders. Dr Blau attended the ritual and observed that 'The terminology would be unscientific but that does not minimise the importance to the families' (ibid 2008). When continuing efforts by the forensic team yielded no results, the families took matters into their own hands. They used spirit mediums to help find the graves and hired their own excavators to continue the search.

Importantly, the families of the missing were not content to passively accept the findings of the forensic team. They mobilised all the resources available to them to continue the search. While members of the families expressed collective, ritualised wailing at key moments during the investigation, their activities were well organised and politically astute. Allen Feldman (2004, p. 176) has made a comparable observation of women testifying before South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

These women did not take the stand as atomised traumatised victims, but as representatives and embodied signifiers for the disappeared and the dead. In addition to the acoustic and gestural antiphonal dynamics between these women's accounts and the community-based audience's response, the entire call and response performance existed in an emotionally powerful relation to absence—to the silenced and the dead who would never testify. The presence of these women, and the shadows they brought into the hearing room, evoked the historical depth and recesses of their witness that could not be captured in literal speech. Refusing to ground their language in individualized knots of the traumatic, these women invoked a dialogic of presencing the unreachable, of giving 'impossible witness'.

Like these women, the families of the missing Santa Cruz victims were not acting out traumatised responses, rather they were engaged actors with political agency.

The relatives of the missing who participated in *Anatomy of a Massacre* exemplified the schema outlined by Grenfell of the 'holding together of multiple ontological formations simultaneously' (2012, p. 92). These shifting ontologies were, however, challenging to the forensic team's need for empirical evidence and for the documentary's investigation of a historical incident. Jacinto De Oliveira took me to a location where he believed his missing son Domingos was buried. When I asked him how he knew this, he claimed that his daughter had seen Domingos at this place in a dream. When Jacinto came in person to investigate, he claimed that he encountered the ghost of a fisherman who pointed to an area on the side of a hill. The father later erected a small cement cross here. It was at this site that he wanted the forensic team to continue their investigations. The IFT were faced with a range of stories about the location of mass graves, most of which proved to be either unreliable or based on 'visions'.

The investigation continued at another site, Hera, where a witness, Alessandro Ruas Hornai, offered very accurate information. This witness stated that he had been coerced by the Indonesian military to dig graves and bury 19 bodies that he had overheard were victims of the Santa Cruz massacre. The forensic team accepted the credibility of his account, and subsequently exhumed the remains of 16 men at Hera. They successfully identified 11 individuals using DNA matching with families of the missing. While in this case spiritual beliefs did not inhibit the witness from accurately remembering the past events, it often appeared that in the absence of knowledge and certainty, spiritual beliefs filled, for some, the emotional need for answers. If science could not provide a solution then customary knowledge could. In another example, even after DNA evidence proved otherwise, one family member, Antonio Da Silva, refused to accept that his brother was not found as expected in a grave site:

The forensic team wants to identify through the blood test, I just kept quiet. But we know that Chico was in that hole (*Anatomy of a Massacre* 2010).

Representing multiple ontologies was a challenge for an investigatory

documentary focused on a forensic science process. Firstly, presenting 'inaccurate' testimony risked undermining the historical validity of the massacre that could lead to doubt about its scale and impact. Secondly, contrasting an empirical methodology with indigenous beliefs can easily lead to an ontological hierarchy, in which local practices and understanding appear naïve or primitive.

While a forensic procedure may provide powerful 'truth' claims, as a historical methodology it has a limited focus. It can only present knowledge based on physical evidence that, in the aftermath of state violence and political repression, may be difficult to obtain. As Rachel Cyr (2014, p. 81) observes, the 'forensic landscape' has no significance without a crime scene. The forensic scientist requires material traces and human remains in order to construct a narrative of the past. This thesis will investigate documentary models and techniques for balancing these contrasting and/or conflicting frameworks.

2.17 Conclusion

The urgency to present the voices of victims and survivors of political violence is a legitimate function of documentary film practice. In a context of denial and impunity, documentary filmmaking contributes to historical knowledge. It provides survivors the agency to tell their stories, often after years of oppression and silence. Witness testimony incorporates the details and affective texture of lived experience that give audiences an emotive and embodied understanding of historical events. As noted previously, video testimony has become a privileged genre in Holocaust discourse. The ability of video testimony to exhibit facial expression, gesture and re-enactment augments the historical archive with the sense memory of survivors. Yet video testimony may also abstract the moments of muteness and collapse as those that most closely reveal the "truth' of the event' (Hirsch and Spitzer 2009, p. 158). The foregrounding of the traumatised witness has become a dominant paradigm in a range of Western discourses. This may, as I have suggested, lead to undervaluing local and collective strategies of resilience

and recovery, and to overlooking indigenous epistemologies.

In Timor-Leste, dynamic shifts in political and cultural conditions have been reflected in witness testimony during an unprecedented transition from occupied territory to sovereign nation. Critically, witness testimony has also been seen to embody a complex cultural schema in which customary, traditional and modern ontologies coexist. Testimony is however only one method by which documentary film can examine memories of political violence. To this end, filmmakers have explored a range of performative, reflexive and interactive techniques. In addition, commemorative rituals, which are usually linked to specific sites of remembrance, offer a framework for observing the struggles and negotiations between official histories and local or vernacular understandings of the past.

Chapter 3 – Place, Occupation, Memory

3.1 Introduction

‘Where there is experience in the strict sense of the word, certain contents of the individual past combine with material of the collective past.’

- Walter Benjamin 1939, p.316

On the western edge of Dili a grey stretch of besa brick shops lines both sides of a dusty road dotted with potholes. This is the national highway, the main route in and out of the capital. At certain times of the day, the small shopping strip buzzes with activity. School kids, commuter buses, goats and pigs bring traffic to a slow crawl. Travelling further west past the abandoned Australian army base, most visitors would not observe the three lakes just inland on the left. Some might notice the statue of John Paul II perched on the rocky promontory ahead and gazing out to sea with hands outstretched. This area is called Tasi Tolu, literally ‘three lakes’ in Tetum. The fact that the lakes are virtually invisible to the passing traveller while being so significant to the residents of Timor-Leste articulates the key oppositions that I will explore in this chapter; the presence and disappearance of physical remains, of living inhabitants, and of memory itself.

In the previous chapter I addressed the use of individual testimony in documentary. In this chapter I use theories of collective memory (Halbwachs 1992; Nora 1989; Winter 2010; Connerton 1989) to examine the culture of remembrance in Timor-Leste and pose the questions of why some places become significant sites of commemoration while others are neglected; and to what extent individual memories are shaped by preexisting social understandings. I discuss the politics of memory and forgetting in Timor-Leste in the context of Indonesian colonisation, post-colonial nation building, and the recent wave of economic development within a discourse of neo-liberalism and globalisation. I examine the role of audiovisual media in preserving memories of occupation in Timor-Leste and how this has contributed to enshrining certain locations as both historically significant and

culturally relevant. A central question of this thesis is why Santa Cruz is a site of memory, and Tasi Tolu a site of forgetting. With this in mind, I refer to the process of making the documentary *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016), and ask how this film may contribute to historical understanding and the preservation of memory.

The counter-memories and counter-histories of the resistance struggle from the time of Indonesian colonisation have become the part of the official history of independent Timor-Leste. Just what is included and what is excluded from this narrative reflects the interests of dominant state actors. I argue that documentary film's ability to preserve the memories and voices of under-represented Timorese individuals and communities has the potential to add diversity and complexity to the national discourse. By providing an audiovisual narrative that can be distributed and viewed in Timor-Leste and more widely, documentary film potentially counters the processes of forgetting.

3.2 Collective Memory

The notion of collective memory has been used in a number of disciplines including sociology (Connerton 1989; Olick 1999), history (Nora 1989; Winter 2010; Asserman 1995), cognitive psychology (Harris, Patterson & Kemp 2008), and philosophy (Ricoeur 2004), yet it is hard to define and its meaning has been disputed. Some scholars have rejected the term, suggesting that 'collective memory' has subsumed those areas previously designated by 'myth' (Gedi & Elam 1996, p. 41), that it is merely 'replacing old favourites' such as 'nature, culture and language' (Klein 2000, p. 128). Theories of extended or distributed cognition have incited intense debates about the relationship between individual memory and external memory systems (Michaelian & Sutton 2013). Paul Connerton, writing in 1989, argued that despite 'the pervasiveness of social memory in the conduct of everyday life' (p. 21), until recently, collective memory had been largely ignored in cultural studies.

The writings of sociologist Maurice Halbwachs form the basis of many contemporary theories of collective memory. Halbwachs proposes that the study of memory should be concerned with how minds work together in society and how memory is structured by social arrangements, since 'It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize and localise their memories' (Halbwachs 1992, p. 38). Halbwachs does not reject the notion of individual memory, but asserts that social frameworks provide the structure for memory and inform what individuals remember and forget. The frameworks for memory are the family, religious, and national groups with whom we associate and identify. These groups can even provide memories of events that individuals never directly experienced. Over time, individual memories become less distinct and so increasingly require a social context. Memories then become preserved within socially available narratives that shape and store them.

The psychologist Frederick Bartlett (1995) criticised Halbwachs for conflating individual memory with collective memory, as though the group itself had some sort of memory or consciousness. However Halbwachs clearly stated that 'While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember' (1992, p. 48). Bartlett's (1995) conception of 'memory in the group, (but) not memory of the group' (p. 294), is not dissimilar to Halbwachs's notion of collective memory. The idea of the group having some sort of agency in the process of remembering has been called the 'strong version' of collective memory by the anthropologist James Wertsch (2002, p. 119). Borrowing and extending the concept of distributed cognition from cognitive science (Kourken & Sutton 2013), Wertsch (2009, p. 119). proposes a 'distributed version' of collective memory where memory is distributed in small group interactions or 'collaborative remembering' as well as 'instrumentally' involving both active agents and instruments that mediate remembering. Human interaction with written texts, narratives and other cultural tools are a necessary component to understand how memory works but as Wertsch acknowledges, the emphasis of linguistic forms of representation of the past has been challenged.

In *How Societies Remember* (1989), Connerton discusses how informal communication and storytelling are features of all communal memory, but in order to explain the persistence of shared understandings of the past within society it is necessary to look at commemorative rituals and bodily practices 'it is the study of these...that leads us to see that images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances' (p. 40). The re-enactment of the past in ritual performances is not only communicative, it is a mechanism that reinforces collective experience in the present, whereby 'a community is reminded of its identity as represented by and told in a master narrative' (ibid, p. 70). Connerton's critique of the privileging of 'inscribing practices' over 'incorporating practices' (ibid, p. 100-101) in discussions of memory has particular significance in Timor-Leste, where illiteracy is still widespread, particularly among the older generation. Ritual performance is a central aspect of Timorese culture and, as I will show, the predominant context in which knowledge about the past is shared in local communities.

3.3 History and Collective Memory

Collective memory is frequently presented in opposition to analytic or formal history. Halbwachs himself (1992, p. 80) drew a sharp distinction between the two, based on the notion that collective memory primarily serves the present day interests of the group:

Collective memory differs from history in at least two respects. It is a current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial, for it retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive.

For Halbwachs, history comes into being after a living memory culture has disappeared.

As noted earlier, some historians have expressed misgivings about the current scholarly interest in memory. Kerwin Lee Klein (2000) and Charles Maier (1993) have viewed the memory boom as a political identity project

that threatens to usurp the value of historical methodology. Other scholars, such as Zamora (1997) and Wertsch (2009), who acknowledge that collective memory is an identifiable social process, contrast analytic history, which employs evidence and interpretive procedures, with collective remembering's requirements of a 'usable past' (Wersch 2009, p. 123) and narratives that affirm communal identity.

However, theorists such as Hayden White (1980, 1984) and Peter Burke (1998) have questioned the 'truth' claims that positivist history makes to distinguish itself from remembrance. Burke (1989, p. 98), sees history as a certain type of cultural memory so that:

[N]either memories nor histories seem objective any longer. In both cases we are learning to take account of conscious or unconscious selection, interpretation and distortion. In both cases this selection, interpretation and distortion is socially conditioned.

Hayden White links fiction and historical writing via 'narrativity' (1980, pp. 5-27). The process of transforming a chronicle of events into a historical narrative embeds 'story types'—epic, romance, tragedy, comedy or farce—as a 'secondary referent' (1984, p. 21). According to White, it is narrative form that endows historical accounts with meaning. Historical realism becomes an effect of narrative coherence rather than a scientific explanation of events based on the examination of evidence. Moreover, in order to distinguish itself from fiction, historical narrative adopts the rhetorical mode of 'declamation' (White 1982, p. 122), which entails stylistic exclusions of, for example, the poetic, the religious or the grotesque. This has implications for deciding which events constitute historical facts. As Carl Plantinga (2010, p. 133) notes, White's analysis of narrative history is equally applicable to historical non-fiction filmmaking, since both configure chronicles into pre-existing narrative templates.

While the notion of an objective account of the historical events has become increasingly difficult to maintain, there are clear distinctions between the academic discipline of history and remembrance, either defined as an

individual or social process. However in the realm of public or popular representations of the past, the relationship between memory and history is politically and culturally complex. Furthermore, both the rigid distinction between and the conflation of memory and history fail to capture the diversity of understandings of the past in places like Timor-Leste, where modern, traditional and customary epistemologies coexist.

3.4 Counter-Memory in Occupied Timor

Winter and Sivan observe that analytic history is rarely accessible to the general public, since 'Professional history matters, to be sure, but only to a small population' (1999, p. 8). Once historiography enters the public sphere it can become implicated in ideological and political struggles and 'history wars'. Historical narratives may serve or challenge official discourses, or validate the claims of certain groups for justice, recognition or compensation. In periods of state oppression, when historiography serves the interests of the ruling party or class, collective narratives of the past may be the only form of counter-history. All totalitarian states adopt official histories and suppress the memories of groups that contest them. 'When a large power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness it uses the method of organised forgetting' (Connerton 1989, p. 14). Timor-Leste under Indonesian rule offers a powerful example of the ability of a popular counter-memory to remain intact despite an official, state-sanctioned historiography.

During the Indonesian occupation, the state, via public education, official monuments and public ceremonies, imposed the narrative of the 'History of Struggle of Indonesia' in which the Timorese were liberated from the chains of Portuguese colonialism, and the armed resistance was characterised as a small group of 'communists' (Leach 2006, p. 227). Part of Indonesia's assimilationist policy was to establish a nation-wide education program, far more extensive than anything under Portuguese rule (Arenas 1998, p. 131). However this attempt to re-socialise the young Timorese as Indonesian citizens failed. The clandestine leadership sustained the narrative of self-determination within Timor-Leste for 24 years. According to Andrew

McWilliam (2005, p. 37), it succeeded because it was able to articulate a nationalist discourse through localised, traditional network of family and clan relationships:

The enduring ties of kinship, family networks and house affiliation around which so much local social life continued to be enacted proved, in the final analysis, to be resistant to infiltration and corruption.

For many of the subjects I have interviewed over the years in Timor-Leste, memories of the occupation, especially the most painful and tragic personal memories, are framed within the overarching narrative of the independence struggle. As Damian Grenfell (2011), Andrew McWilliam (2005) and Elizabeth Traube (2011) suggest, in Tasi Tolu and elsewhere in Timor-Leste, loyalty to this 'modern' narrative is linked to both customary and traditional structures and identities.

Elizabeth Traube has discussed the process of 'producing the people' (2011, p. 177) in Timor-Leste from the time of Portuguese decolonisation as a complex interaction between nationalist campaigns of political elites and their popular transformation into forms more expressive of indigenous understandings and aspirations. Traube uses the example of the 'Maubere people' *povu Maubere*, a term employed by FRETILIN in the mid-1970s. Maubere is the name of a mountain in Soi Bada in the district of Manatuto, and was also a derogatory expression used during Portuguese rule to refer the most backward and uneducated rural Timorese. FRETILIN adopted 'Maubere' as a concept signifying the 'popular classes' (Da Silva 2001, p. 101) that they would liberate from colonialism. In Aileu, Traube (2007, p. 10) observes, the Maubere symbol was adapted and transposed over a local myth about a martyred prophet:

The idea of the prophet who suffered for the people has been interwoven with that of the people who suffered for the nation and gives meaning and force to popular demands upon the new state.

Here the official discourse of sacrifice for the nation merges with a Catholic notion of salvation but also with a customary reciprocity code 'in which those

who suffer to bring something forth must be repaid' (ibid). Through the transformation of official narratives, local communities make claims for participation, compensation or recognition in the nation-state.

3.5 Official History and National Identity in Independent Timor-Leste

Benedict Anderson (2006) has asserted that nations are more imaginary than real entities. Their foundation and perpetuation require the shared allegiance and loyalty of sometimes disparate communities. Part of this process is the creation of narratives and symbols of nationhood, sometimes 'the invention of traditions' (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). While some theorists of collective memory have distinguished nationalism as an overtly ideological construction, and historical remembrance as a more organic form of collective mourning (Winter 2010), others have adopted a fluid understanding of the way that nations are formed through the interaction of multiple groups and identities. Alon Confino (1997, p. 1400) has observed that the nation-state, a relatively recent historical phenomena originating in Europe, is internalised by its citizens, becoming a naturalised, even intimate memory:

National memory is constituted by different, often opposing, memories that, in spite of their rivalries, construct common denominators that overcome on the symbolic level real social and political differences to create an imagined community.

The formation of Timor-Leste has shown that the process of inventing a new nation can lead to serious conflicts and tensions over the creation of a coherent public memory and national identity.

Following independence, what was counter-history became official history, as the political elites in the newly formed state of Timor-Leste adopted a narrative of collective struggle and sacrifice. The 'valorisation of resistance' clause in the 2002 constitution entrenched this notion in the foundational document of the state:

The Democratic Republic of East Timor acknowledges and values the secular resistance of the Maubere people against foreign domination

and the contribution of all those who fought for national independence. (CAET 2002, Section 11 Point 1)

The memory of the East Timorese resistance may be considered a 'unifying' official narrative of national history, 'subject to a high degree of popular consensus' (Leach 2012, p. 227), but since independence there have been ruptures between official and popular accounts of East Timorese history, and even disputes within the political leadership about the 'true' narrative of the independence movement (Leach 2006, 2009). These have been manifest in conflict between FRETILIN and non-FRETILIN members of the government (Leach 2006, p. 233). It also extends to the comparative neglect of the civilian resistance in the national memorial landscape, compared to the greater public valorisation of the armed combatants of FALINTIL and other national 'heroes' (Leach 2009, p. 149) among the political elite. This recognition dynamic has also been evident in the claims of non-combatant clandestine groups who believe that they have been excluded from the compensation that has been offered to former members of FALANTIL.

This lack of recognition, and feelings of exclusion from an approved list of resistance fighters and leaders, was expressed in a variety of ways by participants and interview subjects during my recent trips to Timor-Leste. For example, Domingos Monteiro, who had been a member of the armed resistance before later joining OJITIL, a clandestine civilian organisation, complained that he had been granted neither official recognition nor a pension like other veterans of the resistance. In an interview, he said:

When is this state going to care for us, who suffered to free this country, when is this state going to guess who is who, this one did fight and this one did not? Only then can everything can be good. Now that is not happening. That is why today and I am so sad. Those who fought to free the country, their names should be written down and given recognition. That would do it (personal communication, February 6, 2014).

For some of the younger generation, particularly around Dili, identification with the independence struggle has been expressed through affiliation with martial arts gangs. Many of these, like 7-7, trace their origins to clandestine

resistance organisations from the time of the occupation (Scambary et al. 2006).

It was through his membership of 7-7 that Antony Da Silva, one of the interview subjects in *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016), felt that he was able to connect to the customary practices of the older generation. These grass-roots groups, blamed for fueling political unrest and criminal activities, have now been effectively banned and outlawed by the authorities in Timor-Leste. For Antony and other younger people in Tasi Tolu, this was another example of exclusion from participation in the resistance narrative.

3.6 The Timorese Resistance Museum & Archive

The Timorese Resistance Museum & Archive explicitly articulates the official narrative of the resistance struggle. Situated in the former Portuguese-era courthouse in Dili, the museum opened in 2006. It includes an archive, which preserves contemporary documents, artefacts and photos of the resistance movement between 1975 and 1999. The central feature of the museum is a series of 52 panels, ordered chronologically to depict the history of the resistance, with images and text in Tetum, English and Portuguese. Only three panels focus on the role of the civilian resistance, and these deal exclusively with the Santa Cruz massacre. It also pays little attention to the role of women in the resistance, to the various clandestine support organisations, or to the role played by ordinary people in villages around Timor-Leste who supported the guerillas. These omissions reflect some of Leach's 'fault lines' (2009, p. 146) that have emerged in the formation of a national narrative in the post-independence era.

3.7 Political Hybridity

According to Trindade and Castro (2007), from the time of the United Nations transitional administration (UNTAET) the political leadership of Timor-Leste relied too much on the narrative of resistance to colonial rule as a unifying principle. At the same time, they argue, the almost exclusive focus on building a modern state, modeled on Western systems of governance, contributed to the 2006 crisis:⁸

Many East Timorese feel that they are lacking a sense of ownership of current governance processes. They mistrust the current government and perceive that the idea of the nation-state (which in their eyes is identified with the current government and its practices) is imposed on them just as the colonial system was. Respondents stated that the nation-state seems to benefit only the political elites, which in turn come mainly from the eastern region that claimed to have fought more in the resistance and from the returned Timorese diaspora (ibid, p. 14).

The persistence, resilience and revival of indigenous beliefs and practices in rural areas has perpetuated an alternative worldview to that which promotes modern liberal democratic values and is imposed from the top down.

The tension between modern and customary paradigms has been exacerbated by a lack of understanding within the government about the role of indigenous beliefs and practices in Timorese social life (Fox 2011; McWilliam 2008). While traditional culture is enshrined within the new Constitution of East Timor such that 'Everyone has the right to cultural enjoyment and creativity and the duty to preserve, protect and value cultural heritage' (CAET 2002, Section 59 Point 5), there is a pervasive attitude that treats traditional culture as antithetical to the development of the nation:

⁸ The conflict which erupted in 2006 between people considered to be either from the *Lorosa'e* (Eastern) or *Loromonu* (Western) region of Timor-Leste arose from a perceived bias towards Easterners within the military and police force but soon led to widespread violence and displacement among the civilian population.

In the contemporary post-colonial environment of independence, a whole range of aspirational politics has emerged that foregrounds democracy, human rights, social justice, gender equality and economic development within a climate of political reform. In these circumstances, the role of customary institutions and the perceived inequalities of 'traditionalist' rights and claims over land and political leadership have been seriously questioned (McWilliam 2005, p. 39).

Customary leadership structures have been accused of adhering to 'feudalist' (ibid, p. 39) tendencies; and certain customary practices have been criticised for being patriarchal and unequitable (McWilliam 2005; Trindade 2008; Brown 2009; Bovensiepen 2011).

While acknowledging the risk of romanticising 'the indigenous', Trindade and Castro (2007, p. 16) have highlighted the importance of customary culture in shaping national identity and local governance. The limited access to formal education in rural areas, and the existing structures of local authority and conflict resolution are likely to continue. McWilliam (2005, p. 39) believes that integration or adaptation of customary systems offers a way of reconciling modern political discourse and indigenous understandings of nationhood:

The complex task of nation building may be better served by supporting and mobilising 'traditional' practices and relationships in new ways than by marginalising their role and significance in favour of some externally derived system of idealised political process.

Joanne Wallis (2012) and others have discussed the evolution of a hybrid local-liberal peace project as a response by the Timorese government to the disconnection between state institutions and local practices of justice, social organization and ritual life. While this has led to some investment of political authority in customary leaders and institutions, the adoption of indigenous rituals for state ceremonies has been perceived by some commentators as an 'empty cultural show' (ibid, p. 752).

The dichotomy between the two paradigms can be witnessed in the official commemorative culture. Despite the resurgence of customary practices throughout rural Timor-Leste, they are increasingly being excluded from state ceremonies and the memorial landscape. In one example, while indigenous

forms of dance and ceremonial practice were excluded, Western-style 'cheerleaders' and marching bands featured during the Santa Cruz commemoration of November 12, 2014.

3.8 Customary Commemorative Rituals

Paul Connerton (1989) has contrasted societies where historical knowledge has informed public memory to the 'unreflective traditional memory' (p. 16) of pre-literate cultures. In Timor-Leste where public education is underdeveloped and access to mass media is limited, the predominant forms of social knowledge exchange in rural areas have been oral communication and ritual practices. While there has been infiltration of modern concepts, they coexist with customary understandings. Across Timor-Leste indigenous culture is based on the interaction between the lived environment and the 'spirit' world. At the heart of this belief system is the notion of *lulik*, translated from Tetum as 'sacred', 'prohibited', 'taboo', or 'holy' (Hull 2002, p. 227). According to Trindade, *lulik* incorporates 'the spiritual cosmos that contains the divine creator, the spirits of the ancestors, and the spiritual root of life including sacred rules and regulations that dictate relationships between people and people and nature' (2011, p. 16). The spirit world is a source of power and fertility which can become a destructive force when the necessary reciprocal rituals are not observed (Bovensiepen 2011).

In Tasi Tolu rituals such as the *sau batar* (corn harvest) re-establish the connection between the community and ancestral beings through offerings and performance. The one that I witnessed in February, 2014, occurred at the local *uma lulik* (spirit house). The ceremony began with the placement of cobs of corn on a ceremonial alter. Soon after, a pig and a chicken were sacrificed and their organs examined for portents of the next year's harvest. Elders of the community dressed in traditional *tais* (woven cloth), and danced in a circular pattern, beating drums and gongs, while some of the men waved ceremonial swords (*surik*). Katuas Tasi, the traditional leader of the ceremony (personal communication, February 16 2014), explained its mythological origins:

A long time ago the land was born, the land and the heavens, that is number one. Number two, males and female ancestors meet with the land and from the very beginning they had a good relationship...and in the gatherings between male and female they made a garden but when they finished and the corn was ready to be picked, they found out that they didn't have a house so they went out again and heard voices that came down from the heavens and out from the ground and told them to cut logs, all types of logs to build a house and when the house was completed they left the house and went to pick corn and everybody, children, youth, men and women went and carried the corn to the door and everyone had to greet it the same as we have just done here, stand at the front door to receive the food and bring it in but not to take it inside the house.

The ceremony invokes a master narrative linking the present with the prototypical, archaic event. It is one of a series of rites that take place at critical moments throughout the year and which reaffirm the sacred in the everyday life of the community, as elaborated by Connerton (1989, p. 45):

Although demarcated in time and space, rites are also, as it were, porous. They are held to be meaningful because rites have significance with respect to a set of further non-ritual actions, to the whole life of a community. Rites have the capacity to give value and meaning to the life of those who perform them.

According to Connerton, what is most important in ritual is not so much the symbolic content of the ceremony but the way in which its performance is an embodied repository of communal memory:

This is the source of their importance and persistence as mnemonic systems. Every group, then, will entrust to bodily automatisms the values and categories which they are most anxious to conserve. They will know how well the past can be kept in mind by a habitual memory sedimented in the body (ibid, p. 102).

The *sau batar* ceremony is the enactment of the community's shared values, which is summarised in the concept 'life is a gift that requires a counter gift' (Therik 2004, p. 181). David Hicks (2008, p. 175) writes that 'in this reciprocal system, ancestral ghosts receive offerings of betel chew, palm wine, and pieces of chicken, while human beings receive the gifts of fertility and life'. Critically, the ceremony enacts a ritual exchange culminating in a feast where the gifts of the ancestors are shared throughout the community.

During the making of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, the *sau batar* ceremony, filmed in and around the *uma lulik* at Tasi Tolu, became for me a significant turning point. My presence and participation transformed my role and status from *malae* (foreigner), associated with the forensic team, to an old man (*katuas*) and privileged insider, at least for the duration of the ritual. It was in this context that the two witnesses, Da Costa and Da Silva, modified their original testimony. The location, which they had indicated was a possible burial site of the San Cruz victims, they now claimed had been identified to them by 'the spirits'. This shift in interpretation reflects the importance of the customary understanding of death and the dead among the residents of Tasi Tolu. The presence of the ancestors is part of a spiritual system that does not rely on material traces and physical evidence. It also links memory to a mythic notion of time and the past, disconnected from modern concepts of historical causality.

3.9 *Uma Lulik*

The performance of the *sau batar* ritual in Tasi Tolu exemplifies the restitution of ritual life since 1999. While ritual practices are intimately linked to customary land, during the occupation many people were displaced or forcibly removed from towns and villages. The East Timorese were able to modify their rituals to communicate with their ancestors away from their places of origin, an indication of the flexibility of customary practice which Traube and McWilliam describe as the 'the historical culture of mobility' (2011, p. 37). Susana Barnes offers an example of this among the Darlari people, who adapted to the destruction of their *uma lulik* and to restrictions on movement by continuing to perform 'simplified' harvest rituals and constructing smaller, temporary sacred houses. (Barnes 2011, p. 27). The *uma lulik* in Tasi Tolu, the central location of the *sau batar* that I witnessed, was erected in 2011, another example of the persistence and flexibility of customary life in Timor-Leste.

Throughout Indonesia's 24-year occupation, while restricting the practice of customary ceremonies and destroying *uma lulik* (Barnes 2011, p. 43), their

administration appropriated the symbol of the *uma lulik* to represent Timor-Leste. Although Indonesia failed to pacify resistance, it acknowledged the potential of the *uma* as a unifying device, and had hoped to exploit it. There are variations in the design of the *uma lulik* but its function is consistent throughout Timor-Leste. This building is the centre for human and spirit interaction and the ancestral heirlooms are an indication of the 'reciprocity that binds both parties together' (Hicks 2008, p. 175). It is both a physical site for ritual enactments and focal point for community solidarity and extended family structures (Trinidad & Castro 2007). James Fox has described the *uma lulik* as a 'theatre of memories' (1993, p. 23) in which cultural knowledge is preserved, enacted and embodied.

The resilience of culture throughout the occupation has been attributed by McWilliam to the 'highly localised and deeply rooted network of familial relations mediated through house affiliations, which denied the subversive ideology of the Indonesian state and resisted its penetration' (2005, p.38). The 'house' in this context is the sacred house, a physical and social enclosure. The clandestine resistance movement survived, in part, because of 'house'-based alliances that facilitated communication and logistical support for resistance fighters. These alliances, known as '*nucleos de resistencia popular*', or popular resistance cells (ibid, p. 35), re-created affiliation on a greatly expanded regional level using the village level system of kin-based bonds under the banner of nationalism. The successful struggle against Indonesian occupation for 24 years highlights the effectiveness and unifying potency of the *uma lulik* and its alliance networks in contemporary times.

The most visible indication of a restitution of tradition in Tasi Tolu is the presence of the *uma lulik*. Its location adjacent to the Catholic church is an indication of the co-presence of multiple beliefs systems within Timorese culture, reflected in Domingos Monteiro's comment in *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016:

Before the Catholic church came to Timor-Leste we had our own culture. When the Catholic church arrived he put the cross there and we agreed to accept it, but we cannot lose 'bua and malus' (sacred betel nut) and if we lose this future generations will not believe in each other and will not respect each other. That is why the same culture is passed on to future generations.

Unlike other spirit houses, the one in Tasi Tolu is open, with no walls, and was built consciously, according to locals, to accommodate the diversity of traditions and places of origin in the community. As Jose Da Costa commented:

In 2011 in March, that is when we built this sacred house here. It has the traditions of the *loro-sa'e* and *loro-mosu*, [east and west] *tasi fetu* and *tasi mane* [the female sea to the male sea - the north and south sides of the island] (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016).

This flexibility is one of the most remarkable aspects of the ritual culture at Tasi Tolu. During the *sau batar*, families from diverse areas of Timor-Leste participated, each with their own traditions:

All have to come and eat and drink here, eat green grass and drink clean water. That is tradition, this one comes together, this come to embrace and this is to love. Just like you have come here today to be together here with us, this is our culture...We each have our traditions but all together the traditions becomes one...We become just one, only one, we are all one family. In this suburb there is only one family (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016).

This highly localised memory practice has multiple functions, both sacred and profane. Importantly, in Tasi Tolu it builds and maintains social cohesion through shared connections to land and life. Significantly for my own investigation, it demonstrated that Tasi Tolu was not a 'mute' landscape or a site of forgetfulness, but rather a place with an active, local culture of remembrance.

3.10 Sites of Memory

Authoritarian states control official history and attempt to influence public memory. However, even in liberal democracies, dominant groups promote certain historical narratives through commemorative practices and the memorialisation of certain prominent events and people. As Connerton (1989, p. 51) affirms:

Thus it is now abundantly clear that in the modern period national élites have invented rituals that claim continuity with an appropriate historic past, organising ceremonies, parades and mass gatherings, and constructing new ritual spaces.

Other scholars have questioned the idea that rituals of commemoration and sites of memory can be considered exclusively as inventions of the state to legitimise political authority. While Winter & Sivan observe that the state has a key role 'as a major producer and choreographer of commemoration' (2000, p. 38), Winter (2009, p. 266) stresses that historical remembrance is an activity of civil society:

Commemorative ritual survives when it is inscribed within the rhythms of community and in particular, family life. Public commemoration lasts when it draws its power from the overlap between national history and family history, and family history is a burgeoning field of historical research. Most of those who take the time to engage in the rituals of remembrance bring with them memories of family members touched by these vast events. This is what enables people born long after wars and revolutions to commemorate them as essential parts of their own lives.

However John Bodnar (1992, p. 15) argues that 'public memory' is a political and social process where views of the past are contested and negotiated between 'official' and 'vernacular' culture:

Public memory is a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a society understand both its past, present and by implication its future. It is fashioned ideally in a public sphere in which various parts of the social structure exchange views. The major focus is not the past, however, but serious matters in the present such as the nature of power and the question of loyalty to both official and vernacular cultures.

In Timor-Leste, certain buildings and locations where acts of violence or resistance occurred during the Indonesian era have been identified as culturally significant sites worthy of preservation. But official designation does not guarantee that specific sites will be adopted or endure within a living culture of memorialisation or commemoration.

One example is the Comarca in Balide, Dili. A colonial jail built by the Portuguese in 1963, during the Indonesian occupation it became a notorious prison operated by Indonesian police and intelligence organisations. Pro-independence activists such as Alexander Freitas, who appears in *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016), were imprisoned and tortured here. The building and grounds were rehabilitated with funding from the Japanese government and completed in 2003. It now houses the CAVR archives and library, containing the most comprehensive documentation of the occupation and the resistance struggle. In December 2008 a 'walk-through' exhibition of *Chega!* was opened at the Comarca. The torture cells, with the graffiti of prisoners, guards and pro-Indonesian militia have been preserved on the walls. However, the building and archive, a site of significant interest to scholars, has limited engagement with the public. It is a place disconnected from an active culture of remembrance.

3.11 Commemorating the Santa Cruz Massacre

By contrast, the Santa Cruz cemetery is a 'living' site of remembrance. The 1991 massacre itself has become a powerful social memory, significantly constituted and reinforced by Max Stahl's footage. The 12th November commemoration is an example of a public ritual of personal, communal and historical significance. It is an event in which family memory and nationalist narratives intersect. As a ritual, it displays features of modern, traditional and customary ontologies that characterise the complexity of remembering the dead and the missing in Timor-Leste. However over its fifteen years' existence, the orchestration of the ritual has changed to reflect the shifting priorities of the political leadership.

Each year thousands re-enact the original route of the protest march in 1991. It begins with a mass at the Church of San Antonio de Motael and winds through the streets of Dili to the Santa Cruz cemetery. The procession began informally in 2000 when the families of the missing gathered to commemorate the sacrifice of their relatives. It was a potent demonstration of a newly gained freedom, but also a demand to the authorities to investigate the circumstances of the deaths and to find their bodies. There is a pervasive need for families to locate and bury their missing dead, particularly after periods of conflict. In Timor-Leste, this need is intensified by the belief that the spirits will find no rest until their remains are properly buried with the appropriate rituals (Robins 2010). During the Santa Cruz procession, family members demonstrate that they have not forgotten their relatives by carrying their framed photographs as they follow the route to the cemetery. From this intimate beginning, the commemoration is now one of the key public events in Timor-Leste, attended by the political elite, including ex-prime minister Xanana Gusmao, and the leaders of FRETILIN, Mari Alkatiri and Francisco Guterres (Luolo).

The special prominence of Santa Cruz, given the number of atrocities that took place across Timor-Leste, can be explained in several ways. It symbolically includes the civilian population and the clandestine front in the liberation narrative from which it is generally marginalized in official historiography. The protest was the largest public independence demonstration during the Indonesian occupation, in which many of the current residents of Dili participated, and many of whom lost family members. Most importantly, Santa Cruz was an act of political violence that was witnessed by foreign journalists, photographed, and filmed by British filmmaker Max Stahl, and broadcast around the world. This documentary evidence was critical in presenting the violence of the Indonesian regime in Timor-Leste to the international community, influencing public opinion and the policy decisions that eventually led to independence.

As a ritual of remembrance, 12th November embodies overlapping customary, Catholic and nationalist features. The families of the missing engage with the procession on a number of levels. It is an act of commemoration, a ritual of honoring the spirits, a collective memory expressed after years of oppression, a nationalist celebration of independence, and a political demand for recognition and justice. The procession recalls the Christian ritual of the Stations of the Cross, following as it does a sequence of key events, and the exact route of the original protestors in 1991 as they headed towards the site of martyrdom.

The families of the missing are represented by the 12th November Committee. Led by Gregorio Saldanha, a former FRETILIN parliamentarian, its members include survivors of the protest, many of whom were subsequently imprisoned and tortured. Saldanha has actively lobbied for recognition and support for the families of the missing. With the committee, he had a major role in the forensic investigation by the IFT to find the remains of the Santa Cruz massacre victims, documented in *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010). The 12th November Committee was instrumental in using all available documentation to identify the missing protestors and locate surviving family members. This process enabled the forensic team to take blood samples for DNA matching and conduct interviews with relatives to help link human remains with clothing and personal effects, and led to the identification of 11 of the missing protestors.

The prominence of the Santa Cruz massacre commemoration, and the valorisation of the civilian resistance that it offers, appears to run counter to the prioritisation of the armed resistance in the official ceremonial culture of Timor-Leste. There are, however, a few crucial indications of the concerns of the state in the orchestration of the commemoration and memorialisation of the massacre. From its origins in the spontaneous initiative of families, over time the Santa Cruz commemoration has increasingly been reconfigured from a local event towards an official state ceremony modeled on a modern nationalist template.

Negotiations over a permanent memorial for the victims has revealed tensions between the 12th November Committee and the families on one side, and the government on the other. In 2012 a permanent monument was installed in front of the Motael church, a significant site for 12th November remembrance. The 1991 protest march began with a mass here. The bronze statue depicts one man supporting another wounded man, prone in his arms. The sculpture references an image from Max Stahl's footage of the massacre but also clearly evokes a Catholic pieta, embodying the traditional iconography of Christian sacrifice. Although it is a prominent memorial to the massacre, Gregorio Saldania and the 12th November Committee were not consulted about its design. Absent from the sculpture is a list of the victims and the approximately 300 missing protestors, which was a key request of Saldania and the committee (Leach 2015). This omission is significant—by not naming the victims the possibility of a permanent public record to support any future criminal investigation of Indonesian perpetrators is avoided. As Grenfell observes, the lack of a 'Tomb of the Unknown Soldier' or any national monuments to the victims of the occupation in Timor-Leste appears to derive from a fear of offending Indonesia, or providing a focal point for demands for justice (Grenfell 2015). In addition, a list of the names of Santa Cruz victims on the monument would configure it towards a military shrine offering symbolic inclusion of the victims in the privileged category of the 'veterans' of the armed resistance.

The committee has also been unsuccessful in pursuing the families' demands for the prosecution of the perpetrators of the massacre or even for an informal process to locate the mass graves of the victims. In interviews I conducted with victims' families, they have asked why the government has not put pressure on Indonesia to help find their relatives' remains. Despite this, the families of the missing have a revered status in the ceremony and have achieved some political currency. As Lia Kent (2011, p. 447) states:

For some East Timorese survivors, then, remembering the past has become the starting point for a new, albeit fragile, politics. This politics draws its strength from experiences of collective suffering and the imperative of conveying to the state that the *povu ki'ik* (small

people/ordinary people) must not be forgotten in the new independent nation.

The presence of the photos of the missing carried by the families has multiple meanings, among them an ongoing plea for justice that will not be satisfied with sculptures and marching bands.

The Santa Cruz commemoration does not neatly conform to the 'invention of tradition approach' of Anderson (2006), Ranger and Hobswan (1983), which Barbara Mizszal (2003, p. 68) describes as a notion of collective memory simply expressing 'the maintenance of hegemonic control by dominant social groups.' At first glance the contemporary commemorative culture in Timor-Leste more closely follows Winter and Sivan's (1999, p. 30) formulation of historical remembrance as consisting 'of negotiations between a multiplicity of groups, including the state. Obviously the parties are not equal. Repression occurs, but counter-voices may be heard.' In post-independence Timor-Leste a unified, if complex, liberation narrative has fractured along a number of fault lines. In a weak civil society, the state and the Catholic Church are the dominant voices shaping and directing the collective representations and performances of the past to suit their own priorities. This is particularly the case in and around the capital, Dili.

3.12 Mediated Memories of Santa Cruz

In an interview I conducted with then President Ramos-Horta in 2008, he told me that that Santa Cruz would have been merely one of a number of equally lethal massacres, had Max Stahl's video footage of the event not been smuggled out of the country and broadcast around the world. In a place where foreign journalists had to pose as tourists, and where even taking of a photograph could lead to arrest, the Santa Cruz footage gave the independence movement a rare opportunity to present their struggle to the world. According to Ramos-Horta, the re-activation of global recognition of the East Timorese struggle had only been made possible through an audiovisual document. It had also helped strengthen the resolve of

independence activists and guerrilla fighters within Timor-Leste. It had embarrassed the Indonesian government and gave ammunition for human rights groups and exiled East Timorese leaders to lobby the UN and other organisations for independence. It would be wrong to conclude that the video footage was the only factor that has led to the prominence of the Santa Cruz massacre in the collective and national memory—it took place in the middle of the nation's capital, it led to the deaths of many young people—but the persistence of the footage ensures that this event is continually reviewed and reaffirmed.

3.13 Flashbulb Memories

The Santa Cruz massacre, as a canonical memory for many Timorese, conforms approximately to the 'flashbulb memory' (FBM) identified by Brown and Kulik (1977). FBMs are particularly vivid and long-lasting memories of public news events. Such memories 'are thought to be more detailed and veridical than everyday memories and particularly immune from forgetting' (Liu, Ying & Luo 2012). Repetition (or rehearsal) is central to the retention of FBMs, and broadcast media is the key part of this process. William Hirst and Robert Meksin emphasise that 'media coverage is the quintessential externally driven act of rehearsal' (2008, p. 213). Memories of the 9/11 attacks in New York are frequently cited as a key contemporary example of FBMs.

Roberto Cubelli and Sergio Della Sala (2008, p. 909) argue that FBMs are not at all like a stable photographic image stored in the mind. In fact they are highly susceptible to suggestion and reconstruction after the event:

Memory is always reconstructive; even for surprising and consequential events which would allegedly elicit vivid and persistent memories for the circumstances in which one first learned of them, the camera metaphor embedded in the label and definition of FBM does not apply. FBM represent fragments of emotional and conspicuous episodes, susceptible to subsequent elaborations and distortions, hence they carry no flash-like status.

On the basis of its malleability, some researchers have concluded that FBM is no different from 'ordinary' autobiographical memory (McCloskey, Wible & Cohen, 1988; Talarico & Rubin, 2009). Both are subject to Loftus's (2005) 'misinformation affect'. Social interactions such as conversations can influence the memory of individuals and lead to the incorporation of details not actually experienced. The social contagion of memories outlined by Meade and Roediger (2002) is usually framed as a negative phenomenon leading to false memories. However, some psychologists have argued that the malleability of memory is beneficial (Brown et al. 2012). It enables the convergence of unique memories into shared recollections, a necessary process in the formation of collective identity.

According to Hirst and Phelps (2016), there is a consensus among researchers that people are more confident in the accuracy of their flashbulb memories than other autobiographical memories. While they partly attribute this to 'the vividness, elaborateness, and ease of recall which FBMs retain' (p. 39), this confidence, they argue, is not related to accuracy but rather primarily founded on the close link between FBMs and social identity; 'FBMs are those rare instances in which personal history and History writ large come into alignment. Consequently, they can influence the social identity of a community' (p. 40). Thus, significant FBM-inducing events like the Santa Cruz massacre can, through repetition in the forms of commemorative ritual, media representations and shared remembering become powerful collective memories. In turn, these can influence individual recollections. My experience of working with testimony in Timor-Leste suggests that the significance of the Santa Cruz massacre may have caused some witnesses to attribute unrelated memories to the 1991 event, or to reconstruct memories afterwards.

3.14 Witness Testimony about 12th November 1991

In 2011, I was following the early stages of the forensic investigation in Tasi Tolu when two residents, Jose da Costa and Jose da Silva, came forward as witnesses. The two men explained that they regularly came to Tasi Tolu

during the Indonesian era to plant and tend crops, although at first they lived elsewhere. Da Costa recalled observing Indonesian military activity, including the use of earth moving equipment, on the November 12, 1991, the day of the Santa Cruz Massacre, but was prevented from entering the area. Soon after, he noticed three large earth mounds had appeared. While neither man actually saw bodies being interred and da Silva did not notice the mounds until 1995, they both believed that these features were mass gravesites of the Santa Cruz massacre victims. The forensic archaeologists dug trenches in the area and found that there was evidence of past excavation but no sign of human remains. The investigators believed that the mounds might have been dug as emplacements for tanks or artillery.

A year later, a third witness contacted the forensic team and also claimed that, as a young boy, he heard excavators at Tasi Tolu on November 11, 1991, the day before the massacre, and had seen a filled-in ditch the following day. He identified this location for the investigators who again found no evidence of a grave or even any indication of digging activity. The scientists speculated that changes in the tropical vegetation might have affected the ability of the witnesses to accurately identify precise locations. Alternatively, their memories may have been distorted by time and other factors.

Despite the many alleged killings that took place at Tasi Tolu during the 24 years of Indonesian occupation, the witnesses all associated clandestine burials there with the events that occurred on November 12, 1991. Their inaccurate testimony leads to a number of questions about the way that individual memory is influenced over time by narrative templates or social schemata. Did the Santa Cruz massacre, as a focal point for the independence struggle, influence the recollections of the witnesses? It is possible to hypothesise that the witnesses, while not intending to mislead the investigators, retrospectively linked the burial of missing Santa Cruz victims with disconnected memories of earth works.

The massacre has become so central to the history of the independence

struggle that it has, as Ramos Horta believes, 'come to stand in for other, less well known massacres' (personal communication, 2008). This idea is exemplified by the annual commemorations of the 1983 Lautem massacre, which occur not on its actual anniversary date, but on the day of the Santa Cruz anniversary, November 12 (Kent 2012, p. 35). In its dominance of the commemorative culture of Timor-Leste, the Santa Cruz massacre risks becoming a collective memory that obliterates or colonises memories of other events.

3.15 The Tasi Tolu Protest

In contrast to the events that occurred on November 12, 1991, the historical significance of the protest that occurred during the Pope John Paul II's October 12, 1989 appearance at Tasi Tolu is neglected. While there are two prominent memorials to the Pope's visit there is no public commemoration of the act of civilian resistance that took place on the day the Pope visited Timor-Leste for the first time.

As the Pope delivered mass to a crowd of 100,000 on the banks of Tasi Tolu, about 20 protestors emerged from the crowd and forced their way past security personnel to the stage. Unfurling a banner, they shouted slogans calling for East Timorese independence. As police commenced clubbing the protesters, dozens of young people joined the fight, throwing chairs. At least 40 protestors were arrested, including Alex Freitas, who along with many others, was tortured; some were imprisoned for many years, and others disappeared. Yet this is not a story that figures as more than an afterthought in the official history of the occupation. At the Timorese Resistance Museum & Archive in Dili it is mentioned only once, in a sentence on a panel displaying a general historical timeline.

There are a number of possible reasons why this event is obscure in public history. The protest conflicts with the Catholic Church's commemoration narrative that glorifies the Pope's visit as pastoral, with no political significance. In fact, the visit was highly orchestrated and politically complex.

For the Indonesian authorities, the Pontiff's presence in Timor-Leste, the first by any world leader during the occupation, was a means of legitimising the occupation. However the Pope, without overtly challenging Indonesian rule, performed certain symbolic gestures, which sent subtle messages to the Timorese. Landing at Dili airport, he did not kiss the ground, an act reserved for countries visited for the first time, and which in this case would have affirmed Timorese independence. Instead, during the mass, he knelt to kiss a crucifix placed on the stage. To the vast Timorese audience, however, the Pope appeared to be kissing the ground and applause erupted from the crowd. Nevertheless the Vatican never officially sanctioned the protest that followed (Haberman 1989).

There are few audiovisual records of the protest, and those existing images can be interpreted in a number of ways. They do not offer the unambiguous imagery of Max's Stahl's footage showing military violence directed at unarmed civilians. The Santa Cruz commemoration more neatly fulfills the narrative template of civilian resistance to Indonesian rule. Its prominence obscures the earlier, less well-documented protest at Tasi Tolu.

3.16 Globalisation and Forgetting

On the recently created website for Pelican Paradise Holdings, the following text appears superimposed over an artist's impression of the proposed hotel and golf course complex at Tasi Tolu:

Creating hope, inspiring a future. Where a development can inspire an entire nation. Where change can lead to a better future (Pelican Paradise Holdings 2016).

Economic development has been one of the central components of the neo-liberal state building program in Timor-Leste since 1999. While the sovereign wealth derived from oil and gas dividends provides the majority of government revenue, petroleum resources could be exhausted by 2020 (Scheiner 2015). The need to attract investment in alternative industries such as tourism has helped drive a building boom in Dili in recent years. By far the

largest proposed development has been the Pelican Paradise resort at Tasi Tolu.

Pelican Paradise Holdings is a subsidiary of Ock Group, a Singapore-based property development company whose President, Datuk Edward Ong, also owns and operates Sutera Harbour, a hotel, golf course and residential complex in Sabah, Malaysia. According to Jeremiah Chan, the corporate executive overseeing the Tasi Tolu development, the hotel and golf course complex will cover the entire area incorporating the three lakes. The promise is service industry jobs for the local population and the possibility of attracting further investment, based on the notion of a 'multiplier effect' (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016).

Just as forgetting is a component of the domination of the national memory in totalitarian regimes, forgetting was identified by Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) with the cultural commodification in capitalism. 'All reification is forgetting,' they wrote (p. 191). In capitalist economies this type of forgetting is less about repressive erasure than a shift in perception. For Connerton (1989, p. 64), the transformation of memory is a process underlying new conceptions of time inherent in modernism:

The temporality of the market and of the commodities that circulate through it generates an experience of time as quantitative and as flowing in a single direction, an experience in which each moment is different from the other by virtue of coming next, situated in a chronological succession of old and new, earlier and later.

In consumer capitalism, forgetting is embedded in the system of planned obsolescence. Paradoxically, there is then a surfeit of memory, as desire for a usable past and the fear of forgetting entail the loss of identity that is fed by an accelerating public media memory.

In studies of globalisation, the term 'the politics of forgetting' (Lee & Yeoh 2004, p. 2295) has been used to refer to the reconfiguring of space as an effect of globalising capitalist development. According to Yong-Sook Lee and Brenda Yeoh, 'forgotten places' are made in a process that is often

characterised as ‘inexorable and virtually unstoppable,’ and often, ‘explicit, conscious and strategic’ (ibid, p. 2298). This form of forgetting is based on ‘the monopolisation of space and the relegation of weaker groups in society to less desirable environments’ (Sibley 1995, p. ix). Lee and Yeoh describe the politics of forgetting as ‘the converse case’ of collective memory, since rather than representing the interests of groups, it ‘is a fraught terrain contested by multiple actors with different and sometimes conflicting interests,’ and ‘often accompanied by an active sense of negotiation, conflict, exclusion, sidelining, erasure and loss, producing fragmentary places as the marginalised ‘other’’ (ibid p. 2298).

The Pelican Paradise development at Tasi Tolu aims to replace a site of memory and a living culture with a transnational space for wealthy tourists and business travellers. The marketing copy reveals the temporal logic of global neoliberalism—the past (something that must be forgotten) and the present (something without value) will be replaced with a hopeful future of prosperity and development. By implication, Timor’s history of violence is acknowledged and Jerimah Chan has discussed building a memorial (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016), but the effacement of Tasi Tolu’s inhabitants is emblematic of a memory culture at odds with the momentum of economic growth.

Paul Connerton observes that the idea of a coexisting sacred and profane time, an ‘exemplary recurrence’ (1989, p. 65), is a feature of traditional societies, but one that runs counter to the modernism’s need for endless reinvention:

The operation of this system brings about a massive withdrawal of credence in the possibility that there might exist forms of life that are exemplary because prototypical. The logic of capital tends to deny the capacity to imagine life as a structure of exemplary recurrence. (ibid, p. 64)

The denial of the legitimacy of the residents at Tasi Tolu is also embedded in their status as transitory internal migrants. In an interview, the Pelican Paradise executive Jeremiah Chan characterised the residents of Tasi Tolu as 'squatters' living on state land, some of whom, he claimed, have recently arrived at Tasi Tolu and built houses in the hope of receiving compensation from the government when the development begins (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, 2016). This profound lack of understanding and acknowledgement of the inhabitants of Tasi Tolu, while not unexpected, contrasts with the more informed views of the some of the locals.

Interviews that I conducted with residents of Tasi Tolu revealed ambivalent feelings about the development; some residents were surprisingly positive when questioned about it. Many of the residents had settled in Tasi Tolu because the land was largely deserted and available following the Indonesian withdrawal. Rather than challenge the development, they were more concerned that the state should look after them and find adequate alternative housing. According to Domingos Monteiro:

If they say we must move then we move. We are now independent we must listen to the state...you can build a city and the people must be moved but the people must have a better life for their own families and for their broader families. That will be good. They cannot just take them from here and dump them just like that and abandon them. The state can build a 5 star here. It is up to them but they must move people to a better place.

Translator: Uncle, are you a bit worried about this?

Domingos Monteiro: We are not worried about anything. We are not worried and reason is that it's the right of the state. If we were worried then we would prohibit the state and stop the state from making a city. So it is better that we let the state make the city but they must move the people, for better, give them a better livelihood (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016).

For Domingos and others, their recognition of the need for development was conditional on receiving some of the benefits of economic growth. In the context of the grinding poverty of most of the residents of Tasi Tolu, this expected compensation is unsurprising. They were able to accept forgetting

as part of a process of building better lives for their families. Similar negotiations have been observed in other regions of South East Asia where migration has led to new forms of establishing relationships of ancestry. Carsten (as cited by Connerton 2008) observed that ‘forgetting is here part of an active process of creating a new and shared identity in a new setting’ (p. 63).

For others such as Alex Freitas, the Secretary of the Anti-Corruption Commission, the need to preserve Tasi Tolu was linked to its memory as a sacred place ‘for those who sacrificed their lives for Timor-Leste to be independent’ (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016). This legacy included the sacrifice of the protestors at the papal mass as well as the unknown victims. The discovery of the seven bodies by the International Forensic Team in Tasi Tolu in 2011 was just an indication of the other executions and concealments that many believe took place there. Freitas thought that the entire area of Tasi Tolu should be turned into a ‘national park’, an appropriate designation for the commemoration of the victims the occupation.⁹

For a political elite whose legitimacy is sustained by their links to a historical struggle, there is an ongoing tension between politics of forgetting inherent to economic development and the maintenance of a living cultural memory. The commissioning of the forensic investigation at Tasi Tolu is a clear indication of this tension which is perhaps also evident in the endless delays that have plagued the commencement of the Pelican Paradise resort. This trajectory can be compared to the evolving status of the Santa Cruz cemetery that has clearly become established as a space where the collective memory of the occupation can be ritualised and performed.

⁹ Tasi Tolu area was declared a ‘Peace Park’ by the East Timorese government during the restoration of independence ceremony on 20 May 2002, which took place around the lakes. It has also been identified as an important habitat for a number of restricted range bird species (Birdlife 2016). However these designations have led to little conservation activities apart from a project in 2004 that employed ‘vulnerable community members’ (UN 2004) to plant 200 trees at Tasi Tolu.

3.17 The 'Fallen Place' of Casmiro Freitas

In 2014, Domingos Monteiro took me to the yard of a local family's house in Tasi Tolu where he showed me, what appeared to be, a crude cement grave. As residents gathered around, Domingos told me the story of Casmiro Freitas, a Timorese man who served as a sergeant in the Indonesian army. In 1999 Domingos discovered Freitas's remains on the banks of Tasi Tolu and identified him from documents found in his clothing. Domingos tracked down Freitas's family in the town Leurema. He learned that Freitas had been supporting the resistance while serving in the Indonesian army. When his treachery was discovered, Freitas was executed by the army, or militia, and dumped at Tasi Tolu. The family took the remains back to Leurema. However, as is often the case in customary mortuary practices in Timor-Leste, particularly with violent or 'unnatural' deaths, the place of death was also marked with a memorial called *monu-fatin*, or 'fallen place' (Grenfell 2011, p. 95). These sites, often created for those who die 'bad' (violent or 'unnatural') deaths, are believed to be sacred and to retain the spirit of the deceased. Although Domingos came here infrequently, the residents continued to light candles and look after the memorial.

Domingos felt that it was important to show me this site and for me to film here. As a soldier in the Indonesian army, Casmiro Freitas was an unlikely hero of the resistance; however, as Domingos explained, he was worthy of respect and remembrance: 'He was killed. He did not die a natural death, so you must respect him because he also fought for this country, of course' (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016). Freitas's story suggests the complexity of the occupation, rarely reflected in the official narrative of the independence struggle. This local example of commemoration, in stark contrast to the clear moral distinctions of the Santa Cruz massacre narrative, was unlikely to endure. Recognising the risk of forgetfulness, Domingos explained to the residents:

You are all in the film as he is filming and recording here, like a story for the future, it will be history. One day I will be dead but new

generations can still see this very same place and learn (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016).

A central question posed by the film is why Santa Cruz is a site of memory and Tasi Tolu a site of forgetting. This opposition represents important, broader tensions in post-independence Timor-Leste about how the past, and which versions of the past, are remembered.

3.18 Conclusion

Halbwachs's contribution to the literature of collective memory did not extend to the role of film or documentary-making, but Roxana Waterson has addressed this gap in her paper *Trajectories of Memory: Documentary Film and the Transmission of Testimony* (2007). Waterson argues that the documentary film has the potential to preserve memories as a trace, a form of historical evidence; as an event (testifying is a performative act which demands engagement with an audience); and as a trajectory (individual memories must be transmitted in order to become social). Film's ability to endure over time and be viewed multiple times enables it to enter the flow of collective memory. Waterson argues that films of memory are thus part of the struggle against the forgetting of past injustices and ultimately, have the potential to contribute to shifts in our interpretations of history.

If any audiovisual document could legitimately claim to belong to the collective memory, the Santa Cruz footage presents a strong case, particularly in Timor-Leste. Perhaps *Tasi Tolu* suffers from an inversion of the CNN effect, the notion that global media coverage can affect political change (Hoskins & O'Loughlin 2010, p. 103). While there is some dispute about any direct causal link between global media coverage of a conflict and political change, there is no doubt that unreported conflicts assist repressive regimes to stay 'off the radar'. In Timor-Leste the execution of journalists during the invasion, the repression of the media and ban on foreign reporters during the occupation surely indicates that the Indonesian authorities believed that the leaking of uncontrolled imagery from Timor-Leste would harm the regime.

New camera technology, social media and alternative outlets for audiovisual footage have enabled individuals as well as outside broadcast media organisations to provide evidence of state repression and political violence, now being regularly witnessed in mobile phone footage from various conflict zones. This has created a new information space that has perhaps transcended, if not supplanted, the CNN effect. The absence of such evidence in Tasi Tolu perhaps contributes to its potential erasure as a space of memory in the new wave of economic colonisation.

Tasi Tolu is a place where a fragmented and diverse community is using traditional commemorative practices to establish social cohesion and spiritual connections to land following a prolonged period of political violence. There are also multiple documented events that took place at Tasi Tolu which merit historical remembrance. However, it is not a place that offers a simple and coherent narrative about the past. It is a story filled with gaps and absences. In this sense, Tasi Tolu can be used to represent the uneasy and complex relationship of societies to past events. It shows how a diversity of voices can complicate the narratives that suit nationalist commemoration.

Chapter 4 – Staging Embodied Memories of Political Violence

4.1 Introduction

This chapter uses the documentaries *S-21, The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003), and *The Act of Killing* (2014) as case studies to investigate notions of embodied memory as a form of testimony about political violence. I look at theories of embodied cognition that support the interconnection between mind and body in recollection. Beyond questions of accuracy and evidence, I argue that particular embodied and performance-based practices in documentary filmmaking can bridge collective memory and personal memory. As John Sutton and Kellie Williamson (2014, p. 8) write:

Embodied memory in these contexts is firmly embedded in complex and idiosyncratic cultural settings, with unique social and historical backgrounds and norms. These cases remind us that by examining activities and practices of remembering, and in giving consideration to the role of bodily as well as neural resources, we also open up memory's public dimensions.

Theories of embodied cognition have important implications in formulating techniques to record and represent the memories of participants in documentary film projects. They have influenced the development of my own methods for provoking memory during the making of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016).

Rithy Pahn's *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (S-21) and Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (TAOK) are documentary films which examine past genocides in Cambodia and Indonesia respectively. In strikingly different ways, but with certain key similarities, both films use re-enactments by perpetrators as strategies to recover and dramatise memories of the torture and murder of civilians during campaigns of coordinated political violence. Both films are significant, I argue in this chapter, because they capture performances of embodied memories that can only be effectively transmitted via film and video. Each film explicitly and implicitly

raises critical ethical and epistemological problems of working with survivors and presenting historical violence and its reverberations in the present day.

Unlike Pahn and Oppenheimer, in my own projects I have worked and continue to work exclusively with survivors rather than perpetrators. Nonetheless, there are key thematic crossovers between their work and mine. My two earlier films, *Luolo's Story* (2002) and *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010), dealt with the aftermath of the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste through the present day lives of individuals. My film, *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016), which comprises the creative component of this thesis, also examines traces of a violent past in present day Timor-Leste. *S-21* and *TAOK* use unconventional methods, particularly staged re-enactments, to represent the struggle for memory. While these methods may not always be appropriate, Pahn and Oppenheimer's films have provided important input for the development of my current approach to filmmaking in Timor-Leste.

4.2 *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*

During the Khmer Rouge's control of Cambodia from 1975 to 1979, Security Prison 21 (or S-21) was the main detention centre. Around 17,000 prisoners were tortured, interrogated and then executed there. There were only seven known survivors (Dy, Chandler & Coughill 2007). The film *S-21* is Rithy Pahn's attempt 'to understand how the Communist Party of Democratic Kampuchea, the *Angkar* (or organisation) concocted and implemented its policy of systematic elimination' (First Run Features 2003). Pahn persuaded both survivors and their former torturers to return to the site of what was S-21, now the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. As a text, the film is a study of memory and forgetting. It deals with the ongoing struggle of individual survivors to remember the genocide and comprehend what happened. It also examines the way that perpetrators avoid and deny responsibility for their crimes. The language of oppression, used by the Khmer Rouge and still employed by the perpetrators, contributes to enabling this denial. In his film, Pahn shows how the intentional distortion and destruction of the memory of individuals was intrinsic to the regime's interrogation and torture procedures,

and ultimately part of their strategy to restructure Cambodian society. There is a political imperative to Pahn's project; he believes that the recovery of memory is a necessary process in order for the society to acknowledge and understand what happened under the Khmer Rouge, and to avoid its repetition.

Like Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah* (1985)—an acknowledged influence of Pahn's—*S-21* avoids the use of archival footage, apart from a brief, black and white sequence at the beginning of the film, and relies heavily on present day images of locations where acts of violence occurred. Lanzmann (as cited in LaCapra 1998, p. 108) called *Shoah* '... a film on the ground level, a film of topography and geography.' Likewise, *S-21* is largely filmed in the Tuol Sleng prison where architectural features and relics of the past—prison cells, administrative documentation and photographs—are preserved. Pahn has an archeological interest in the physical objects, gestures, sounds and images that contain traces of the crimes that took place there. His focus on the memories embedded in this place is reflected in the synopsis of the film's press release:

Words cannot suffice to describe what took place there. The implacable and meticulous operation of the machinery of carefully planned murder is beyond our understanding. It is as though the conscience cannot take it in, as if the story cannot be put into words. But the evidence remains—photographs, archives, and the place itself—which bring back images from the past (First Run Features 2003).

While there is testimony in the film, it is framed almost exclusively in dialogue exchanges between participants rather than in direct address to camera or to an off-camera interviewer. Pahn is interested in the form of the utterances and the gestures that accompany these exchanges as a means of revealing affective and unconscious traces of the violence. In a conversation with Oppenheimer (2012a, p. 248) he observes:

Something that cinema can do which literature can't do, in the same way for example, is when you have somebody in the film, as he does say, 'I killed', and then there's a long silence before he says, 'I take

responsibility'. This is something that you cannot do as easily, as powerfully in literature. You can write, you know, 'I killed', brackets, silence, and then 'I take responsibility', but you cannot make it as powerful a statement, and as simply put as that in literature as you can in film.

Similar to Lanzmann's direction of *Shoah*, Pahn mobilises the distinctive and unique ability of film to record moments in the present where the imprint of the past is manifested in his subjects. Lanzmann refers to these moments in *Shoah* as 'incarnation' (Chevrie & Le Roux 2007, p. 41), a theological term used commonly in Christianity to refer to the 'word made flesh' in the Son of God. For Lanzmann, incarnation refers to the embodiment of memories when participants appear to re-experience past events.

After an introduction that provides historical context, the film goes to the family farm of Him Houy, a perpetrator and deputy head of security at S-21. Inside their modest dwelling, Houy's elderly parents confront him about his past. His mother insists that karma requires him to atone for his misdeeds during the Khmer Rouge era. Houy defends himself with the Nuremburg defence—he was following orders, and would have preferred to fight and die at the front. The film situates itself in the present day, in the social context of rural Cambodia, where a perpetrator and his family are still grappling with the past. To what extent this confrontation is stimulated by the arrival of the filmmaker is unstated.

Then the film moves to S-21 where Vann Nath, one of the handful of survivors, discusses his time at the prison. Vann is an artist and this ability enabled him to survive. He remained at the prison during the five years of Khmer Rouge rule, painting portraits of Pol Pot while his fellow inmates were tortured and killed. Vann continues to paint but his subjects now are precise visual reconstructions from his memory of scenes from S-21—prisoners arriving at the jail, inmates chained in cells. These are his contribution to the public commemoration of the crimes of the regime.

A conversation between Vann Nath and Chum Mey, another survivor,

expresses both the need of survivors to remember and the ongoing pain they experience when events of the past are denied or willfully forgotten by perpetrators:

Chum Mey: I hear rumours according to which we need to have reconciliation, bury the resentment, that sort of thing. Nath what do you think about putting Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge on trial? Speak with your heart.

Vann Nath: Reconciliation...they can do what they want. But until now, has anyone said, this past action was wrong, that two million dead among the Khmer people was wrong? Has anyone begged for forgiveness from the lips of any leaders or underlings? Have you?

Chum Mey: No.

Nath: So how can we help the families of victims and survivors to find peace again? How do we know it was wrong? They don't even say it was wrong! Why ask for forgiveness if they did nothing wrong.

Chum Mey: They took us to Tuol Sleng to torture us. It's senseless. The two million dead is senseless too. Isn't it? Everyone dodges, saying they're not guilty. What do we do?

Nath: I don't want revenge against these people. But to tell us to forget because it belongs in the past. It's not like you step over a puddle. You get you pants wet. They dry and you forget. This is something painful, really painful, and even if it's been twenty years it's not so far back. It hasn't 'dried.'

Chum Mey: Till my dying day it won't Nath. So long as I live, nothing will be erased

(S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine 2003).

As the film demonstrates, beyond the need of individuals for justice, presenting and affirming the memory of survivors is a necessary component of the political and historical struggle of societies emerging from political violence. In their own way, Nath and Mey articulate the flaws of transitional justice mechanisms that emphasise reconciliation over accountability. Jürgen Habermas has emphasised that the collective amnesia in the transition from totalitarianism to liberalism needs be counterbalanced with the responsibility of a shared historical understanding and a process of public mourning (Habermas & Leaman 1988). This implies that, in the case of Germany, the Holocaust must never be normalised through historicisation, let alone denialism. *S-21* vividly dramatises the struggle to preserve the disappearing traces of the Cambodian genocide as a necessary act to prevent historical revisionism and a culture of impunity.

In the film, Pahn presents sequences where perpetrators and survivors, whom he has persuaded to return to S-21, encounter each other. In the first of these scenes two former guards walk down a corridor of the prison. Typing is heard on the soundtrack. The film cuts to a shot of survivor Chum Mey. He stands in the centre of a room in the former prison looking off-screen to his right. The typing on the soundtrack becomes louder and closer. On the floor behind Chum Mey are piles of rags—clothing of the victims of S-21. The camera pans to the two former guards standing behind a desk, one of them is operating a typewriter. No one speaks.

The obsessive record keeping and meticulous documentation of the forced confessions by the Khmer Rouge is re-staged in the ruined building without commentary. Pahn establishes some key stylistic and narrative strategies for the film. Clearly, this scene has been constructed and directed, yet there is no attempt to dramatise this meeting of survivor and perpetrators. Rather, the film simply presents the sounds and gestures of the past. Just as non-verbal aspects of testimony can convey meaning, Pahn's film uses performance to enable the expression of remembrance in subjects. There is no explicit physical or bodily demonstration of Chum Mey's memory. His rigidity and silence is ambiguous but it creates a profound space for the spectator to reflect on the meaning of witnessing, both his own and the survivor's. It also establishes the context for later confrontations.

Pahn has explained that his use of re-enactment was partly derived from unsuccessful attempts at 'talking head' interviews with participants (Oppenheimer 2012a). Through this process he discovered that what could not be articulated in oral testimony could be revealed physically by staging memory provocations. The use of gesture and re-enactment in one notable scene with a former guard vividly presents the routine nature of the abuse and violence at S-21. As Pahn (in Oppenheimer 2012a, p. 244) recalls:

I discovered that there was another memory, which is body memory. So it may be twenty years later but survivors would talk about pains

they feel in certain areas of the body, even if it was a long time ago. But you find the same thing with former guards. Sometimes the violence is so strong that words don't suffice to describe it. And also that violence may be so strong that the words become inaudible.

The sequence suggests that we are witnessing the revelation of habitual patterns of behavior thorough the enactment of unconscious or semi-conscious embodied memories, which Connerton refers to as 'habitual memory' (1989, p. 29); philosopher Edward Casey employs the term 'habitual body memory' (1987 p. 149).

Pahn sets the scene at night with a wide exterior shot of the prison. Men are seen pacing along the balcony corridors illuminated by neon lights. On the soundtrack, patriotic Khmer Rouge music plays, the vocals sung by a woman. A former guard—Khieu Ches or Pœuv—simultaneously narrates and enacts the physical movements, gestures and language of his daily routine in the deserted prison. Pahn (in Oppenheimer 2012a, p. 245) comments on his direction of this scene:

I then simply said 'so show me your work, show me how you worked'. And that's what opened up the bodily memory, if you like in a chronological way: There is an order in which things are done: so before you put on or take off the handcuffs, you have the business with the bar as well underneath, and so there's an order in which things are done, which he followed.

Pœuv begins by explaining his actions, 'At 10pm, the interrogator brings the prisoner back.' He then switches to direct address as if talking to a prisoner, with a corresponding pointing gesture, 'Stand here.' His tone is aggressive 'I unlock the door. I lead him in.' He enters the cell. Along the visible wall are crudely painted numbers from 9 to 20, designating a small space for each shackled prisoner. The camera stays in the doorway observing him in wide shot. He mimes the gestures as he speaks: 'Stand there! I open the lock, put the irons on him. I remove the handcuffs. I remove the blindfold, I go out.' As Pœuv walks back towards the doorway he points towards a space along the wall, and declaims forcefully, 'Be quiet! Don't make any noise! Otherwise it's the club.' He exits the cell, shuts the door and says, in a matter-of-fact tone, 'I

lock the door.’ He walks down the corridor to a window of the cell and points through the bars, ‘Why are you sitting up? You’re going to get it! Lie back down and not a word.’ (S-21: *The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* 2003)

Pœuv continues walking from cell to cell, gradually refraining from narrating all his actions and focusing instead on addressing the invisible inmates, even responding to a request for a latrine can. He continues to enact threats to beat prisoners with a club, responds to requests for water and even strikes a group of non-existent inmates with a bowl. He appears to inhabit his role with increasing authority, displaying his power with gesture and voice.

In this scene the performance of the subject is one aspect of the *mise en scène*, but there is also the performance of the camera. In this case, point of view is critical. As Pahn (in Oppenheimer 2012a, p. 245) states:

The moral perspective of the filmmaker at this point is very important, and it’s necessary to have that moral perspective before, not while you’re filming it. So you’ve got to be very careful that you don’t topple over from the point of view of the guard to the point of view of the victim and...we’re kind of captivated by the violence of the gestures. When he talks about the violence that he’s meeting out, he also talks about the others sleeping on the floor in the cell. And if the director is excited by that violence, he’d be following it always but happily we didn’t follow the violence all the time.

The scene is filmed in a single uninterrupted take and crucially the camera does not follow the subject into the cell. The filmmaker retains a critical ‘distance’, both spatial and conceptually, from the re-enactment:

So it was important to stop, to hold the camera at the door, not to follow in. Otherwise we’d be walking over the prisoners if you like. And would knock over into the side of the guards. This is something that I realised after shooting. I instinctively didn’t walk over the prisoners. If I had done, ‘who would I be?’ (ibid).

It is important to note that in S-21, Pahn does not appear on camera. Superficially, the film takes the form of an observational documentary, but it is clear that the film would not exist in this form without the intervention of the filmmaker. The confrontation between guards and prisoners, and the re-

enactments are the result of Pahn's unseen and unfilmed participation and intervention. As Pahn suggests, his point of view is manifest in the mise en scène and camera placement. In addition, Pahn, himself a survivor of the regime, does not embody the role of investigator himself; instead, he enables Van Nath to confront and question his former captors.

Pahn's film was created simultaneously with the Cambodia Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). The four top Khmer Rouge leaders, who went on trial in June 2011, insisted that the atrocities of which they were accused were committed by enemies of the regime, and that any other acts were justified responses to external aggression (Cayley 2012, p. 458). Within the context of denial, the struggle for memory has a political as well as a humanitarian motivation. Pahn shows that memory is critical to examining the rule of the Khmer Rouge. The distortion and fabrication of individual memories was part of the process of interrogation and elimination at S-21 as Prâk Khân, a former interrogator, admits in the film.

In one scene, three former S-21 officials discuss the purpose of torturing, interrogating and forcing confessions from prisoners who were already condemned. Prâk Khân, muses on this conundrum, seemingly for the first time in twenty years:

There's something I don't understand. When they brought prisoners here, we had to make a file on them, question them at length about their personal lives. On the outside in the villages and regions, when someone dug up potatoes to eat them, we arrested him and executed him then and there. There was no file, no interrogation. Here we interrogated at length. (*S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* 2003)

Prâk Khân asks, 'Why? I don't get it.' After a brief discussion, the two others recite the party line, as if they are still merely functionaries, obeying orders from above. Him Houy former deputy head of security answers, 'They had to be interrogated to find something they had done wrong. Something they were guilty of. Then we executed them.' Sours Thi, the head of registers, channels Khmer Rouge slogans and double-speak to justify the (il)logic of the regime: 'Angkar has eyes everywhere, it makes no mistakes, it arrests rightfully.'

Prâk Khân thoughtfully answers his own question: ‘Each man has his own memory, his own history. The aim was to break down their entire memory and make an act of treason out of it.’ (*S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* 2003)

Prâk Khân understood that *S-21* was part of an ideological attack on individual memory by the Khmer Rouge. Criminalising memory was the regime’s technique to instil a new historical knowledge based on its doctrine. Pahn’s film reveals the ongoing legacy of this indoctrination in the speech of the former guards and prison staff. Even the slogans and bureaucratic language of Sours Thi are memory traces of the apparatus of genocide. These are components of the historical evidence that Pahn is compiling in his work.

Pahn has created a context in which embodied memories can be revealed through behavior and speech, and captured on film. The final scene in the film shows an empty room in the prison; wind stirs up the dust. The scene suggests the fragility of individual memory. The few survivors of the prison will die, as will the perpetrators. The film itself is a record of memory in the process of disappearance. The film *S-21* is, however, not an isolated entity. It forms part of body of work concerned with the Cambodian genocide and is linked to the establishment of the Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center in Phnom Penh whose stated mission is ‘to save and animate the memory of yesterday and today’ (Bophana 2016). Like other audiovisual archives, such as in Timor-Leste and Rwanda, the Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center reflects the understanding that film and video are essential components of the historical record and repositories of collective memories. Situated within a public archive they are powerful tools for countering the politics of forgetting and historical revisionism.

4.3 *The Act of Killing*

In 1965 General Suharto seized control of Indonesia’s armed forces and instigated a series of nationwide purges to consolidate his power. Across the

archipelago, but mainly focused on Java and Bali, paramilitary groups and militias, supported and directed by the army, began systematically killing members of the Indonesian communist party (PKI) and its sympathisers. The murdered included trade unionists, ethnic Chinese, Christians and anybody else that the military considered a threat. Estimates of the numbers of victims vary but there is no doubt that 'several hundred thousand people' were killed (Cribb 1991, p. 1). *The Act of Killing* (2012), directed by Joshua Oppenheimer in collaboration with Christine Cynn and an anonymous Indonesian director is set in the Sumatran city of Medan. Its main subject is Anwar Congo, a death squad leader during the massacre. The film presents Congo and other perpetrators as they re-enact with increasing extravagance the murder of so-called 'communists' and other civilians over 50 years ago. The film also shows the culture of impunity in Indonesia, which has meant that the killers have not only evaded justice but are publically respected and celebrated. While *TAOK* has garnered international critical praise and numerous high profile awards, it has also been fiercely criticised for enabling perpetrators to justify their crimes with elaborate filmic spectacles. I will examine some of the criticism and support for this film with a focus on its use of performance as a means of presenting embodied memory. I will then question whether the film has developed an effective strategy for engaging with the social repercussions of historical violence.

The film begins with a surreal sequence. Brightly dressed female dancers emerge from an enormous fish, actually an abandoned restaurant in southern Sumatra. Two men, one in drag, the other in a cowboy costume, pose at the fish's mouth. The men are later identified as Herman Koto and Anwar Congo. Immediately, the film announces that it is not going to be a conventional documentary. It takes us into the realm of fantasy, absurdity and cinephilia. In fact, we soon discover that Anwar and some of his colleagues were 'movie gangsters'—along with their criminal activities, they sold tickets to Hollywood movies at local cinemas and idolised Elvis, Brando and John Wayne. Oppenheimer then broadens his investigation by following Anwar up the chain to meet the politicians and newspaper editors who

ordered and coordinated the campaign of violence and are still in positions of power. We see the ongoing influence of *Pancasila Youth*, a paramilitary group that ran death squads for the Suharto regime. These scenes come closest to conventional reportage and are essential context for the more stylistically excessive sequences.

In an early scene, and in the first re-enactment of the film, Anwar demonstrates how he strangled his victims with wire. It is a simple sequence filmed in medium and wide shot on a rooftop. Here, Anwar killed scores of people but he displays no sense of shame or guilt. His performance is matter of fact. Afterwards he smiles and dances. There is not the total immersion displayed by Pœuv in *S-21*, but rather a demonstration with direct address to the camera. Anwar is then shown watching back the footage of his 'performance'. He critiques it, commenting that it lacks authenticity and he would not have worn white pants to kill people. The film proceeds to document Anwar and his associates' attempts to re-enact torture and executions, in studios and locations with props, lighting, a film crew and elaborate make-up and wardrobe. The exact nature of the filmmakers' involvement in staging these re-enactments is stated explicitly only once in the opening titles of the film:

When we met the killers, they proudly told us their stories about what they did. To understand why, we asked them to create scenes about the killings in whatever ways they wished. This film follows that process, and documents the consequences (*The Act of Killing*, 2012).

Oppenheimer's approach leads to questions about the perspective of the filmmaker and how audiences engage or identify with the characters and the events presented.

As Oppenheimer shows in TAOK, the perpetrators of the 1965 violence live without fear of prosecution while the survivors still live in the shadows. He has stated that during his research for a film about the victims of the genocide, he encountered endless official obstruction. So local activists suggested that he approach perpetrators and make a film about them. 'Film

the killers: they will talk, and not just talk, they'll boast' (Bradshaw 2013, p. 3), activists and survivors accurately predicted. Oppenheimer's strategy, in contrast to Pahn's, evolved from a desire to present the present day culture of impunity in Indonesia:

I think this film is fundamentally different from either *S21* or *Enemies of the People*. Here, because the killers have won and remained in power, the whole film is an attempt to understand the imagination of a regime of impunity – and what happens to our humanity when we build our normality on terror and lies, and we use storytelling to deny the most awful parts of our reality, not to see it for what it is (ibid, p. 7).

Central to Pahn's film is the meeting of perpetrators and their victims. He creates the agency for former prisoners to confront and question their torturers. In *TAOK*, only once, and briefly, is a victim given a voice. While rehearsing a scene, one of the supporting actors discusses the murder of his stepfather during the 1965 genocide. He suggests that his story could be integrated into the re-enactments. He is quickly dismissed by the other actors/perpetrators on the grounds that it would be impossible to include everyone's story. It is a telling moment. The perpetrators only want to include narratives that suit their self-image as movie heroes. Once again, the voice of the survivor is silenced.

Working with perpetrators raises ethical problems that are never explicitly confronted in the film. For a film that relies so much on cinematic references and self-reflexivity there is little exposure of the filmmakers' involvement in the staging of the re-enactments. During the film, Oppenheimer's voice is heard from behind the camera, asking questions, interacting with the participants, but Oppenheimer is never seen on screen and for the most part, his camera simply observes the action, documenting the preparations for the full scale re-enactments presented in the final section of the film. There is not the sort of meta-textual framing found, for example, in Anna Broinowski's *Forbidden Lie\$* (2007) where film and filmmaker are presented as complicit in a process of fabrication. In *Forbidden Lie\$*, acceptance of the documentary medium as a generator of truthful utterances is questioned.

While Oppenheimer's presence is evident in his off-screen verbal interactions with Anwar and others, it is what is not revealed in this limited participatory approach that is most problematic. Oppenheimer is an admirer of Jean Rouch's filmmaking. In his interview with Bradshaw (ibid, p. 8) he says:

I would look to Jean Rouch as a precedent for me, [particularly] his films like *Moi, Un Noir*, *Jaguar*, *Petit à Petit*, where he understood that every time you film anybody you're creating a reality with that person.

Like the subjects of Rouch's *Moi, Un Noir* (1958), Anwar cooperates with the filmmaker in the creation of the re-enactments. However there are fundamental differences between the power relations that Rouch explores in post-colonial West Africa, and the participation of perpetrators in *TAOK*. Rouch's subjects were traditionally viewed as objects by the European gaze; in giving them agency and a voice, Rouch was radically shifting the authorship from the privileged European filmmaker to a form of *anthropologie partagé*, or 'shared anthropology' (Rouch 2003, p. 18). In *La Pyramide Humaine* (1961) Rouch appears on screen, his provocations of the subjects/actors becoming part of the story itself. The subjects of *TAOK* are privileged henchmen of the political elite who continue to enjoy respect and status. This is demonstrated several times in the film, such as in a scene where Anwar is celebrated in a television interview. Oppenheimer's own point of view is expressed in dialogue exchanges with the participants, for example when he asks Adi Zulkadry if he fears that one day an international commission will prosecute his crimes. He also disputes that Anwar would know how his victims felt after playing the role of one in a re-enactment. These are situations in which Oppenheimer can demonstrate an ethical superiority.

The filmmaker's complicity in the staged sequences of *TAOK* is presented in a token way. Early in the film, the focus is on the rehearsals for the re-enactments, the studio sets and camera equipment; towards the end of the film the staged scenes are shown full-frame. The *mise en scène* of the burning of the village immerses the audience in the violence of the re-enactments. The distress of the extras, some of whom may have felt coerced

into performing in scenes of violence, is shown but this can easily be blamed on the perpetrators. The filmmaker's role in this is not reflected upon. The point of view of the scene allows the audience a vicarious thrill. In *S-21*, the positioning of the camera as subject/witness, never lets us identify with the perpetrators. Oppenheimer, on the other hand, collapses the distance using fictional *mise en scène* and narrative continuity editing. This has the effect of an uncomfortable complicity between the spectator, the filmmaker and the film's subjects. It dissolves the moral distance of the camera that Pahn considered essential.

Critics of this film have questioned both the ethics and aesthetics of Oppenheimer's collaboration with the likes of Anwar. In *Film Comment*, BBC commissioning editor Nick Fraser (2013) argues that the re-enactments in *TOAK* would be condemned in another context. He uses the analogy of a hypothetical film made with ex-Nazis in rural Argentina in the 1950s. He goes on to suggest (2013, p. 22) that for a Western audience the film enables the detachment of viewing an exoticised other:

The spectacle can be enjoyed while deploring the film's subjects. Instead of an investigation, based on such humdrum aspects of the killings as to why and how they occurred, and what they really had to do with the context of the Cold War, we have ended somewhere else—in a high-minded snuff movie.

Fraser calls the scene of Anwar singing *Born Free* as he is reconciled with his victims an example of the 'wholly tasteless' approach of *TAOK*. He suggests that the film's success with Western audiences is less to do with its subject, and more about its 'laborious (dare I say, pretentious) contemplation of its own methodology' (ibid). Whether the film's self-reflexivity is simply a 'tasteless' and attention grabbing posture or an informed strategy for presenting an act of historical violence and its legacy in present day Indonesia remains in question.

Oppenheimer's approach in *TOAK* can be framed as a form of *Ostranenei*, or defamiliarisation, a term first employed by Viktor Shklovsky in 1917 to describe a form of poetic language. *Ostranene* is a technique 'to make forms

difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged' (Shklovsky 2004, p. 16). *TOAK* is innovative because it compels us to look at something we think we may know—the depiction of genocide—and reconfigures the frame of reference. As Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2010) observe, media templates are the dominant process that news organisations use to define current events and to retrospectively define the meaning of past events within an 'archival prism' (p. 91).

The media template of the Holocaust has become the principal interpretive framework for the discussion of other atrocities and genocides, resulting in contradictory responses—first, the difficulty in meeting 'the considerable expectations placed on representations of an event considered unimaginable' and second, the reinforcement of a 'global familiarity' with a narrative (ibid, p. 92). The repetition and reiteration of narratives, Hoskins and O'Loughlin argue, limit the mainstream media's capacity to shock or move an audience. Another symptom of this remediation is 'compassion fatigue', a term used to describe why certain conflicts stay 'off the radar' of news coverage and why viewers feel more connected to some stories than others (ibid, p. 37). Oppenheimer's framing of *TOAK*, from the beginning, as a surreal aesthetic experience, and by establishing a 'behind the scenes' or 'film within a film' component to the narrative, subverts the Holocaust template and overturns the spectators' narrative expectations. However, an innovative formal approach alone is not sufficient to generate new knowledge. It also risks misrepresentation as a dramatic fiction template, which may undermine its claims to 'truth'.

Performance is central to both *S-21* and *TAOK*, but whereas the former allows the artifice of performance to reveal behavioral traces of the past, the latter takes the artifice into the realm of excess and spectacle. The performances in *TAOK* are intended to reveal how repressed aspects of Indonesia's history are expressed in a society where the perpetrators are celebrated.

The filmmaker argues (Oppenheimer & Uwemedimo 2012b, p. 290) that the use of performance is an attempt to expose a counter-memory in a way that is appropriate to the participants and the politics of Indonesian state historiography:

We avoid considering historical narration as mediation of a past that can be made coherently and fully present; instead we consider historical narrative as a performance whose staging produces effects.

To provide context, an anti-PKI Indonesian propaganda film, *The Treachery of the September 30th Movement of the Indonesian Communist Party (G30S)* (1984), is presented in TAOK. *G30S*, a hyper-violent melodrama depicting the violence and savagery of the communists, was compulsory viewing on Indonesian TV and cinemas. It was used to generate popular outrage and to justify the Suharto regime's actions. History as performed in the film notably suppresses the violence of the state against the PKI. Some of the re-enactments in *TAOK*, according to Oppenheimer, mimic the generic violence of *G30S* while presenting a hidden narrative of the genocide as told by the perpetrators. The aim of this strategy:

[I]s, in the first instance, to perform it in such a way that the operations of its obscenity can be grasped, so that the spectres it produces can enter the scene in a way that allows them to be addressed, acknowledged and contended (Oppenheimer & Uwemedimo 2012b, p. 291).

Oppenheimer describes the re-enactments as 'counter performances' by the perpetrators which reveal repressed historical detail, in that they 'frame performances that contravene the official history while nonetheless acting in its name and acting out its routines' (ibid, p. 291).

Crucial to the use of performance in *TAOK* is the presentation of the embodied responses that the re-enactments provoke in Anwar and others. The performances of the perpetrators reveal the extent of their normalization of, and habituation to, mass violence, but we also see the reversal of this process. The primary narrative thread of the film is constructed around

Anwar's eventual realisation of the effect and impact of the violence that he inflicted on his victims. This realisation is shown in interviews and in observational scenes during which Anwar discusses his growing feelings of remorse and guilt. It is also expressed in the extravagant final musical sequence in front of a waterfall where he attempts to dramatise reconciliation with his victims. These conscious attempts to come to terms with his past are interrupted by what appear to be spontaneous physical or bodily reactions. This is first explicitly shown in a sequence in which Anwar plays a victim of torture during which he appears to experience a traumatic response. The final scene in which Anwar repeats the demonstration of his killing technique on a rooftop in Medan is interrupted when he starts retching uncontrollably. He attempts to continue, then retches again.

According to Oppenheimer, what causes Anwar's reaction 'is the growing terror: he's choking on the terror that comes when you look at the abyss between yourself and your image of yourself' (Bradshaw 2013, p. 6). However, it is also possible to see this scene as the unlocking of an embodied memory, a visceral and abject response to his re-experiencing acts of violence. But to what extent can we 'trust' this scene as either a genuine or contrived response? I argue that the filmmaker fails to establish both spatial and intellectual detachment in the use of camera placement, and that his reticence to disclose the nature of the collaboration undermines the film's authority as a discourse. This scene can easily be interpreted as a form of narrative closure derived from fictional templates, satisfying the expectation of a redemptive act—a false resolution given the ongoing political suppression of the 1965 genocide in Indonesia.

Bill Nichols' concept of axiographics recognizes that in documentary film point of view cannot be subsumed, as it can in fiction filmmaking, within the imaginary (Nichols 1991, p. 79). In documentary, the gaze of the camera encodes the moral stance of filmmakers in its placement within the world of

the events and subjects represented. As Vivian Sobchack (1984, p. 294) states:

Documentary space is constituted and inscribed as ethical space; it is the objectively visible totalisation of subjective visual responsiveness and responsibility toward a world shared with other human subjects.

The moral stance of the filmmaker is most clearly exposed through the gaze of the camera in extreme circumstances. Sobchack has identified six forms of ethical behavior, revealed in the position and relationship of the camera encountering the event of death and dying: the 'accidental gaze', the 'helpless gaze', the 'endangered gaze', the 'interventional gaze', and the 'ethical' or 'humane stare', and the 'professional gaze' (ibid, p. 294). While we cannot compare the re-enactments of torture and execution in *TAOK* to actuality footage of these events, and accepting the comparison of the film to a 'snuff movie' as perhaps too extreme, the camera's placement within these scenes conflates the point of view of filmmaker, spectator and the perpetrators. Killers, playing the role of victims, further complicate this ethical space. This approach is in stark contrast to Pahn's awareness (Oppenheimer 2012a, p. 245) of placing his camera in a position where he would not be 'walking over the prisoners' while filming a re-enactment.

Notwithstanding these problems, the notoriety that *TAOK* has garnered has contributed to historical knowledge within Indonesia, albeit outside the mainstream. The film has bypassed almost certain censorship by playing in select private screenings to journalists and survivor groups. The film prompted a major investigation by *Tempo* magazine, which sent 47 journalists across the country to gather evidence. On October 1, 2012 *Tempo* published a double issue on the 1965 mass killings. The Indonesian version of the film has also been uploaded to YouTube, and a Bit Torrent bundle has been downloaded 3.5 million times (Mason 2014). Arguably, Oppenheimer is addressing his critics in *The Look of Silence* (2014), his companion piece to *TOAK*. In that film, he follows a family of survivors, and one man in particular, Adi Rukun, who confronts a range of perpetrators associated either directly or indirectly with the torture and execution of his brother.

As documentary investigations of past crimes against humanity, *S-21* and *TAOK* deviate from realist and more conventional 'humanitarian' approaches to filmed testimony. In their own ways, both films have set themselves the ambitious and almost impossible goal of making visible the embodied memories of perpetrators and victims of historical crimes. The moments of 'incarnation' manifest in only brief sequences in both films yet these are critical to any claim of authority and authenticity. In the next sections, I examine the significant body of scholarship that supports performative approaches to testimony as a method of engaging with the embodied memory of participants and transmitting embodied knowledge to documentary film audiences.

4.4 Embodiment

Over the last two decades the term 'embodied memory' has appeared in a range of disciplines including psychology, cognitive science, sociology, linguistics, memory and documentary studies. It is a loose term that has been used to refer to a range of concepts, such as the (re-)experience of trauma (Culbertson 1995); the relationship between the body and the brain in cognition (Glenberg 1997); and even the affective power of the facial close-up in Holocaust testimony (Renov 2013). Generally, embodied memory, or embodiment when referring specifically to memory, deals with the ways in which the human body is engaged with the inscription, storage or transmission of memory.

Concepts of embodiment have been influenced by the philosopher Merleau-Ponty who, in his 1945 book *Phenomenology of Perception*, situated the lived experience of the world as the foundation and basis for all knowledge:

The first philosophical act would appear to be to return to the world of actual experience which is prior to the objective world, since it is in it that we shall be able to grasp the theoretical basis no less than the limits of that objective world, restore to things their concrete physiognomy, to organisms their individual ways of dealing with the world, and to subjectivity its inherence in history (Merleau-Ponty 2005, p. 66).

Phenomenology offers a critique of classical epistemology stretching back to Descartes's transcendental subject. The body's emersion in existence is both pre-conceptual and pre-subjective. For Merleau-Ponty, social, mental and abstract schemas are formed on the basis of the body's direct interaction with the world, thus our body is 'our point of view on the world' (ibid, p. 5). Where traditional epistemology attempted to overcome subjectivity, Merleau-Ponty said that knowledge of the world is always embodied:

The perceiving mind is an incarnated mind. I have tried, first of all, to re-establish the roots of the mind in its body and in its world, going against doctrines which treat perception as a simple result of the action of external things on our body as well as against those which insist on the autonomy of consciousness. . . . And it is equally clear that one does not account for the facts by superimposing a pure, contemplative consciousness on a thinglike body (ibid, pp. 3-4).

Phenomenology counters the philosophical preoccupation with language as the necessary foundation for meaning and embeds subjectivity and consciousness in corporeal experience. Speech and language are linked to the concrete world of physical action via the gesture. For Merleau-Ponty speech is 'one of the possible uses of the body' (ibid, p. 211), an extension of a facility to communicate to others made possible by a wider existential sphere of meaning. Consciousness, Merleau-Ponty claims, is 'incarnate' (ibid, pp.3-4). Thus, knowledge cannot be divorced from the act of knowing or the embodied consciousness engaged in knowing.

4.5 The Embodied Mind Theory

Theories of the embodied mind in cognitive science, linguistics and psychology have extended and elaborated the interconnectedness of sensorimotor and conceptual systems through empirical research. For linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson language and higher abstract reasoning are not only shaped by the bodily experience, they are evolutionary developments of basic perceptual and motor facilities present in other animals. Therefore, 'to understand reason we must understand the

details of our visual system, our motor system, and the general mechanics of neural binding' (Lakoff & Johnson 1999, p. 4). Traditional cognitive science, as well as computational and representational theories of mind, have viewed the brain as the control system for the body, in which 'Perceptual and motor systems, though reasonable objects of inquiry in their own right, were not considered relevant to understanding 'central' cognitive processes. Instead, they were thought to serve merely as peripheral input and output devices' (Wilson 2002, p. 625). Lakoff and Johnson propose that human thinking derives from embodiment. Thoughts and concepts arise from our interaction with the world we inhabit and the way our brains are structured by its connection to the body.

In *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999), Lakoff and Johnson outline the primary role of metaphors derived from sensorimotor domains in subjective experience. Even complex political, moral and mathematical ideas, they argue, are largely formed by interconnected primary metaphors. These metaphors reflect physical, spatial and geographical actions and experiences. Our bodies and the conceptual frameworks that emanate from our being in the world are engaged in abstract thought or 'off-line' cognition and determine how, and even what we can think. Importantly, this embodiment also extends into the environment around us.

4.6 Embodied Memory

Psychologist Arthur M. Glenberg (1997) has developed a theory of memory grounded in embodied cognition. He proposes that memory, like other cognitive structures, has evolved to serve perception and action and that 'memory is embodied to facilitate interaction with the environment' (p. 1). Most memory is the automatic and unconscious encoding of 'meshed' sets of patterns of action. The meshing of perception and remembered experiences creates embodied conceptualisation. According to Glenberg, it is the embodied nature of both perception and memory that enable the two to interconnect. Memory's function to encode information in term of bodily interaction is supported by empirical studies, for example laboratory research

which has suggested that memory for actions is better than memory for the verbal description of the commands (Cohen 1981; Saltz & Donnenwerth-Nolan 1981; Englekamp & Zimmer 1989).

Rather than distinguishing between different memory systems as short-term and long-term, or working and episodic memory, Glenberg conceives memory as 'automatic' or 'effortful' (1997, p. 36). Effortful memory requires suppression of input from the environment to replay trajectories of spatial-function patterns. But even in conscious memory, the body is engaged in unconscious physical responses to remembered events:

Thus imagining a fearful situation evokes sweating, imagining positive situations results in measurable activity in muscles associated with smiling, and imagining negative situations results in activity in the muscles associated with furrowing of the brow (ibid, p. 3).

Other studies confirm that memory encodes affective, sensory-motor and spatial information about experiences. According to Dijkstra et al. (2007), 'memory for a stimulus or event is stored in the perceptual and motor pathways that were involved in the processing of the event' (p. 140). The body is not simply the source of sense data, rather the body and brain are an integrated system that dynamically interacts with the environment.

Researchers have also shown that the retrieval of autobiographical memories is more effective when subjects are in the same body posture as when the original events occurred:

Physically assuming an elaborate body position plays a major role in access to autobiographical memories and their subsequent recall. Assuming a memory-congruent body position helps both younger and older adults to gain access to their memories. This demonstrates encoding specificity in an autobiographical memory domain with the same body position during retrieval and the original experience facilitating access to that experience (ibid, p. 146).

These findings have important implications in formulating techniques to record and represent the memories of participants in documentary film projects. Directing participants to physically re-enact scenes of past events or to adopt

the physical posture in which they experienced an event may be more than a representational strategy. It potentially offers better access to an accurate recall of events. Crucially, it adds another layer to spoken word testimony. Physical actions, posture, gesture, expression and tone provide access to encoded, unconscious memories that may support, contradict or offer another layer of meaning to the content of spoken recollection.

Applying these theories of embodied memory to the re-enactment of memories of political violence is controversial, not least the serious ethical consideration of re-traumatising witnesses. However, it is an important framework for examining a type of performance practice in contemporary documentaries. In the next section, I discuss the staging of testimony dealing with past genocide and human rights abuses in terms of the relationship between embodied and traumatic memories, which I then apply to my own experience of making films in Timor-Leste.

4.7 Documentary Re-enactment

In documentary filmmaking the use of directed performance and re-enactment has been revived following a period when it was viewed with suspicion. In the 1960s the practitioners of Direct Cinema rejected the overt intervention of filmmakers and associated re-enactment with Griersonian filmmaking and techniques associated with narrative fiction film. At the same time in Europe, however, Jean Rouch was experimenting with various forms of staged performance and reflexivity. While realist staging—or re-enactment that attempts to seamlessly blend with actuality footage—is criticised as a deceptive practice (Nichols 2008), many contemporary documentary filmmakers use various forms of overt staging and performance. There is a greater awareness of the performative nature of social life. Frederick Wiseman, the most prolific practitioner of the observational mode of cinema, has discussed the ways that people ‘perform’ their day-to-day activities in his films (Plantinga 1997, p. 197).

Documentary film theorists Brian Winston (1998) and Bill Nichols (2008) both trace the use of re-enactment in various forms to the earliest days of non-fiction filmmaking, including Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922). For Winston and Nichols, re-enactment is part of a 'secret' history of documentary that requires re-examination. Winston, as Jonathon Kahana (2009, p. 52) notes, sees re-enactment in semiotic terms 'as a language out of which different rhetorics or paradigms of 'true story' are shaped and contrasted to each other'. Nichols (2008) creates a roughly chronological taxonomy of re-enactment culminating in contemporary reflexive forms. He sees re-enactment as a challenge to the classic documentary image, 'where an indexical link between image and historical occurrence exists', and favours contemporary documentary practices that draw attention to the gap between the re-enactment and the original event, creating an 'uncanny sense' or 'fantasmic subject' (p. 74). Nichols perceives that 'In this way reenactments effect a temporal vivification in which past and present coexist in the impossible space of a fantasmatic' (ibid, p. 88). Whether implicit or explicit, spontaneous or filmmaker-induced, performance is integral to documentary practice.

In documentary films that deal with historical violence, testimony is also a form of performance. This is the case even in a 'talking head' interview where a witness recounts to the filmmaker and spectator a narrative based on reconstructed memory. The performativity of testimony becomes more explicit when it involves some form of body enactment. Pœuv's re-enactment of threatening and dominating prisoners in *S-21* or Anwar Congo's gagging while demonstrating his murder technique at the end of *The Act Of Killing* have already been discussed. The Abraham Bomba scene in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) offers another example.

4.8 Shoah

At Treblinka, Bomba's task was to cut the hair of women and children just prior to them entering the gas chambers. He had worked as a barber in New York after the war but had since retired. For the film, Lanzmann hired a

barbershop in Tel Aviv and directed Bomba to discuss what he did at Treblinka while cutting a male customer's hair (Winston 2012, p. 109). In this notorious scene, Bomba stops and tells Lanzmann he can't continue, saying 'It's too horrible.' Lanzmann forcefully insists he continue: 'We have to do it... We must go on.' Bomba pauses, he wets his mouth with his tongue and mutters some inaudible words. Eventually he resumes, but there is palpable transformation in the tone of his voice and posture (*Shoah* 1985).

In a discussion of this scene, Lanzmann (as cited in Bruzzi 2000, p. 108) makes it clear that his purpose in staging it this way was not to create a 'representational' device, but rather, to facilitate the 'transmission' of Bomba's experience to an audience:

Lanzmann: I think he [Bomba] would not have agreed to do this with women, and I think that I would not have agreed. I think that would have been unbearable. It would not have been transmitted, I am sure. It would have been obscene.

Felman: It confirms the fact that what you're doing in the staging is not representational.

Lanzmann: Absolutely. The film is not at all representational.

During the scene Lanzmann asks Bomba to describe factual details: 'How did it look, the gas chamber? Can you describe precisely?' (*Shoah* 1985). He directs Bomba to imitate exactly how he cut the women's hair. Lanzmann is less interested in the factual account than in provoking the sort of embodied memory that Bomba appears to experience.

There are other instances in *Shoah* where survivors are asked to sing songs from the past, to re-enact physical movements or recall precise details of spaces and places to induce similar effects. These scenes suggest that the body holds unconscious information, sensations, traces that can be unlocked, manifested in the present moment, and recorded on film. But Lanzmann goes further. As previously discussed, he refers to these moments not as remembrance but as 'incarnation' (Chevrie & Le Roux, 2007, p. 41). Lanzmann wants to distinguish memory as an ordered, causal representation of the past, from this type of phenomenological event:

[I]t is in no case of the order of memory. A film consecrated to the Holocaust can only be a counter myth, that is an inquiry into the present of the Holocaust or at the very least into a past whose scars are still so freshly and vividly inscribed in places and consciences that it gives itself to be seen in in a hallucinatory intemporality (as cited in La Capra 1998, p. 105).

Thus Lanzmann's *mise en scène* is a provocation; a method to induce an embodied response. As LaCapra (*ibid*, pp. 99-100) observes:

Lanzmann relies on an anti-memory or on the silences and indirections of memory in arriving at what I take to be the object of his quest; the incarnation, actually reliving, or compulsively acting out of the past – particularly its traumatic suffering—in the present.

In *Shoah*, performance is critical to inducing the incarnation, and film is the medium capable of capturing and transmitting its manifestation. Referring to Holocaust video testimony, Lawrence Langer even goes so far as to suggest that the act of its witnessing allows access to an unmediated truth or 'the thing itself' (Langer 1991, p. 46). For Lanzmann and Langer, the 'acting out' provides an ontological correspondence with the primal scene experienced; an embodied trace that transmits rather than represents. But this idea of trauma as a pure and unmediated presence implies that documentary can reclaim the indexical bond between the image and the historical event only via a traumatised subject.

4.9 Performance and Traumatic Re-enactment

The explicit staging in documentary films of scenes with survivors or perpetrators of political violence or genocide is often discussed within a trauma paradigm. In the case of Holocaust video testimony, the unconscious, embodied responses of witnesses are often highlighted over their ability to offer accurate evidence. Hirsch and Spitzer write that 'If the main function of testimony now is not to inform factually but to transmit affectively, it cannot do so by purely verbal means, whether or written' (2009, p. 155). Moreover, the verbal content of oral testimony is perceived as inadequate to represent

the limit event of the Holocaust:

Video testimony includes narrative and bodily re-enactment and its interpreters often focus in greater detail on this latter dimension that written testimony fails to provide. The moments that best illustrate and represent embodied memory tend to be the moments where speech fails and where the distance between past and present seem to collapse (ibid, p.158).

This notion of atemporality connects documentary practices to theories of traumatic memory, arguably a specific type of embodied memory.

As previously discussed, Janet defined traumatic memory as experiences that cannot be assimilated into mental schemas or integrated into a coherent narrative. Instead, the traumatic memory is re-experienced involuntarily in overwhelming physical sensations, or 'as fragmented sensory or motoric experiences' (Van der Kolk & Van der Hart 1995, p. 176) described in terms of a simultaneity:

[T]he simultaneity is related to the fact that the traumatic experience/memory is, in a sense, timeless. It is not transformed into a story, placed in time with a beginning, a middle and an end (which is characteristic for narrative memory) (ibid, p. 177).

At its extreme limits, trauma is fundamentally different from memory because 'it becomes dissociated from conscious awareness and voluntary control' (ibid, p. 160). Van Alphen observes that traumatic re-enactments take the form of drama, not narrative, since 'Drama just presents itself, or so it seems; narrative as a mode implies some sort of mastery by the narrator' (Van Alphen 2002, p. 210).

Deidre Boyle also applies theories of traumatic memory to the scene of the former prison guard Ches in Pahn S-21. According to Boyle, the scene is an example of dissociation. Rather than narrating his testimony, Ches acts it out, performing his daily routine of prisoner abuse, and 'As we watch Ches reenact his experience, we witness the past become present. This scene was not written and directed by Panh; it is a moment of memory relived' (Boyle 2010, p. 161). Thus the drama of acting out a traumatic memory

appears to lend itself to audiovisual representation because it is an embodied and gestural performance, albeit an unconscious one.

However, the idea that embodied memory, and by extension the memory of traumatic events, is unreflexive and implicit, and therefore, distinct from the explicit and conscious character of episodic or autobiographical memory has been questioned. John Sutton and Kellie Williamson (2014, p. 6) argue that:

It is a mistake to treat embodied memory as so entirely intuitive as to be outside the psychological realm, for this is to reinforce dichotomies between acting and thinking, and between body and mind, which need to be thoroughly dismantled to achieve better understanding of these complex phenomena.

In fact, they argue, the interaction between personal and habitual body memory is a feature of everyday life. Similarly, Connerton (1989, p. 72) suggests that:

Many forms of habitual skilled remembering illustrate a keeping of the past in mind that, without ever advertising to its origin, nevertheless re-enacts the past in our present conduct. In habitual memory the past is, as it were, sedimented in the body.

Just as the engagement of the body and the senses can induce remembrance in a variety of contexts, in the cases of *Shoah*, *S-21* and *TAOK* the performance of embodied skills or routines by subjects provoke vivid recollections of past traumatic events. The fact that these memories are partly performed rather than verbally narrated does not necessarily imply that they are automatic and unconscious, nor does it reflect a compulsive re-living of past events. Moreover, the social aspect of these recollections and their emplacement in significant, or precise locations, suggests that memory is not only embodied but situated.

4.10 Performing ‘Traumatic Memories’ in Timor-Leste

In my own work in Timor-Leste, the recounting of testimony has induced certain participants to re-enact events in ways that suggest the experiential

dimension of embodied memories. During the filming of *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010), I brought Mariano Do Rego, a survivor of Santa Cruz Massacre, back to the cemetery, where I asked him to describe to me what happened on November 12, 1991. He stood in the exact place where he was at that time and began to recall the events leading up to the Indonesian troops opening fire on the protestors. A normally quiet and withdrawn man, as he recounted his experience, he became animated and excited. At one point he dropped to the ground and covered his head as if dodging bullets.

Do Rego's testimony was not only a compelling physical performance, but also a coherent narrative. His testimony was both verbal and embodied, providing a vivid demonstration of his experience. Undoubtedly, this was a traumatic event in his life, yet he did not falter during his re-enactment. If there was a re-experiencing of a traumatic memory, it did not overwhelm his ability to speak or to describe his experience. This example of a performative, on-location interview, along with others that I filmed before and after in Timor-Leste, suggested that the recounting of trauma events does not necessarily entail a traumatised subject.

This interview with Do Rego took place after I had spent time with him and interviewed him on several occasions at his home. He had overcome an initial reluctance to speak to me and had come to regard the film and the forensic investigation as serious and well intentioned. Importantly, he saw his presence in the film as a way of expressing a collective desire for justice and to bring to account the perpetrators of the violence at Santa Cruz and throughout the occupation. His performance was his demonstration to me, and a broader audience, of what it was like on the day of the massacre. In this sense, it was not a case of 'acting out'—or even of 'working through' (in psychoanalytic terms)—an individual trauma. Rather, it could be characterised, using Siapno's term, as an example of 'speaking beyond trauma' (2012, p. 432).

In Timorese dance and martial arts traditions, Siapno has identified

performative practices that 'embody resilience' (ibid, p. 436) and provide 'acts of resistance' (ibid, p. 230) to political domination, which suggest:

That embodiment and local knowledges formed through practices and regimens of bodily discipline, grace and physical training (such as in ritual, martial arts and performing arts, for example), can complement and/or challenge abstract theoretical writings on 'embodying peace' in post-war countries (ibid, p. 427).

With this in mind, I argue that an approach to filmmaking as a negotiated social interaction can enable embodied memories to be dramatised with survivors of political violence without engaging in the re-traumatisation of participants. This approach, investigated in the making of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016), developed from a notion of embodied memory towards an understanding of emplaced memory as a catalyst for remembrance and a way of representing the interaction of people, place and memory. In the next chapter I explore the development of my methodology based on these theories.

Chapter 5 – *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* – Case Study

5.1 Introduction

The Spirits of Tasi Tolu (2016) is the culmination of 15 years of filmmaking in Timor-Leste. It is part of a series of documentaries about a nation emerging from a period of political violence. *Luolo's Story* (2002), *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010), and the film under discussion have all dealt with the legacy of the Indonesian occupation and the ways in which it continues to impact on the lives of individuals and communities in Timor-Leste. *Luolo's Story* follows a guerilla fighter's transformation into a political leader. *Anatomy of a Massacre* looks at a forensic investigation to discover the missing victims of the Santa Cruz massacre while telling the story of the families of the missing. *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* uses multiple subjects and points of view to focus on the alleged site of extrajudicial executions and clandestine burials during the Indonesian occupation. While these documentaries deal primarily with contemporary events, all three films refer to the past as the source of present, ongoing concerns.

The Spirits of Tasi Tolu represents a shift from my previous Timor-Leste films. In this film I engage more directly with the political, social and cultural factors influencing remembrance and recollection of the occupation in Timor-Leste, and reflect on my filmmaking practices and choices. This change in direction arose directly from the experience of making *Anatomy of a Massacre*. The context for both films is an encounter between forensic scientists, a film crew and local people during a human rights investigation. In this chapter, I discuss the central role that forensic science occupies in both *Anatomy of a Massacre* and *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* and discuss how I re-examined that aspect of the narrative during the making of the latter film. I then look at how my theoretical research informed the methodology, as well as the narrative and stylistic decisions made during the production of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*.

5.2 Forensic Archeology

Until the mid-1980s, investigations of human rights abuses relied almost entirely on witness and survivor testimony (Kirschner 1994). The elevated status that forensic science has recently gained in the West, often referred to as ‘the CSI effect’ (Schweitzer & Saks 2007), has decentered the privileged position of survivor testimony as the ‘template for all forms of traumatic telling, response and responsibility in the contemporary field of human rights’ (Shaffer & Smith 2004, p. 7). Rachel Cyr (2013, 2014) argues that forensic science provides a positivist reading of historical interpretation by producing evidence about what happened at a given time and space. The forensic scientist is not an eyewitness, like the historian, he or she testifies to the material traces left behind by events. Unlike the historian, Cyr (2013, p. 100) claims, the forensic scientist’s ability to reconstruct past events:

[I]s contingent on the constitution of a corpus delicti—the body or scene of the crime—produced by means of the methodological location, collection, and preservation of physical evidence found at a given site.

Without a crime scene, material traces or human remains the forensic scientist is unable to construct a narrative of the past. The ‘forensic landscape’ (Cyr 2014, p. 81) raises expectations about determining verifiable facts about the past; finding nothing disrupts the promise of epistemological certainty and creates a ‘mute landscape’ (Cyr 2013, p. 100).

Over the past thirty years, forensic archeologists have been enlisted to excavate and exhume the graves of victims of war crimes, genocide and state violence in over a dozen countries (Blau & Skinner 2005, p. 452). Medico-legal verification of torture and execution has provided physical evidence of crimes against humanity. However this has not always inevitably led to criminal prosecution. In some contexts, perpetrators may still have political influence within a state. Regularly, *realpolitik* compels some nations not to pursue judicial procedures against more powerful neighbours. This has been the case in Timor-Leste where the political leadership has deemed the

initiation of an international tribunal to prosecute the crimes of the Indonesian occupiers as counter-productive and potentially destabilising (Kingston 2006, pp. 281-284). In fact, it would be particularly reckless, Jose Ramos Horta argues, given there is no support for it from crucial members of the international community which includes the USA and Australia (*Anatomy of a Massacre* 2010).

The IFT investigations that I documented in *Anatomy of a Massacre* and *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* had to operate within this political climate. The explicit rationale of these investigations was for human rights purposes ‘with the aim of locating and identifying human remains’ (Blau & Fondebrider 2010, p. 6). In the case of the forensic investigations into the November 12, 1991 Santa Cruz Massacre, Blau (ibid, p. 6) explains that:

[W]hile the Timorese authorities expressed no intention to pursue criminal charges based on the findings, the exhumation process included the complete recovery and preservation of all evidence, following international forensic standards, in addition to taking into account the needs of the families as expressed to the IFT during several meetings.

Although focused on victim identification, the IFT discovered, during both investigations, physical evidence of extrajudicial executions by Indonesian armed forces. This evidence included bullet wounds and bullet fragments, rope ligatures—proving that victims had their hands tied behind their backs—and blunt force trauma, suggesting victims were beaten and bashed.

While it is unlikely that any of this evidence will appear before a criminal court or tribunal, its discovery, along with the positive identification of 11 victims of the Santa Cruz massacre using DNA matching with family members, was compelling proof of war crimes and provided a central narrative strand of *Anatomy of a Massacre*. If forensic archeology is defined as ‘the study of the past from human remains for humanitarian or judicial purposes’ (Blau & Skinner 2005, p. 450), the presentation of the investigation and its findings in the film corroborated the witness testimony and the audiovisual evidence. However, the failure to find more of the estimated 200 victims of the

massacre risked undermining the validity of the witness testimony, and affirming the claims by the Indonesian authorities that there were far fewer casualties (CAVR 2005, 7.2 p. 202). Notwithstanding the considerable difficulty in locating a secret mass grave after more than a decade, this inconclusive outcome raised the dilemma of employing a medico-legal paradigm in which the lack of material traces could lead some to declare evidence of absence, rather than absence of evidence.

In forensic archeology, witnesses, when there is a lack of other sources, are required to assist in the location of gravesites and crime scenes. However, as I show in *Anatomy of a Massacre* and *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, testimony can be an unreliable source for the discovery of physical evidence. In *Anatomy of a Massacre* this ‘inaccuracy’ was explained as a combination of factors: witnesses ‘believing’ something they had not actually seen themselves; the deceptive practices of the Indonesian authorities to conceal gravesites and create ‘fake’ ones; and the desperate need of families to know the truth and locate their relatives. In *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, I investigate the apparent inaccuracies of testimony more directly in order to understand the motives of witnesses who tell their stories—whether they are ‘faulty’ memories or indicators of alternative epistemologies.

In addition, the forensic archeology investigation had a particular focus that excludes certain types of evidence. In the current film, the forensic team’s frame of reference, to discover the Santa Cruz massacre victims or mass graves from other periods, sidelined an examination of the substantial evidence of killings at Tasi Tolu during the 1999 militia violence, witnessed by Domingos Monteiro and filmed by Max Stahl. These killings were outside the scope of their commissioning. The authority to investigate this period had been invested in the UN Serious Crimes Unit and the Special Panels of the Dili District Court (Reiger & Wierda 2006).

In the West, forensic science has become a privileged discourse, popularised by drama and non-fiction television series (e.g. CSI, Forensic Files, Bones

etc.). Antoinette Burton (2006, p. 5) writes that 'The most popular archive stories of the new millennium are shaped by the belief in the capacity of material evidence to create and sustain tests of verifiability'. Medico-legal procedures provide documentary film with a clear narrative objective and the promise of epistemological certainty. *Anatomy of a Massacre* made use of these attributes of the forensic process. The downside of this approach was that it tended to dominate elements of the film with less causal certainty and narrative resolution. Juxtaposed with empirical science, customary practices can be perceived as simply irrational and 'unscientific'. While acknowledging the important role of forensic archeology in global human rights investigation, and in the recovery of human remains in Timor-Leste, in *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* I aimed to reconfigure the balance and hierarchy of the various 'voices' in the film. This took place on a number of levels.

Firstly, it required an investigation of remembrance in Timor-Leste based on reading and creative practice. Secondly, it led to the exploration of filmic techniques and methods to induce the recollections of subjects. Thirdly, it was crucial to develop a documentary form capable of negotiating and representing different understandings of historical events.

5.3 Praxis – Implications for Practice

While my filmmaking practice always incorporates serendipity, spontaneity and unexpected discoveries encountered in the field, the making of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, was significantly informed by theoretic research. My central concern was how to convey in documentary film the complexity of remembrance in Timor-Leste through the relationship between the recollections of individuals, commemorative rituals, sites of remembrance, the forces of globalisation, and forensic science. In the course of my practice-based research in Timor-Leste, as detailed previously, I observed that personal narratives of the occupation were dynamic, that they were informed by changing political and cultural factors, and that shifting relationships between the filmmaker and participants had an influence on the form and content of testimony.

On this basis, in preparing to film at Tasi Tolu I identified four main theoretic concerns directly relevant to my practice with which I sought to engage in the current film. These theories influenced the narrative structure of the film as well as approaches adopted during the production, which included visual style, interview techniques and montage strategies. These were:

1. Grenfell's three tier social schemata derived from a theory of 'constituent abstraction'.
2. Theories of collective or social memory and commemorative ritual.
3. Theories of performativity and embodied or sense memory.
4. A questioning of the trauma paradigm as a dominant model for working with witnesses and survivors of political violence in Timor-Leste.

5.4 Grenfell's Social Schema

Damian Grenfell offers a social schema in which remembering the victims of the occupation in Timor-Leste occurs at the intersection of 'customary', 'traditional' and 'modern' ontological forms (Grenfell 2011). Importantly, these categories operate on a spectrum from the more embodied social relationships (of the customary) to the increasingly abstract and disembodied social structures (of the modern). As discussed earlier, this social schema, derived from Paul James's 'constitutive abstraction' (2006), offers a number of advantages for examining the complexity of personal recollection, commemorative practices and historical understandings in East Timorese society. Crucially for my own work, this approach suggests that these categories can coexist without necessarily being in conflict, although different forms may be dominant at any given time and place. In addition, this analytic framework provides a more refined reading of the interplay of ontological forms beyond rigid dichotomies between the modern and the traditional or pre-modern.

In *Anatomy of a Massacre* the tensions between the scientific approach of the forensic team and the beliefs and practices of the families of the missing were presented as a clash of paradigms. In this formation, local understandings could easily be discounted as superstition. On several occasions, this was reflected in the attitudes of the forensic team. For example, while forensic anthropologist Dr Soren Blau articulated an obligation to accommodate the 'needs of the families', she characterised some of the ritual practices of the families as 'unscientific' (*Anatomy of a Massacre* 2010). Later, Blau and Kinsella (2013, p. 5) wrote about the difficulty of reconciling these epistemologies:

The Western scientific approach to locating the remains of a deceased person and confirming identification relies on physical proof entrenched in the principles and techniques of forensic science and medicine. These systematic methods often confront and clash with the cultural and spiritual approaches to investigating the missing in Timor-Leste. Forensic experts have met with resistance from families when providing scientific reasons for the lack of evidence for the presence of graves containing bodies.

Anatomy of a Massacre's focus on the investigation and the defined stages of an empirical process provided insufficient context for local beliefs and practices. One of my central concerns during the making of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* was to avoid the dominance of the modern scientific paradigm and to present a more nuanced examination of remembrance in Timor-Leste. This approach led to a shift not only in tone and explication in the film but also to significant stylistic changes.

5.5 The Presence of the Dead

Grenfell observes that 'traditional and the customary are held to be as distinct from each other as they both are from modernity' (2011, p. 90). This diverges from other models, which collapse and merge the traditional and the customary or set up a dichotomy between the modern and the indigenous. Domingos Monteiro expressed this distinction during an early interview I filmed with him where he suggests a complementary relationship between the two ontological categories but one in which the traditional appears to

dominate:

First is Jesus Christ, then second is the culture of Timor-Leste, which has been here since our ancestors and we must continue to cultivate it and pass it to future generations because that is the culture of Timor-Leste (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, 2016).

In an interview (February 16, 2014), Katuas Tasi, the customary spiritual leader who conducted the *sau batar* ritual in Tasi Tolu, suggested an inverse relationship by placing the arrival of Portuguese Catholic priests within a mythological chronology and origin story embedded in customary forms:

Timor-Leste was created long before Portugal dreamed of setting foot in the country. Later Portugal sent three priests on a wooden ship called Lifau and they landed in a place in the inlet over in the west in Kupang. Then they slowly came down, down, down here and the three priests came here and docked at Tasi Tolu and they pulled the boat out of the sea in Karketu over in Mota Ain. That is why Timor knows how to call God's name. If Portugal had not sent those three priests where would that knowledge have come from? That knowledge came here by ship. That is how Portugal had left that knowledge here in Timor-Leste.

In both these examples, the customary and traditional are perceived as crucial forms of sacred life and cultural identity but they are clearly defined as separate realms—God is above while the spirits are around. Each has a distinct set of rituals and ceremonies, although as Grenfell (2011) points out, these converge during mortuary practices. Importantly, these categories are overlaid rather than placed in a causal or linear hierarchy.

In Tasi Tolu, the relationship between the customary and the traditional was demonstrated in a clear material form in the placement of the spirit house next to the Catholic church. In *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, I wanted to visually express the connection and contrast between these two formative aspects of social life. Although not concurrent, I placed the sequence of the Sunday Catholic mass just before the *sau batar* (corn harvest) ceremony at the *uma lulik* (spirit house). While filming, I experimented with a number of camera angles to show the geographic proximity of the two buildings. I eventually used a panning shot from the church to the dancers in front of the *uma lulik*.

Visual style at the two locations was dictated to some degree by the restriction of movement at the church and the relative freedom of movement at the *uma lulik*. But these decisions were also motivated by a deliberate visual strategy of contrasting two camera techniques that I had developed during the filming. The use of the camera on a tripod during the mass suited the formality of this event; my position in the centre of the customary ritual with its dynamism and energy was better expressed through the hand-held camera.

The contrast between a more ‘embodied’ hand-held camera and a more formal style on the tripod was also used to delineate two distinct sets of interviews I conducted with participants. For the earlier interviews, the subjects were seated and the camera on a tripod; the later interviews were filmed hand-held and the participants were free to move around. As I detail later, these two styles ‘provoked’ quite different responses in the subjects; however, there were other factors, including my evolving relationship to the community, that also contributed to the contrast between the responses of participants in the two interview periods.

5.6 ‘Formal’ and ‘Embodied’ Interviews with Da Costa and Da Silva

The interviews with Jose Da Costa and Jose Da Silva during my first filming trip in 2011 and the interviews I filmed with them in 2014 present radically different interpretations of the same event—the recollections that prompted the two witnesses to identify a site for investigation. In the framework of constitutive abstraction, I argue that these two interviews articulate a shift from a modern to a customary ontology. The first interview with the two men occurred during the forensic investigation, when the scientists were actively seeking eyewitnesses to guide their search for concealed graves. Da Costa and Da Silva came forward and provided testimony to the team concerning the three earth mounds at Tasi Tolu.

Around this time I filmed an interview with the two men. Da Costa explained that he had a small agricultural plot in Tasi Tolu in the early 1990s but lived elsewhere during this time. On the day of the Santa Cruz massacre, he claimed that Indonesian security personnel had prevented from entering his land. When he was able to return, he noticed the three mounds. Da Silva's testimony was less convincing—he had not begun farming in Tasi Tolu until 1995. Nevertheless, both men were certain that the mounds were associated with the Santa Cruz massacre.

For Da Costa, offering his testimony to 'the commission' was a duty associated with the sacrifice of the mainly student demonstrators on the November 12 and identification with the nation-building narrative of the independence struggle:

I want to report it to the commission because I feel for my countrymen, for my daughter and my son. I was told that it was because we wanted independence. We wanted to become a nation that is why our children gave their lives and died for that. It is always in my mind (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, 2016).

Interestingly, he refers to the forensic team as 'the commission'—perhaps conflating the forensic investigation with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of 2000-2002. For Da Costa, both of these institutions are part of a foreign state-building apparatus, whose relevance and legitimacy are derived not from identification with an abstract notion of nationhood, but from the desire of the younger generation for independence and their deaths pursuing it. This aligns with Grenfell's (2011, p. 97) observation that:

[W]here people have been killed in a nationalist liberation struggle...it is possible for patterns of modern remembrance to come to the fore in ways that impact, but do not extinguish, the customary-traditional.

Da Costa's version of the independence struggle emphasised the civilian victims, rather than the armed resistance whose priority in official commemoration and state compensation is a source of resentment for many survivors of the occupation. Although these interviews elicited seemingly factual accounts by eyewitnesses of events from 20 years earlier, the three

mounds, when excavated at the site, provided no evidence of human remains.

The next interview sessions with Da Costa and Da Silva took place during the *sau batar* ceremony on February 16, 2014. The two men were central participants in the ritual and were dressed in customary cloth (*tais*), metal headpieces (*caibowki*) and carried ceremonial swords (*surik*) that they brandished during the dancing. As stated, during the 2011 interview I was associated with the forensic team; now, my status and role had changed to *katuas*—honorary insider or ‘old man’. When I questioned Da Costa and Da Silva about the three mounds this time, Da Costa offered a ‘customary’ explanation for their identification of the site:

Yes, about the spirits. We were on the top of that mountain and we did see them. It was midday in broad daylight. The spirits (*mate bein*) ran up the hill then down to that flat area there again. We really saw it. That is why we showed the place to the foreigners (*malae*) to dig. We worked together there. But they were not able to find anything. That was during the Indonesian time, during the occupation. We saw this thing from afar (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, 2016).

The presence of the spirits—absent from the first interview—was central to this account, however the phrase ‘we saw this thing from afar’ qualifies Da Costa’s explanation. This may suggest that invoking the spirits offers a means of coping with and accommodating uncertainty and the unknown. The spirits fill the void. His invocation of the customary indicated that I had gained the trust and the confidence of the community.

Da Costa’s discussion of the spirits did not however prevent him from also offering a ‘rational’ explanation for the absence of the bodies at the site and from again linking sacrifice to a ‘modern’ nationalist concept. There was also a reference to the authority of a ‘traditional’ notion of God:

This is the place that they cleared, but they could have just done this here as a cover up and they may have buried the bodies somewhere else. Who knows? Only God knows. That is the price we paid for

Timor-Leste to be a nation (interview with Jose Da Costa, February 16, 2014).

These two interviews suggested that these men were able to engage with one of the three ontological forms without extinguishing the others. Thus, there was no sense that they were being dishonest with me, or the forensic team, when they had suppressed the customary to offer an 'acceptable' modern explanation.

5.7 The 'Fallen Place' of Casmiro Freitas (Part 2)

The ability to move between categories of the schema was demonstrated again during the extended walking interview I conducted with Domingos Monterio on the banks of the lakes at Tasi Tolu. This began as a 're-enactment' of his discovery of victims of militia violence in 1999 and his interaction with UN investigators. Monterio brought along documents that he had been given at the time by UN staff to help him locate and identify the site of the human remains. His description of dismembered bodies was factual and precise with little overt display of emotion. This shifted, however, when we reached the memorial site for Casmiro Freitas, the Timorese member of the Indonesian army. Here, surrounded by a group of residents, Monterio became emotional as he recounted his discovery of Freitas:

First I feel sad and second I am happy because experts continue to come here to search, I am always happy to hear from you. I am sad and that is why I cried. I keep returning here to what I saw before and I see it again now and the journalist keep interviewing me. I feel sad every time that is why I am crying (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016).

While I had provoked Monterio's grief by asking him to remember the events around his discovery of Freitas, he explained, 'I am happy because I continue to mention the names of the dead and the people of this nation will know what happened here.' Here again, remembrance was framed within a national liberation rhetoric (albeit for a Timorese soldier in the Indonesian army who was truly outside any 'official' narrative), and a customary notion of honoring the spirits of the dead.

As discussed, the cement grave or marker placed here was not Freitas's actual burial site but a customary memorial of the place of the death, called *monu-fatin* or 'fallen place'. These sites, often created for those who died violent or 'unnatural' deaths, are believed to be sacred and to retain the spirit of the deceased. Here Monteiro reminded the residents to maintain a regular prayer vigil:

This is where he died. He was killed. He did not die a natural death, so you must respect him because he also fought for this country. You all here please can light some candles here. Now this is where he died so he is guarding you and you should look after the grave (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, 2016).

Respect for the spirits is rewarded by protection by the spirits, a manifestation of a code of reciprocity embedded in customary ways of beings (Traube 2011, p. 193).

In Tasi Tolu, the strength of customary practices and principles exemplifies a wider resilience of indigenous culture throughout Timor-Leste. A number of ethnographic studies in Timor-Leste, such as McWilliam's observation of Fataluku society, have shown that 'material well-being is held to be dependent upon spiritual and sacrificial dimensions of social life and living landscapes from which they have drawn sustenance' (McWilliam & Traube 2011, p. 29). The residents of Tasi Tolu have reclaimed land colonised and co-opted by an Indonesian state program of cultural destruction and political violence. From this unlikely starting point, the inhabitants have reinstated customary social bonds and relationships to land. As Monteiro said in an earlier interview, 'the spirits here are strong, always, sometimes we see them clearly and we know that they are the spirits of the land' (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016). This reconfigured relationship to place through a customary ontology has not prevented residents such as Da Costa and Monteiro from maintaining traditional Catholic practices and accommodating rapid modernist transformation, whether in the form of nation-building ideologies, capitalist development or scientific paradigms.

Acknowledging these shifting frameworks while filming *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* was made possible by my changing status and role in the community over time. This reinforced the notion that the relationship of researchers or filmmakers to their subjects can never occupy a purely objective position. Perceived as a member of the forensic team, I was only given a partial account by the witnesses. In Tasi Tolu and elsewhere in Timor-Leste, remembrance of the occupation occurs within a multilayered cultural context. Customary beliefs and practices do not necessarily negate the possibility of factually accurate testimony, however this is not placed as the only or privileged form of remembrance or knowledge of the past.

5.8 Social Memory and Commemorative Ritual

Since the end of the occupation in Timor-Leste there has been a proliferation of local practices of commemoration and memorialisation. These have been tied to the restitution of customary practices for honoring the dead (Barnes 2011, p. 71) but also, as Elizabeth Traube (2007) notes, to legitimising claims in which families and communities have linked victims to the narrative of the independence struggle. The resistance narrative, which operated as a powerful counter-memory during the occupation, enabled a majority of Timorese to resist adopting the official historiography and nationalist ideology of the Indonesian state (Leach 2008, p. 145).

In *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, I aimed to show how commemorative rituals have been used to create and sustain collective remembrance and identity in Timor-Leste. These rituals are crucial for understanding the politics of remembrance and forgetting in the new nation. In the film, the contrast between the 12th November commemoration each year and the local, unofficial, and customary rituals of remembrance that take place at Tasi Tolu articulates the parallel existence of distinct memory cultures.

The importance of the Santa Cruz commemoration, as detailed earlier, cannot be overestimated. One of the advantages of an audiovisual representation of the ceremony is to present its scale and, through editing, to

reveal its formal qualities as a re-enactment of an archetypal event, itself sustained and validated as—or by—a media memory. In *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* I show Max's Stahl's footage of the actual event in 1991 as well as imagery of 2014 annual re-enactment of the event. The enduring importance of the massacre emanates largely from the audiovisual documentation, which can be repeatedly viewed, and the unique form of the protest march which enables its staging as a mass procession each year—Max Stahl's footage is now replayed continuously at the Timorese Resistance Museum & Archive in an exhibit dedicated to the massacre. The significance of the ceremony that commemorates the massacre extends beyond communal mourning and honoring the dead—it is also an event during which political priorities are contested and nationalist narratives are affirmed.

Tasi Tolu is also a site of collective remembrance. Its reputation as the location of mass killing and concealment is widespread, especially among the older generation around Dili who lived through the occupation. However, it does not figure in the official commemorative culture of Timor-Leste but for one notable exception. As a site of Catholic remembrance, it has significance. The 1989 visit of Pope John Paul II is memorialised in a building designed in the shape of an *uma lulik* (built during the Indonesian era in preparation for the Pope's visit). On the western promontory above Tasi Tolu, a bronze sculpture of the Pontiff erected in 2008 gazes, significantly, out to sea—not towards the lakes where the crowd gathered on the day of his visit. However Catholic commemoration at Tasi Tolu avoids explicit reference to the student protest during the Pope's sermon and to the killings that took place around the lakes.

The Spirits of Tasi Tolu shows how the local community has revived or re-invented customary practice exemplified in the *sau batar* and the memorial to Casmiro Freitas. These are part of an oral and performative culture that was repressed during the Indonesian era. The return of these practices in Tasi Tolu, a place lacking a community for decades and scared by violence, is another example of the resilience and flexibility of customary culture, and the

use of ritual to invest places with meaning and memory. During the *sau batar* bodily practices such as dancing, animal sacrifice and the sharing of food affirms customary connections to land and communal bonds. On another level, the ritual is a crucial moment of connection between the human and the spirit world.

Within this customary epistemology, victims of the occupation are integrated into a cosmology in which the dead take the form of ancestral spirits (*mate bein*). As is the case in other oral cultures, time in this system is both cyclic and mythological (Connerton 1989, p. 20). Thus the dead are not relegated to a historical past, they coexist with the living in a parallel spirit world (Grenfell 2015, p. 22). Seen in this way, customary practices are antithetical to the state rhetoric that aims to relegate the occupation to a historical past. It also runs counter to the global capitalist discourse articulated in the film by Jerimiah Chan, who intends to build 'a historical park or monument of some sort' within the sprawling Pelican Paradise resort (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016).

5.9 Mute, Haunted and Living landscapes

Throughout *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, images of the lakes, filmed from a distance, affirm the centrality of place in the narrative. The use of time-lapse photography suggests time frames beyond normal human perception, evoking the spiritual realm and the relentless forces of the natural world. The landscape functions as a visual motif whose connotations and denotations fluctuate. It shifts as we understand more about the various relationships of the film's subjects to this location. Meaning and memory is projected onto place, but the physical traces of historical events are elusive. From a forensic perspective it is a 'mute' landscape; for the developer it is vacant land; for Alex Gumao, the executive secretary of the Anti-Corruption Commission of Timor-Leste, it is a sacred site for the independence struggle; for the residents, it is a place of other, less conclusive but more embodied and emplaced forms of knowing.

These distinctions recall Pierre Nora's (1989) opposition between *lieux* and *milieux de mémoire*. For Nora, memory in pre-modern society was part of an environment of memory or *milieux de mémoire*. These societies did not distinguish rigidly between past and present, since 'memory is a perpetually actual phenomena, a bond tying us to an eternal present' (Nora 1989, p.8). Rituals, customs and tradition embedded origin narratives into the current of everyday life. *Lieux de mémoire*, according to Nora (ibid, p. 12), come into being as *milieux de mémoire* vanish:

The moment of *lieux de mémoire* occurs at the same time that an immense and intimate fund of memory disappears, surviving only as a reconstituted object beneath the gaze of critical history.

In modern societies, historical consciousness replaces the living memory of oral cultures with *lieux de mémoire*, which include physical locations, but also ceremonies, archives, institutions and organisations. These explicit and constructed signs and symbols, are attempts to reclaim the lost force of collective memory, wherein 'the trace negates the sacred but retains its aura' (Nora 1996, p. 9).

More recently, anthropologist Marc Augé has proposed the concept of non-places, or '*non-lieux*' (as cited in Smith 2009, p. 34). Transit lounges and refugee camps are examples of these anonymous areas which resist memory and historical signification. This term has also been applied to sites of genocide, from the Nazi death camps to locations in Rwanda and Cambodia, where perpetrators have erased the traces of their crimes (Meyran 2007, p. 138). Compounding the willful destruction of evidence are the varying degrees of reluctance of post-conflict political leaders to memorialise certain massacre sites.

Tasi Tolu offers few material traces of the violence that occurred there. While the memory of its dark past is retained by the older generation, the absence of official commemorative rituals or memorials threatens to transform Tasi Tolu into a *non-lieu de mémoire*, in this case an anonymous space of global tourism and capitalism. *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* provides an alternative

cartography in which the rare extant signs of the past are documented—an ambiguous shrine in the jungle covered in bullet cases; Max Stahl’s video of human remains in 1999; and the graves containing seven men discovered by the forensic team. The residents of Tasi Tolu, the main obstacles to the process of forgetting, have transformed an empty and desolate site into something approximating Nora’s *milieux de mémoire*. The landscapes at the opening and close of the film chart a journey from a haunted landscape, in which the dead seem to represent a traumatic and sinister past, to an understanding of the spirits as cultural metaphors for a living landscape.

5.10 Performing Embodied Memory

I have discussed theories of embodied memory derived from phenomenology and empirical studies in cognitive science (Glenberg 1997; Sutton & Williamson 2014). These theories propose that memory and the body are inextricably linked. As applied to documentary film, they suggest that recollection may be provoked in individuals by forms of re-enactment or performance. Ethnographers have also employed notions of embodiment to examine the relationship between memory and the senses. These theories have been useful to developing a methodology for my own research practice.

As part of her investigation of sensory ethnography, Sarah Pink (2009) has outlined two related categories of memory, collective sensory memory and individual sensory memory. Commemorative rituals are not simply collective representations of the past, they are performances in which past events are enacted and experienced through the body and the senses in repeated gestures and behavior. Pink (2009, p. 72) agrees with Connerton, who identifies habit memory, etiquette and other customary behaviors as forms of social memory as residual in the body. Sensory anthropologists Paul Stoller (1994), David Sutton (2010) and Nadia Seremetakis (1993) have examined cultural practice as the enactment of embodied memories, Stoller (1994, p. 640) discusses spirit possession among the Songhay people as the trigger for counter-memories, which are ‘stored in movement, in posture, in gesture,

in sound, odor, and tastes-in the flesh.’ Sutton and Seremetakis have discussed the rituals and experience of food and eating as the focus of collective memory. According to Pink (2009, p. 39):

These understandings of sensory memory as embodied, and continually reconstituted through practice, are particularly relevant to an ethnographic methodology that attends to the body and place. They imply that sensory memory is an inextricable element of how we know in practice, and indeed part of the processes through which ways of knowing are constituted.

These ways of knowing extend from participants to researchers who aim to engage with their own sensory understandings and memories as part of their research practice. With a focus of ‘biographical research’, Pink argues that embodied experience expands into the environment through the senses, ‘our experiences of place—and its social, physical and intangible components—are inextricable from the invocation, creation and reinvestment of memories’ (ibid, p. 38). Thus, sense memory is both embodied and emplaced.

This leads Pink (2009, p. 39) to propose three roles for theories of sensory memory in ethnographic research, which include the interpretation of participants’ memories, understanding and experiencing the role of place with participants, and the use of researchers’ own memories to reflect on experiences in the field:

First, to aid us in understanding the meanings and nature of the memories that research participants recount, enact, define or reflect on to researchers. Second, to help us to understand how ethnographers might generate insights into the ways other people remember through trying to share their emplacement. Third, to assist us to comprehend how ethnographers use their own memories in auto-ethnographic accounts....or to reflexively reconstruct their fieldwork experiences.

Although Pink’s discussion of sensory memory is a minor aspect of her investigation of sensory ethnography, her examination of methodologies that engage participants and researchers with embodied and emplaced experiences is directly relevant to my filmmaking practice.

5.11 Walking with Video

'Walking with video' is one research method that Pink (2007) proposes for learning about and representing the sensory experience of another person. She cites a number of anthropological studies that explore walking as a form of 'place-making' (ibid, p. 245) or a means of understanding 'places being created by routes' (Lee & Ingold 2006, p. 68). Pink (ibid, p. 246) suggests:

Paths and routes are not simply functional routes that connect one place to another, but are meaningful sensory and imaginative places their own right that interact with and are contextualised by the sensescapes of which they form a part.

Phenomenological understandings of place have informed ethnographic studies of landscape as a cultural and multisensory process (e.g. Feld & Basso 1996). Pink suggests that 'walking with' participants, as part of a phenomenological research practice, can bring researchers to a closer understanding of how people 'perceive their multisensory environments, constitute place through everyday practice' and, as emphasised by Pink, live 'in their bodies' (ibid, p. 246). Adding video to this method can be both a catalyst for and a means of communicating embodied and emplaced experiences.

5.12 Video Tour

In Pink's own fieldwork, this takes the form of the 'video tour' to explore material and sensory environments with participants, which has included homes, a garden and a city. She describes her use of this technique to research the 'sensory home', in which she walks with participants through their homes and video records them, 'while they 'showed', performed and discussed with me their material environments, the meanings these had for them, and the practices they engaged in in them' (2007, p. 249). Drawing on the work of the philosopher Edward Casey, Pink suggests that 'walking with video' is a method to explore 'the centrality of the experiencing body to place' and 'the gathering power of place itself' (Casey 1996, p. 44). It enables an

understanding and communicating of other perceptions of place and, by drawing together people, places and sensory experiences, is itself a process of place-making, or what Casey calls a 'place as event' (ibid p. 24.) Hence 'walking with video' both provokes and represents the process of embodied place making.

Beyond her own practice, Pink acknowledges that ethnographic filmmakers have employed similar techniques to explore physical environments with participants. *Lorang's Way* by David and Judith MacDougall (1979) features a ten-minute sequence in which the film's central subject takes the filmmaker on a tour of his compound. In this example, walking brings the experiencing body of the protagonist to the fore. By sharing the experience of walking, the social interaction between filmmaker and participant becomes part of the place-making event. In another layer, the camera itself, how it moves, what it focuses on, carries the imprint of the body holding the camera. As MacDougall (2005, p. 3) says, 'we see with our whole bodies, and any image we make carries the imprint of our bodies; that is to say of our being as well as the meanings we intend to convey.' Corporeal images are 'not just the images of other bodies; they are also images of the body behind the camera and its relations with the world' (ibid). The image itself becomes part of an intersubjective experience for an audience. As a way of provoking people's sensory and embodied experience of place and communicating these empathetically with an audience, a version of 'walking with video' became an important method used in *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016).

5.13 Walking with Video as a Memory Provocation

Pink does not deal specifically with the role of memory in this context however I suggest that the 'walking with' method can be a catalyst not only for embodied experiences of the present moment, but also sensory memories of past events. These were central concerns in my own use of the 'walking with video' technique in *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016). A key sequence in the film presents Domingos Monteiro walking around the Tasi Tolu lakes. Previously, I had interviewed him sitting down in front of his

home, during which time he discussed a number of deceased people he claimed he had discovered around Tasi Tolu following the militia violence of 1999. The walking tour began with my request for him 'to show me the places where he discovered these bodies.' One afternoon, over several hours, I filmed Domingos as the translator Bety Reis and I walked with him around the lakes to places where he recalled seeing bodies in various stages of decomposition. At specific sites he repeated the phrase, 'this is the place'. The tour ended at the memorial for Casmiro Freitas, the place where Domingos discovered the remains of the Indonesian soldier and resistance supporter 15 years earlier. Compared to the first interview there was an added level of detail in Domingos's verbal recollections. In addition his gestures, glances and silences suggested affective and embodied responses to a process of active recollection, as if his emplacement at these location were bringing memories to mind.

This walking tour became a multilayered event in the film. First, it is a catalyst for remembrance. Domingos's recollections were structured around the path of the walk itself rather than a chronological narrative. The route and the places along it prompted recollections. Second, it is a representation of place as a site of memory. In the film, following the initial images that show a bird's eye view of the lakes, this sequence became a way to reveal Tasi Tolu on the ground via Domingos's movement through it. These memories are part of his lived experience, embedded in his environment. Third, it is a record of an encounter between filmmaker and participant. In walking beside him with the camera there is a sense of intimacy and empathetic engagement that is transferable to the audience. The audiovisual dimension of place and landscape provides context and variety to Domingos's account and is more visually interesting than a talking head interview. We come to know Tasi Tolu not only as a geographical location but as a place experienced through routes and paths, a place where people live and create ways of knowing their environment. This gathering together of people, places and sensory experiences includes both individual and collective memories.

5.14 Spontaneous Testimony and Embodied Camera Style

An aspect of the walking tour technique that Pink does not discuss is the agency that can be transferred from filmmaker to subject. While initiated by the filmmaker, the tour can be unpredictable and spontaneous. This can be embodied in the hand-held camera, which follows the participant and registers the filmmaker/cameraperson's responses to unrehearsed changes in direction, stop and starts. By provoking emplaced and embodied remembrance it offers a form of spontaneous testimony that was notable in my early experiences with witnesses in the period 2000-2001. In addition, the hand-held camera connotes an 'amateur' homemade-style of video-making in counterpoint to the formal, 'professional' style that characterises the sequences with the forensic scientists. The contrast reinforces a tension between the rational and embodied understandings that the film explores.

5.15 The Trauma Paradigm Reviewed

Trauma is central to discussions of survivor testimony and documentary representations of past political violence. Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spritzer (2009) have observed the discourse of trauma in the context of Holocaust video testimony. In the writings of Cathy Caruth (1995), Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992), and in Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah* (1985), Hirsch and Spritzer (2009) observe that 'the body of the traumatised witness 'from the inside' seems closest to offering access to the unspeakable essence of trauma and its continuity in the present' (p. 158). The performative aspects of testimony supposedly transmit experience of traumatic events. Van der Kolk and van der Hart (1995, p. 160) align this with Janet's notion of traumatic memory, in which 'behavioral reenactments' are the manifestation of unassimilated experience.

The trauma model is also central to human rights discourse. Researchers such as Vanessa Pupavac (2004) and Michael Humphrey (2005) have identified 'international therapeutic governance' as a dominant paradigm in transitional justice programs. According to Pupavac, this therapeutic ethos

'pathologises war-affected populations as emotionally dysfunctional and problematizes their right to self-government, leading to extensive external intervention' (2004, p. 149) Critics of this model have questioned the assumption that entire populations will inevitably react with a trauma response following periods of conflict.

In the context of Timor-Leste, Emily Toome (2012) has observed that the therapeutic security paradigm 'pathologises emotions of unhappiness, anger and frustration, which might better be seen as legitimate and understandable responses to given circumstances' (p. 24). Without underestimating the scale and impact of violence and suffering that Timorese people have experienced, there are local methods for understanding and recovering from the psychological impacts of occupation that may be more effective than imported psycho-medical concepts and processes. I have cited a number of researchers, including Derek Summerfield (1999, 1996), who have dealt with this specific topic.

I have questioned the trauma paradigm as a primary model for understanding the statements of victims and survivors. In my early filming experiences, participants initiated the giving of testimony. Technologically-mediated witnessing was transposed into local processes of justice seeking and remembrance. In these examples, participants provided coherent, detailed accounts of violent acts contradicting notions of traumatic witnessing in which survivors are silenced and unable to narrate experiences. While there was a Western film crew documenting their testimony, the witnesses retained significant agency in this social interaction.

During the making of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, as in earlier films, interviews with subjects included questions about violent events from the past. Without discounting the potential to cause distress in this situation, there was no intention to ever induce a 'trauma response.' This type of reaction, central to *The Act of Killing* (2014) with perpetrator Anwar Congo, and in *Shoah* (1985) with survivor Abraham Bomba, is framed as authentic and unmediated embodied memory. While these moments have undeniable affective

potency, the notion that they offer privileged access to historical truth is questionable. As Dominick LaCapra (2001, p. 97) has observed, the impact of traumatic testimony is derived largely from the effect on the viewer, the traumatic response of the 'secondary witness'.

Conversely, making *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016) was not framed as an explicitly therapeutic process. From my initial association with the forensic team to my two subsequent trips, a long-term engagement with the local subjects allowed me to form relationships of trust with evolving levels of intimacy and revelation. I explained that I was telling a story about Tasi Tolu and the people who lived there, and I wanted them to have input in how the story was told. There was nothing 'in it for them' apart from a growing friendship and mutual respect. Nonetheless, many local participants expressed gratitude to me for telling their story and presenting their voices in the film. In this context I was able to communicate my intention for the documentary, to show them footage, and to ask their advice about how to best tell the story. From this position I asked them to lead me to places they wanted to show me or to experiences that they wanted to discuss with me. Thus, the memory provocations I have discussed were derived in collaboration with the subjects.

This process, however did not entirely prevent the opening of old wounds. Domingos said to me, 'First I feel sad and second I am happy because experts continue to come here to search. I am always happy to hear from you' (*The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* 2016). While the trauma paradigm can reduce the affective responses of witnesses to a rigid framework, clearly the past continues to haunt Domingos: 'I keep returning here to what I saw before and I see it again now. I feel sad every time that is why I am crying' (ibid). However, using whatever means I could to mitigate the risk of distressing the film's subjects, I understood that this is impossible to avoid entirely in dealing with the remembrance of past political violence.

5.16 Documentary Voice

The filmmaking methodology developed during the research and implemented during the making of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* required a narrative and discursive form that could accommodate a complex interweaving of divergent points of view. In addition, I intended to foreground my own participation in the filmmaking and construction of the documentary, which had been largely suppressed in earlier work. This led to the development of a reflexive approach in which my own voice would guide the viewer and provide enough cultural context to comprehend the situations presented while engaging with epistemological uncertainty. Crucial to this method was the writing and performance of a narration that would allow my voice to be part of an 'ensemble' of voices rather than a privileged source of authoritative knowledge.

Bill Nichols observed in 1983 the tendency of many contemporary documentary filmmakers to have 'lost their voice' (p. 18). This development, obvious in observational films, had become, according to Nichols, a feature of a new form of historical documentary in which direct address was re-instated through the use of social actors. In films such as *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (1980) interviews, rather than voice-over narration tell the story, replacing historical authority with personal testimony. This practice avoids the pitfalls of voice-over narration, 'namely authoritative omniscience or didactic reductionism. There is no longer the dubious claim that things are as the film presents them, organized by the commentary of an all-knowing subject' (ibid, p. 23). However, for Nichols, this attempt to efface the filmmaker from the text recreates an illusion of objectivity disguised as oral history. In promoting self-reflexive strategies in which the voice of the filmmaker is more explicit, and may appear in the form of the 'filmmaker's voice over', Nichols is clear that he does not mean the return of 'the self-validating authoritative tone of a previous tradition' (ibid, p. 23), in other words the 'expository' mode of Griersonian documentaries (Nichols 2010, p. 167).

The suspicion of voice-over that is expressed in documentary studies often associates its use with the most basic version of the 'voice of God' commentary, characteristic of *The March of Time* newsreels (Bruzzi 2000, p. 40). Stella Bruzzi observes that 'The negative portrayal of voice-over is largely the result of the development of a theoretical orthodoxy that condemns it for being inevitably and inherently didactic' (ibid, p. 40). However, as Plantinga (1997, p. 103) argues, the notion of voice-over as 'the authoritative transmission of information' fails to acknowledge the poetic use of voice-over, even in Griersonian films such as *Nightmail* (1936) and *Song of Ceylon* (1937). Criticism of narration-led documentaries often ignores the variety of ways it may be used without conforming to a didactic model.

5.17 The Essay Film

Nichols acknowledges in the second edition of his *Introduction to Documentary* (2010) that certain filmmakers employ expressive voice-over commentary to explore the complexity of experience. *Nuit et brouillard/Night and Fog* (1955), directed by Alain Resnais with a commentary written by a Mauthausen concentration camp survivor, Jean Cayrol, is a cardinal documentary about the Holocaust. Nichols (2010, p. 206) suggests that the use of voice-over and 'images of illustration' in *Night and Fog* indicates the expository mode of his documentary taxonomy, though 'the haunting, personal quality of the commentary moves it toward the performative.' Here, visual evidence is engaged by a voice that questions and reflects on the materiality of the filmic image, for example: 'The blood has clotted, the voices have died, the barracks are abandoned by all but the camera,' and in doing so draws attention to the limits of representation:

The reality of the camps, despised by those who made them, inconceivable to those who suffered in them—in vain do we try to discover its remnants. These wooden barracks, these shelves where three slept, these burrows where one hid, where one concealed food, where sleep itself was a menace—no description, no image can restore their true dimension, that of uninterrupted fear (*Night and Fog* 1955).

Like other non-fiction films which Nichols places within a performative mode, such as Agnes Varda's *The Gleaners and I* (2000), Rea Tajiri's *History and Memory* (1991) and Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir* (2008), in *Night and Fog* there is move away from realist representation of the historical world towards subjective and affective observation, and unconventional narrative structure.

This dialogue between the subjective and the historical, and the reflection on cinematic representation and epistemological certainty, have been classified by Phillip Lopate (1992), Timothy Corrigan (2011), Laura Rascaroli (2008), Michael Renov (2004), and Paul Arthur (2003) within a tradition of the essay film. While there is agreement among these writers about the inclusion of certain works such as *Night and Fog* within the canon of this cinematic genre, the essay film is an elastic category that may include both fiction and non-fiction filmmaking. While outlining the contested definitions of the essay film is not the focus of my study, films that are most clearly associated with the essayistic impulse—Chris Marker's *Letter from Siberia* (1957) and *Sans Soleil* (1983), as well as those already mentioned—provided guidance and inspiration during the making of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*. 'An essay,' says Phillip Lopate (1992, p. 19), 'is a continual asking of questions—not necessarily finding 'solutions', but enacting the struggle for truth in full view,' articulating a defining characteristic and approach of these films.

5.18 *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* – Haunting the Forensic Text

During the making of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*, I had the freedom to explore documentary form in ways that were not possible during my previous broadcast films dealing with Timor-Leste. In the earlier films, industrial factors strongly constrained form and style. These included mandatory running lengths of around 56 minutes, the preference for sympathetic Western central characters, the editing of sequences to reinforce a classical trajectory with unambiguous goals and narrative closure. In the case of *Anatomy of a Massacre*, the procedures of forensic science conveniently merged with the industrial model of television production. A forensic investigation offers

causality through a rigorous process of archeological and medico-legal authentication, which provides an ideal narrative structure for the genre of journalistic or scientific television documentary. The favoured non-fiction forms of broadcast TV do not necessarily preclude some experimentation and expressivity, but they do tend to reinforce a realist aesthetic that suggests the pursuit of empirical knowledge affirmed by an authoritative voice or increasingly, by an on-camera presenter or journalist. Timothy Corrigan (2011, p. 155) observes that the conventional news and current affairs program:

[C]laims a position of factual reportage through a singular agency 'anchoring' the audience to the image through a celebrity or star personality (who implicitly replaces the traditional documentary voice of God).

Operating independently has enabled me to create a formal structure for *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* that could accommodate less conventional thematic concerns and enabled the development of a more expressive mode of filmmaking. This included the orchestration of a number of participants, the foregrounding of place and landscape over narrative, and the use of a subjective voice in conjunction with an embodied camera style. Decentering the forensic narrative allowed other voices to be heard. The allure and force of the investigation, notwithstanding its inconclusiveness, could easily have overwhelmed the other elements of the film. It needed to be introduced after the establishment of Tasi Tolu and the relationship of Domingos Monteiro to his environment.

Moreover *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* has been devised with a different set of priorities to those that frequently govern the industrial model of broadcast TV documentaries in Australia. It is unlikely that even public TV broadcasters would have funded the film if pitched in its current form. Based on experience, I believe the desire for drama and narrative momentum would have required the foregrounding of the forensic investigation. Broadcast executives would have undoubtedly put pressure on the production team to emphasise with voice-over narration, editing, visual devices and musical

cues, the importance of moments that propel and reinforce an investigative template. However making this type of film could have been problematic. The lack of narrative closure would have been perceived as a serious problem, perhaps even considered a failure to provide an adequately engaging or satisfying storyline. Fortunately this was not the focus of the film that I intended to make. A central strategy in *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* film was the careful juxtaposition and interweaving of various narratives and voices to reveal the complexities of memory and forgetting in Timor-Leste. These thematic concerns; the paradoxes, contradictions and uncertainties of this mode of storytelling are not typical of the documentaries that are currently commissioned by broadcasters in Australia.

Corrigan proposes the model of the editorial essay film as an alternative form to the investigative documentary. He writes that these films 'unveil and analyse not only the realities and facts that are documented but also the subjective agencies (enmeshed in the films and their reception) of those realities and facts' (2011 p. 155). My voice-over in *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* embeds the subjective experience of making the film, and my attempt to make sense of the events that I documented, within the body of the text. The commentary attempts to strike a balance between the need to know and the limits of my knowledge. It frames my point of view as one personal perspective among others, all mediated by audiovisual technology.

Through the use of subjective voice-over I also draw attention to my embodied experience of operating the camera. This is another point of transmission to an audience. As David MacDougall (2006, p. 54) observes:

In viewing a film we respond in various ways to the bodies of people we see on the screen but we also respond to the filmmaker's body as we experience it through the decisions that guide the movements of the camera, how it frames events, and in matters of proximity and positioning in relation to the subjects.

MacDougall's notion of reflexive filmmaking does not require 'a cumbersome structure of explanation' which may be 'completely at odds with the narrative

or emotional logic of a work' (1998, p. 90). It does, however, draw attention to the social interaction between the filmmaker and the subjects. Like MacDougall, Jean Rouché (cited in Renov, 2004, p. 178) recognizes that the camera provokes and becomes part of the events it records:

Yes the camera deforms, but not from the moment that it becomes an accomplice. At that point it has the possibility of doing something I couldn't do if the camera wasn't there: it becomes a kind of psychoanalytic stimulant which let people do things they otherwise wouldn't do.

Cinema, for MacDougall, enables a '*performative* anthropology' in which the filmmaker becomes the intermediary. Rather than a 'translation' of culture', film re-enacts the encounter between the filmmaker and the subject, in which social experience is 'made perceptible' (ibid, p. 272). In this way, voice and the use of the camera can make explicit the participatory encounter and subsequent reflections on it.

Conclusion

Documentary filmmaking drew me to Timor-Leste, and it was through this practice that I encountered a range of individuals throughout the nation in its formative years. My most vivid memories are of travelling around this half-island, driving through isolated burnt-out villages where children ran past the car grinning and holding up both hands in a 'V for victory' salute. At the Aileu cantonment I met armed FALANTIL guerillas who had been ordered to wait and avoid fighting while the militia were on a rampage, a costly but necessary strategy designed to facilitate a UN intervention. I recall being part of vast ring of male dancers late at night near 'Jakarta', a notorious cliff face where supporters of the resistance were thrown to their deaths.

Some moments were filmed and others were not. But even filmed events only capture a trace of the multisensory and affective dimensions of lived experience. Furthermore, what was significant for me was not necessarily relevant to the genre of films I was making. In the two first documentaries, communicating the subjective experience of the filmmaker was suppressed. They operated within institutional discourses that privilege historical narrative or scientific procedure over creative or personal expression. These films employed a mode of documentary practice that seeks to reduce or remove the filmmaker's voice and presence from the text, in order to present work 'objectively'. In addition, I was a *malae*, a foreigner and outsider. I had not lived through the occupation. I had not lost family members, suffered abuse and starvation, experienced violence and torture, or the more mundane daily humiliations of oppression. These films were not about my experiences. They were about the memories of the survivors. This thesis and the accompanying documentary film, *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016), have explored and questioned some of the assumptions and formulas that have influenced the form and content of these earlier productions and present an alternative model.

Through critical writing and creative practice, this thesis has investigated the use of documentary film to explore forms of remembrance of the 24-year

Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste. This study has required research into the social, cultural and political influences that have shaped personal recollection, public commemoration and the official historiography of the 21st century's first new nation. My literature review has encompassed a range of fields including memory studies, political and cognitive science, cultural and film theory, sociology and ethnography. The breadth of this reading was deemed necessary because the study of memory crosses a number of disciplines. Moreover, the scholarship around the cinematic representation of past political violence is overwhelmingly concerned with the Holocaust. So while it was important to engage with its representation, it was also necessary to explore the specific political and cultural conditions that shape remembrance in Timor-Leste.

The tensions between personal, local and official narratives is a critical observation derived from my fieldwork and concurrent reading. Testimony in Timor-Leste is culturally complex and influenced by dynamic interpersonal interactions. I have characterised encounters during my early filmmaking at the end of the Indonesian occupation as 'spontaneous testimony'. In these instances, during the making of *Luolo's Story* (2002) my role as a foreign filmmaker and my association with the popular political party FRETILIN, prompted people to seek the film crew out in order to present their testimony. They recounted experiences of violence, torture and murder perpetrated by members of the Indonesian armed forces or pro-Indonesian militia. These accounts also expressed the resilience, courage and dignity of the survivors. Their desire to tell their stories to the camera operated on multiple levels. My research into the social and cultural context of memory in Timor-Leste led to a more multi-layered reading beyond a binary opposition of modern and indigenous understandings. I have employed Damian Grenfell's social schema (2011) as a means of analysing the complexity of testimony in which seeking justice and honouring the dead traverse modern, traditional and customary modes of thought and experience.

My research demonstrates that the urgency to present testimony has changed over time. I have argued that this is partly due to disappointment

with the transitional justice process, the policy of appeasement of Indonesia by local political leaders, and the unwillingness of the international community to provide a judicial mechanism to pursue the perpetrators of the most serious human rights abuses during the occupation. The continuing poverty of most Timorese since independence—in contrast to the perceived wealth of a small elite—cannot be discounted as a contributing factor for this shift in attitudes. During the making of *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010), interviewees expressed resentment about institutional failures to provide justice. Some people claimed that the process of giving testimony to foreign media in the past had offered no substantial benefits. This attitude led to a more prolonged and complex process of negotiation with participants who needed to be convinced that the forensic team, and the film crew, was committed to investigating and recovering the remains of the missing. The earning of the trust of participants was gained in stages culminating in the identification of human remains and the public screening of the film in Dili on March 24, 2010.

In *Anatomy of a Massacre*, people's testimony was framed by a discourse of victims' rights combined with an affirmation of customary practices around death and the dead. For example, the community of Santa Cruz survivors acquired a powerful collective agency to negotiate with the forensic team, to make claims to government institutions for support, and to assert the need for customary rituals within the process of recovering human remains. On a broader level, the revival of customary practices and affiliations to local kinship or survivors' groups has produced stronger bonds than externally imposed, abstract notions of national identity. Indigenous understandings configure nationhood within an alternative framework. Local practices generate different priorities from commemorative ceremonies orchestrated by the state. These counter-memories and counter-histories complicate and disrupt the official narrative of the independence struggle.

At the annual Santa Cruz commemoration local, popular and official rituals coexist. However, there are tensions between the needs of the families and

the survivors, and the production of a nationalist spectacle. This is evident in disputes over forms of memorialisation. State historiography and commemorative practices valorise the armed resistance over the clandestine civilian movement, the contribution of women, and the opposition to the occupation by ordinary people. These developments reveal the ways public memory is being formed and negotiated as Timor-Leste defines itself as an independent nation.

Crucial to these debates is the role of documentary filmmaking as a privileged form of historical representation and political activism. During the occupation, video footage provided evidence of three things. Firstly, it confirmed reports of human rights abuses perpetrated by the Indonesian armed forces and its militia. Secondly, it demonstrated the opposition of the Timorese people to foreign rule through civil disobedience. Thirdly, it affirmed the survival of the armed struggle in the mountains. This was significant not only for sustaining awareness of the plight of the Timorese on the international stage, but also for invigorating the clandestine resistance within occupied Timor-Leste.

Today, filmmaking retains its value in producing historical evidence. The rare footage of the occupation has an unusual power. Its contribution to the independence struggle is recognized and nurtured at CAMSTL, the audiovisual archive established by Max Stahl in Dili, funded by the government of Timor-Leste and international donors, and supported by the French *Institut national de l'audiovisuel* (INA). The use of audiovisual footage is also prominent in the Timorese Resistance Museum and Archive. Public presentations of film and documentaries dealing with the occupation, such as the two sold out screenings in Dili of *Luolo's Story* (2002) on February 16, 2012, almost ten years after independence, are popular and well attended. In this context documentary film is a medium that offers specific advantages for investigating the complexity of remembrance and disseminating historical knowledge within the nation. For the Timorese, it provides a discursive form in which local voices can be seen and heard, in which subjects are speaking indigenous languages and engaging in familiar forms of social interaction and

ritual practice. It is of particular value for a culture without a high level of text-based literacies. Thus, ordinary people's ownership of their history can be accessed rather than locked away in bureaucratised archives and official historiography.

Individuals' testimony recorded on video does not replace the need for the preservation of written documentation and the work of professional historians. However, it is an alternative resource that has a number of advantages. It can be a communal experience that engages audiences empathetically. The tremendous audience participation and engagement with the film *East Timor, Long Road to Freedom* (2000), which I have discussed, is a notable example. Video embodies individual testimony, presenting physical and affective responses that contextualise verbal accounts. The filmmaking encounter can provide a performative context in which recollections are provoked or triggered. But witness testimony in film is also a confrontation with the complexity and limits of remembrance as an individual and social process.

Individual memory is never an unmediated recollection of past events. Like all forms of witnessing, it is indebted to selective procedures that give it discursive or narrative significance, and requires cross-checking to validate its authenticity. The problems of the apparent inaccuracy of witnesses encountered during the making of *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010) and the challenges of presenting the cultural background to testimony became one of the central concerns of this study. In order to interpret and present the complexity of memory in Timor-Leste, I resolved that a journalistic form of documentary was inadequate. While this form is usually structured round a 'big issue' or central problem to be investigated, it struggles to deal with moral or epistemological ambiguity and uncertainty. Instead, I explored an authored, expressive and reflexive form of filmmaking. This approach enabled the representation and validation of indigenous epistemologies while acknowledging the contribution of empirical science for human rights investigations and historical knowledge. A key challenge was to find a form

and style for the documentary that could balance these distinct points of view.

In *the Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016), reflecting on the encounter between the subjects and myself became an essential method for revealing the cultural frameworks of remembrance, presenting the shifting relationship between filmmaker and participants, and for examining how this influenced and altered the form, character and significance of testimony. Despite my initial hesitation, subjective voice-over commentary was essential to provide context. It also introduced another layer of analysis, doubt and expression into the filmic discourse. It was a way of stepping from behind the camera, to contribute my own voice, and to acknowledge my role in the process of remembering Tasi Tolu.

In an application to The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade for a Missing Persons Identification Center in Timor-Leste, Dr Soren Blau and Dr Clinton Fernandes cite the idea of the statesman and philosopher Edmund Burke that a nation is a partnership between 'the living, the dead and the unborn' (Blau & Fernandes 2013). Philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1984, p. 118) expresses a similar sense of responsibility to the dead when he writes:

[A]s soon as the idea of a debt to the dead, to people of flesh and blood to whom something really happened in the past, stops giving documentary research its highest end, history loses its meaning.

The reference to the 'spirits' in *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* repositions customary notions of the dead from the periphery of narrative representation, where it was situated in *Anatomy of a Massacre*, to the centre. The intention here is not to romanticise local culture as somehow 'purer' than imposed Western paradigms—it is to highlight, in an expressive form, the continued presence of the dead in Timor-Leste, on multiple levels of understanding. In Tasi Tolu and elsewhere, the dead continue to influence the living. They have shaped

the national identity and the independence struggle. They both protect and require protection. The spirits that inhabit the landscape bring the dead out of the realm of memory and enable the living to return to places scared by death and violence. This repositioning of the spiritual realm reflects and recognizes the participants and future Timorese viewers of the film for whom it may become part of the historical remembrance of the nation.

Appendix 1

It is important to address the question of informed consent in the process of making the documentary *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016). What were the risks and to what extent were local subjects aware of them before agreeing to appear in the documentary? There are legitimate concerns that the process of filming testimony about past political violence can disturb and even retraumatise participants. There was also a potential danger that interview subjects could become the target of reprisals following the distribution or broadcast of the documentary.

In order to understand the process by which participation was negotiated it is essential to understand the origin of the film and the local context. The filmmaker's association with a forensic investigation and a training project framed initial interviews with subjects at Tasi Tolu. In this case the International Forensic Team (IFT) managed consent by engaging in a prolonged and exhaustive process of consultation with East Timorese institutional and customary authorities. Local witnesses, when they identified themselves, were informed about the investigation with the assistance of expert interpreters and facilitators.

When my work in Tasi Tolu transitioned to a documentary filmmaking practice, I contacted local participants and renegotiated consent. This included a written consent form translated into Tetum, which was read aloud to local people who could not read prior to asking them to sign it. Two East Timorese colleagues, Gaspar Sarmiento and Bety Reis, were crucial to this process. Sarmiento and Reis are experienced East Timorese interpreters and filmmakers with a profound understanding of local sensitivities and cultural practices. Not only did they inform subjects about the risks of appearing in the documentary, they carefully monitored the emotional and psychological well being of participants. In this context it is important to distinguish between the sadness or distress of recalling painful experiences and moments of crisis, and more extreme forms of retraumatisation. There is no guarantee that the later can be avoided however prior consultation with participants and

knowledgeable local co-workers can mitigate these risks.

I discussed the danger of reprisals against interviewees with East Timorese colleagues and participants. This was seen as an unlikely scenario considering the political circumstances in Timor-Leste. The perpetrators who are most likely to initiate reprisals reside in Indonesia. Some absent militia members have active criminal charges against them in Timor-Leste. Since none of the interviewees directly implicated any members of the Indonesian armed forces or its proxy militia groups, there would be little motivation for perpetrators or their associates to intimidate or harm the subjects of the film were they to view or become aware of its existence.

Appendix 2

It is important to clarify the nature of the collaboration with local participants during the preparation and production of *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu* (2016). As discussed, this documentary is the latest in several films I have made in Timor-Leste. Since 2000 I have worked with a number of East Timorese colleagues. During these collaborations I have incorporated 'on the job' training in various aspects of documentary production and filmmaking techniques. Gaspar Sarmiento was a key crew member on *Anatomy of a Massacre* (2010) acting as interpreter, sound recordist and production co-ordinator. He reprised these roles during the early stages of the most recent film. Bety Reis was already an accomplished drama filmmaker when I began working with her on *The Spirits of Tasi Tolu*. Reis co-directed the award winning *A Guerra da Beatriz/Beatriz's War* (2013), Timor-Leste's first, locally produced feature film. As well as being employed as an interpreter, Bety was interested in learning more about documentary filmmaking and I maintained an ongoing dialogue with her about documentary techniques and narrative structure as well as offering some practical training in camera operation during the production of the film.

Certain forms of participatory documentary filmmaking aspire to even more inclusive forms of community engagement: co-authoring, co-directing or

collectively producing films; and providing intensive filmmaking training programs with local participants. These modes of local involvement however were either not possible or appropriate in this production. This film was filmed in four, two or three weeks periods over four years. In this disparate community participants were often absent, engaged in family duties elsewhere, or busy tending to agricultural work when I was on location. In some cases, despite their generosity and graciousness, I felt that their participation in the documentary was an imposition on their time. However, the involvement of local subjects as interviewees as well as their feedback on rough cuts was crucial and contributed significantly to the form of the film. These subjects also expressed to me over the course of the production a growing understanding that telling their stories in this medium could be an instrument for collective justice and community empowerment.

The value of training some local people in filmmaking techniques that will probably be of no practical value to them needs also to be considered. Sarmiento and Reis are two of the most experienced filmmakers in Timor-Leste however even they struggle to make a living, relying on family support and other forms of income to survive. I judged that employing and training them on this production was a higher priority and a more beneficial allocation of resources than a more intensive local participatory process. However in future productions in Timor-Leste a range of participatory methodologies will be considered.

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5 May 2016

Mr. Andrew Sully
Department of Media, Music,
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Faculty of Arts
Macquarie University
NSW 2077

Dear Mr. Sully

Reference No: 5201001500

Title: *The Audiovisual documentation of Forensic Research into Cases of Political Violence*

This letter is to confirm that the ethics application cited above met the requirements set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007 – Updated May 2015) (the *National Statement*).

The application received approval from the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee on 17 January 2011.

The above project was conducted by Mr. Andrew Sully, PhD candidate, under the supervision of Dr. Maree Delofski and Professor Kathryn Millard.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Dr Karolyn White
Director, Research Ethics & Integrity
Chair, Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) and the *CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice*.

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Filmography

A Guerra da Beatriz/Beatriz's War, 2013, FairTrade Films, directed by Luigi Acquisto and Bety Reis.

A License To Kill, 1999, Four Corners ABCTV. Reported by Mark Davis, Produced by Michael Doyle.

Anatomy of a Massacre, 2010, Cordell Jigsaw. Produced by Michael Cordell, Directed by Andrew Sully.

Balibo 2009, Transmission Films. Directed by Robert Connolly.

History and Memory, 1991. Akiko Productions. Directed by Rea Tajirir.

In Cold Blood: The East Timor Massacre 1992, Yorkshire Television. Produced and Directed by Peter A Gordon.

East Timor Birth of a Nation: Luolo's Story 2002, Film Australia. Directed by Andrew Sully & Luigi Acquisto.

East Timor, Long Road to Freedom 2000, Journeyman Pictures. Directed by Sophie and Lyndal Barry.

Forbidden Lie\$ 2007, Palace Films. Directed by Anna Broinowski.

Housing Problems 1935, British Commercial Gas Association. Directed by Edgar Anstey & Arthur Elton.

La Pyramide Humaine 1961, Editions Montparnasse. Directed by Jean Rouch.

Letter to Siberia 1957. SODA Pictures. Directed by Chris Marker.

Lorang's Way 1977. Ronin Films. Produced by David and Judith MacDougall.

Nanook of the North, 1922, Criterion. Directed by Robert Flaherty.

Nightmail, 1936, GPO Film Unit. Directed by Harry Watt & Basil Wright

Pengkhianatan G 30 S/PKI, PPRN. Directed by Arafin C. Noer.

Rouch's Moi, Un Noir, 1958, Ronin Films. Directed by Jean Rouch.

Sans Soleil 1983, Criterion. Directed by Chris Marker.

Scenes From An Occupation, 1999. Ronin Films, Canberra. Directed by Carmela Baranowska.

Shoah, 1985, Criterion. Directed by Claude Lanzmann.

Song of Ceylon, 1937, Ceylon Tea Board & GPO Film Unit. Directed by Basil Wright.

S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine, 2003, Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA), First Run Features. Directed by Rithy Pahn.

The Act of Killing 2012, Final Cut For Real Productions. Directed by Joshua Oppenheimer.

The Gleaners and I, 2000. Zeitgeist Films. Directed by Agnes Varda.

Waltz with Bashir 2008, Sony Classics. Directed by Ari Folman.