

Recent Books on East Timor – April 2021

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Anthropology

Indigenous Spirits and Global Aspirations in a Southeast Asian Borderland :
Timor-Leste's Oecussi Enclave / Michael Rose
Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020
258p. ; 156x234x25.4mm
Includes Index ; Bibliography
9789463723428
\$ 116.48 / HB
522gm.

Over the past 40 years, life in Timor-Leste has changed radically. Before 1975 most of the population lived in highland villages, spoke local languages, and rarely used money. Today many have moved to peri-urban lowland settlements, and even those whose lives remain dominated by customary ways understand that those of their children will not. For the Atoni Pah Meto of Timor-Leste's remote Oecussi Enclave, the world was neatly divided into two distinct categories: the meto (indigenous), and the kase (foreign). Now matters are less clear; the good things of the globalised world are pursued not through rejecting the meto ways of the village, or collapsing them into the kase, but through continual crossing between them. In this way, the people of Oecussi are able to identify in the struggles of lowland life, the comforting and often decisive presence of familiar highland spirits.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=750876>

The Dead as Ancestors, Martyrs, and Heroes in Timor-Leste / (Eds) Lia Kent & Rui Graca Feijo

Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020

348p.

Includes Index

9789463724319

\$ 128.24 / HB

652gm.

During the 24-year Indonesian occupation of East Timor, thousands of people died, or were killed, in circumstances that did not allow the required death rituals to be performed. Since the nation's independence, families and communities have invested considerable time, effort and resources in fulfilling their obligations to the dead. These obligations are imbued with urgency because the dead are ascribed agency and can play a benevolent or malevolent role in the lives of the living. These grassroots initiatives run, sometimes critically, in parallel with official programs that seek to transform particular dead bodies into public symbols of heroism, sacrifice and nationhood. *The Dead as Ancestors, Martyrs, and Heroes in Timor-Leste* focuses on the dynamic interplay between the potent presence of the dead in everyday life and their symbolic usefulness to the state. It underlines how the dead shape relationships amongst families, communities and the nation-state, and open an important window into — are in fact pivotal to — processes of state and nation formation.

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