

3º CICLO DE ESTUDOS EM SOCIOLOGIA

The Farmers' Movement in East Timor
A case study of the social history and the development of
the Ermera Farmers' Union (UNAER)

ABEL BOAVIDA DOS SANTOS

2022



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Tese realizada no âmbito do Doutoramento em Sociologia, orientada pela Professora Doutora Helena Vilaça e pela Co-orientadora Dr. Ann Wigglesworth.

[Thesis submitted to the Doctoral Degree in Sociology, supervised by Professor Helena Vilaça and co-supervised by Dr. Ann Wigglesworth]

Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto

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Membros do Júri

Presidente:

Vogais:

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved wife Yuslianni Sulistia and our three beloved children: Fitun Elichsan; Funan Fitrianni Sabrina and Timoria Kireyna Galiza for their unconditional love and support. I love you all.

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Declaration

I, Abel Boavida dos Santos, declare that the thesis entitled “A Farmers' Movement in East Timor: A case study of the social history and the development of the Ermera Farmers' Union (UNAER)” is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor in Sociology at the University of Porto, Portugal. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature: Abel Boavida dos Santos

Date: 18/07/2022

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Resumo

Esta tese apresenta a história social e o desenvolvimento do movimento camponês em Timor-Leste através de um estudo de caso do sindicato dos camponeses de Ermera, UNAER (*Uniaun Agrikultores Ermera*). Esta investigação baseia-se no quadro conceptual de que a emergência de um movimento social camponês aberto e organizado está enraizado no legado histórico do colonialismo e da ocupação militar estrangeira, altamente exploradora e repressiva. As políticas coloniais, incluindo o trabalho forçado, a imposição de impostos por cabeça e o estabelecimento de plantações em terras confiscadas do povo, bem como a domínio militar estrangeiro, a repressão e a privação de direitos políticos e económicos antes da restauração da independência em 2002, tiveram um profundo impacto no povo timorense.

Com base numa revisão da literatura sobre resistências camponesas e movimentos sociais, como Scott (1976; 1985); Lofland (2003); Tilly (1981), McAdam, et. al (2001); Tarrow (1998), entre outros, procurarei mostrar que a força da repressão estatal foi a principal causa por trás dos protestos camponeses, que assumiram a forma de resistência oculta realizada por indivíduos. A natureza oculta da resistência pôde ocorrer efetivamente porque se apoiava nas relações sociais dos clãs enraizadas no sistema sociocultural das comunidades locais. Durante a ocupação indonésia, a resistência camponesa vinculou-se à ideologia política da resistência timorense, tornando os camponeses mais corajosos e levando-os a lutar pelos seus direitos abertamente. Após a independência, o governo não implementou uma reforma agrária efetiva, deixando assim de cumprir as prometas feitas durante a luta pela autodeterminação. Em reação, os agricultores organizaram-se e formaram um movimento social aberto coordenado por meio da UNAER. O movimento ganhou força, tanto com base em reivindicações por terras consuetudinárias (recursos locais) como através do apoio de diversas ONGs (recursos externos).

Recorrendo a um paradigma construtivista e uma abordagem metodológica qualitativa, a análise desenvolve-se sob a forma de uma narrativa que enfatiza as histórias das pessoas para explicar os acontecimentos (Bryman, 2014). Identificaram-se três temáticas principais. A primeira temática descreve as principais causas ou “fatores principais” que levaram ao surgimento do movimento camponês, que estão ligados à história da intervenção colonial e suas práticas políticas exploratórias e repressivas contra os agricultores. Isso provocou o descontentamento dos camponeses levando ao aparecimento da resistência

camponesa, tanto na sua vertente oculta como na vertente aberta, que será influenciada pela cultura tradicional e pelas ideologias políticas dominantes.

A segunda temática analisa os 'fatores facilitadores' do movimento camponês de Ermera e como este movimento sobreviveu e se adaptou às mudanças sociais que ocorreram ao longo do tempo. Após o fim do colonialismo português em 1974, seguiu-se uma opressiva ocupação militar indonésia. Esta situação levou ao aparecimento de um movimento de resistência nacional de luta pela independência, o que permitiu que o movimento camponês encontrasse a sua inspiração ideológica. Assim, o movimento camponês que inicialmente seguira um padrão oculto de resistência transformou-se num padrão de resistência aberto e coordenado.

A terceira temática analisa os 'fatores de reforço' que fortaleceram o movimento. Isto vê-se nas estratégias da UNAER usadas no fortalecimento e empoderamento do movimento camponês de Ermera. A sua abordagem de organização comunitária contou com a mobilização de recursos internos, bem como o apoio externo de organizações da sociedade civil.

Nesta tese, analisam-se essas três grandes temáticas, mostrando que a emergência dos movimentos sociais camponeses em Ermera em Timor-Leste não pode ser dissociada da história de intervenção do poder estrangeiro explorador e repressivo. Suspeitava-se que o legado de políticas coloniais exploradoras e opressivas terá sido preservado pelo Estado após a independência de Timor-Leste. Assim, inspirados na ideologia de libertação nacional de Timor-Leste, os camponeses estabeleceram um movimento social camponês mobilizando recursos internos e externos.

Esta investigação mostra que a formação e posterior capacitação do movimento camponês é fruto de um legado histórico de exploração que perdurou até a era da independência. Influenciado pela ideologia de libertação do movimento de independência e apoiado por ativistas da sociedade civil após a independência, este movimento continua a ser fortalecido e promovido como um importante instrumento para os agricultores lutarem pelos seus direitos e se capacitarem para melhorar o seu bem-estar e qualidade de vida.

Palavras-chave: agricultores, movimentos sociais camponeses, UNAER, colonialismo, direitos consuetudinários à terra, ativismo, organizações da sociedade civil, Timor-Leste.

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the social history and development of the peasant movement in Timor-Leste through a case study of the Ermera farmers' union, UNAER (*Uniaun Agrikultores Ermera*). The research is based on the conceptual framework that the emergence of an open and organized peasant social movement is rooted in the historical legacy of colonialism and foreign military occupation which were exploitative and repressive. Colonial policies, including forced labour, imposition of head taxes and the establishment of plantations on confiscated lands from the people, as well as foreign military domination, repression and deprivation of political and economic rights before the restoration of independence in 2002, had a profound impact on the Timorese people.

Drawing on literature on peasant resistance and social movements, such as Scott (1976; 1985); Lofland (2003); Tilly (1981), McAdam, et al (2001); Tarrow (1998), among others, I argue that the strength of state repression caused the peasant protest in the form of hidden resistance carried out by individuals. The hidden patterns of resistance were able to occur effectively because they were facilitated by clan-based social relations in the socio-cultural system of the local community. During the Indonesian occupation, the peasant resistance became closely linked with the political ideology of the Timorese resistance, which made the peasants more courageous to fight openly. After independence, the government did not carry out agrarian reform as promised during the liberation struggle. Therefore, the farmers began to organize themselves to carry out an open and coordinated social movement through UNAER. The movement strengthened both by drawing on customary land claims (local resources) and through support received from NGOs (external resources).

Based on the constructivism paradigm and qualitative methodological approach, the analysis is presented in the form of a narrative that emphasizes people's stories to explain events (Bryman, 2014). Three main themes were identified. The first theme describes the main causes or 'leading factors' in the emergence of the peasant movement, which is linked to the history of colonial intervention and its exploitative and repressive policy practices against farmers. This caused widespread discontent among the peasants which led to the emergence of peasant resistance, both in their hidden and open forms, which were influenced by traditional culture and political ideologies.

The second theme analyses the 'enabling factors' behind the Ermera peasant movement and how this movement has survived and adapted to social changes over time. After Portuguese colonialism ended in 1974, it was followed by an oppressive Indonesian military occupation. This situation led to the emergence of a national resistance movement to fight for independence. This enabled the peasant movement to find its ideological inspiration, which led to the transformation of the peasant movement from hidden patterns of resistance to more open and coordinated forms of resistance.

The third theme analyses the 'reinforcing factors' that strengthened the movement. This can be seen in UNAER's strategies to strengthen and empower the Ermera peasant movement. Their community organizing approach has relied on the mobilization of internal resources as well as external support from civil society organizations.

These three themes are meticulously analysed and show that the emergence of peasant social movements in Ermera cannot be separated from the history of exploitative and repressive foreign power intervention. The research suggests that the legacy of exploitative colonial policies continued to be preserved by the state after Timor-Leste's independence. Therefore, inspired by the national liberation ideology of Timor-Leste, the peasants established a peasant social movement that mobilized internal and external resources.

This research shows that the formation and subsequent empowerment of the peasant movement is the result of a historical legacy of exploitation that continued until the era of independence. Influenced by the liberation ideology of the independence movement and supported by civil society activists after independence, this movement continues to be strengthened and promoted as an important instrument for farmers to fight for their rights and to empower themselves to improve their welfare and quality of life.

Keywords: farmers, peasant social movements, UNAER, colonialism, customary land rights, activism, civil society organizations, Timor-Leste.

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Glossary

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Tetum or Portuguese or Indonesian | |
| Adat | Custom (Indonesian word now widely used in Timor) |
| Aihun boot ne'ebe lulik | A big tree that is considered sacred |
| Aisamtuku | Albizia tree |
| Aldeia | Hamlet |
| A luta continua | Keep fighting |
| Alvará | One of the land titles in the Portuguese colonial era |
| Arrolamento da população | Registration of the population |
| Barlake | Ritual exchange of goods between families at marriage |
| Bematan lulik | Sacred spring |
| Bogos | Bogos is a sacred place for traditional ritual ceremonies, in the form of a stone arrangement that surrounds a pole and/or a large tree. Bogos is a sacred site that shows the existence of a clan community. |
| Chefe de Suco | Village Chief |
| Deportados | Deportees |
| Estafeta | Liaisons |
| Fatin lulik | Sacred place |
| Fatuk lulik | Sacred stone |
| Relasaun Fetosan-Umane | Social relations in customary marriage exchanges between clans in East Timor |
| Juventude | Youth (plural) or young people in Tetum and Portuguese |
| Kuda rai ho sistema integradu | Integrated planting system |
| Lia nain | A traditional elder or a 'spokesperson' or 'judicial authority'. They play a ceremonial role through carrying the wisdom of the ancestors |
| Lulik | Sacred |
| Lisan | Custom or traditional practices (law) |
| Liurai | King of socio-linguistic group |
| Malae | Foreigner |
| Matadalan | Guidance |
| Mau Gunda | Name of the child that was born on Monday |
| Mau Kinta | Name of the child that was born on Thursday |
| Mau Sesta | Name of the child that was born on Friday |
| Mau Tersa | Name of the child that was born on Tuesday |

| | |
|---|--|
| Património de estado | State heritage |
| Occupar, produzir e resistir | Occupy, produce and resist. |
| Rede ba Rai | Land Rights Network |
| Strategi dalam mempersiapkan kapal perang (Indon) | Strategy in preparing warships |
| Strategi dalam mempersiapkan kapal dagang (Indon) | Strategy in preparing merchant ships |
| Tais | Traditional cloth woven in Timor Leste, worn by women as skirts and by men in ceremonial costume. |
| Tara Bandu | Tara Bandu is a cultural activity to announce customary law regulations that aim to conserve nature and the environment as well as people's livelihoods. |
| Terra livre, povo livre | Free land, free people |
| Timor Leste | East Timor from 2000 |
| Uma lulik | Sacred house |
| Viva camponeses Timor-Leste | Long live the Timor-Leste peasants |

List of Acronyms

| | |
|-----------|--|
| AOP | Assembly of the Poor |
| AMAN | Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (The Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago) |
| APHEDA | Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad |
| ASDT | Associação Social Democrata Timorese (Association of Timorese Social Democrats) |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organizations |
| DSMPT | Dewan Solidaritas Mahasiswa dan Pemuda Timor Timur (East Timor Student and Youth Solidarity Council) |
| ERPOLEQS | Ermera, Poetete, Lequisi (names of the place, village and hamlet where several families there are reclaiming customary ownership of the Aifu plantation) |
| EURA | Eskola ba Ukun Rasik An (School for liberation) |
| EZLN | Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional (EZLN) |
| FDCH | Fundo de Desenvolvimento Capital Humano (Human Capital Development Fund) |
| FLUP | Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto (Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto) |
| FALINTIL | Forças Armadas da Liberação Nacional de Timor Leste – Armed forces for the Liberation of East Timor |
| FRETILIN | Frente Revolucionária do Timor Leste Independente |
| FONGTIL | Forum ONG Timor-Leste (East Timor NGOs Forum). |
| HAKOMAFIA | Hakuak Komunitade Maudiu Fatuquero (Protecting the Maudiu-Fatuquero Community) |
| HASATIL | Hametin Agrikultura Sustentável Timor-Leste (Strengthening East Timor's Sustainable Agriculture) |
| IEFS | Instituto Ekonomia Fulidaedae/Slulu" (Institute for Economics of Fulidaedae/Slulu) |
| IEP | Instituto ba Edukasaun Popular (Institute for Popular Education) |
| KHJR | Klibur Juventude Haburas Rai (Youth Organization for Reforestation) |
| KODIM | Komando Distrik Militer (Military District Commander) |
| KSI | Kadalak Sulimutu Institute |
| KUD | Koperasi Unit Desa (Village Unit Cooperative) |
| LPM | Landless People's Movement |
| MPRA | Movimentu Popular ba Reforma Agrária (Popular Movement for Agrarian Reform) |
| MPRA-L | Movimentu Popular ba Reforma Agrária Município Liquiça (Popular movement for agrarian reform Municipality of Liquiça) |
| MOKATIL | Movimentu Kamponeses Timor-Leste (East Timor Peasant Movement) |
| MST | Movimento Sem Terra (Landless Movement) |
| NGO | Non-government organisation |
| NSMs | New Social Movements |
| OPJT | Organização Popular da Juventude Timor (Timor Popular Youth Organization) |

| | |
|---------|--|
| OPMT | Organização Popular da Mulher Timor |
| RDTL | República Democrática de Timor Leste - Democratic Republic of Timor Leste |
| RENETIL | Resistência Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor Leste – National Resistance of Students of East Timor |
| SAPT | Sociedade Agrícola Pátria e Trabalho |
| SIL | Sahe Institute for Liberation |
| SWCU | Satya Wacana Christian University |
| SKEP | Surat Keputusan Panglima (Commander's Decree). |
| TNI | Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Army) |
| TNCs | Transnational Corporations |
| UDT | União Democrática Timorese (Democratic Union of Timorese) |
| UKEN | Uniaun Agrikultores Kota Heu, Eroho, Nunupu (Farmers' Union of Kota Heu, Eroho, Nunupu) |
| UNAER | Uniaun Agrikultores Ermera (Ermera Farmers' Union) |
| UNAMER | Uniaun Agrikultores Mertuto (Farmers' Union of the Mirtuto village) |
| UNAGOU | Uniaun Agrikultores Guoio (Farmers' Union of the Guoio village) |
| UNORKA | Pambansang Ugnayan ng Nagsasariling Lokal na mga Samahang Mamamayan sa Kanayunan (National Association of Independent Local Citizens' Organizations in the Countryside). |
| UNTL | Universidade Nacional de Timor Lorosa'e - National University of Timor Lorosa'e |
| WCED | World Commission on Environment and Development |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |

Introduction

"They no longer have rights over our ancestral lands because we have already declared independence. It means *povo livre, terra livre* (free people, free land)" (ASdS)¹

Introduction to East Timor

East Timor refers to the eastern part of the island of Timor which is now known as Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (RDTL, or *República Democrática de Timor-Leste*)². Timor-Leste became the first new sovereign nation of the 21st century through the restoration of its independence which was declared on 20 May 2002.

Previously, East Timor was ruled by two foreign powers: the Portuguese colonial administration and the Indonesian government. East Timor was colonized by Portugal in the 16th century³, and was known as Portuguese Timor until 28 November 1975, when the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor (FRETILIN, or *Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente*) declared the territory's independence. Nine days later, it was invaded and occupied by Indonesia and was declared Indonesia's 27th province from 1976 to mid-1999.

While under the domination of foreign powers, the people of Timor experienced oppression and exploitation under the repressive state power. This situation led to resistance from the Timorese people. Open resistance took the form of rebellions by the native kings, most notably by the King of Manufahi, Dom Boaventura, from 1910-1912. The Manufahi rebellion had been planned in advance by the leaders and by Dom Boaventura who at the time intended to expel the Portuguese from the island. Therefore, it acquired a proto-nationalist or, at least, an anti-colonialist character (Sousa, 2011: 76). Dom Boaventura's revolt, which was the last of many, was successfully suppressed by the Portuguese colonial

¹ ASdS (52 years old) is the current Head of Ponilala Village and also one of the initiators of the founding of UNAER. Interview with ASdS was conducted in Ermera, 15/2/2018.

² In this study, I will use the two terms interchangeably according to the context. The term East Timor refers to historical aspects from before to the end of foreign occupation in this country, including the transition period towards the restoration of its independence, whereas the term RDTL refers to the official name of this country after the restoration of its independence on 20 May 2002.

³ There are many references that explore colonial history in Timor. An important reference to the Portuguese presence in Timor from the early establishment of colonial rule on the Island to the Second World War, see Augusto, F.F. (2011). *Timor-A Presença Portuguesa (1769-1945)*. Lisboa, Centro de Estudos Históricos Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

government. However, this great revolt inspired a massive popular resistance to fight for the independence of East Timor which was organized by FRETILIN from 1975 to 1999.

In addition to open resistance, colonial repression also caused marginal people to manifest their dissatisfaction through patterns of disobedient behaviour and/or individual actions that were then carried out hidden. For the purposes of this study, these behaviours and actions are also understood as a form of resistance in the context of covert movements.

Although the intervention of foreign powers took place in a repressive manner, the Timorese managed to maintain their society with distinctive characteristics based on their social and cultural system, which was rooted in a system of family relations based on clans, and which was culturally embodied in traditional house institutions (*uma lisan* or *uma lulik*/sacred houses).

The life of the Timorese people, especially in rural areas, is based on a subsistence economy, where ownership, control and access to land as well as the organization of production are collectively defined based on the local culture and traditions inherited from their ancestors. It subsisted over centuries of history, maintaining structural traits that make it unique (Rui Feijó, 2016:11). Therefore, even though foreign powers came with legal, rational and centralized governance, in practice, the influence of traditional legitimacy continued and is maintained to the present day.

This was an important factor that bolstered the hidden resistance of the indigenous Timorese who were marginalized in the repressive system. This was because resistance was supported by social relations in their traditional cultural system. When changes were operated that allowed the people's discontent to be consolidated through FRETILIN and organized into a national resistance that demanded the independence of East Timor, hidden resistance then became open resistance in the form of collective actions strengthened by the organization of clandestine movements, which at that time were based on political ideology.

Thus, the East Timorese people's resistance to foreign power actually occurred not only in the form of massive and open popular resistance, which was coordinated on the basis of political ideology alone, but also in the form of hidden resistance which was coordinated on the basis of a traditional culture-based ideology.

The long struggle of the people of East Timor to free themselves from the domination of foreign powers was finally supported by the international community and the United Nations (UN) was able to organize a referendum for self-determination on 30th August 1999.

The referendum offered the Timorese people the choice to continue to be part of Indonesia with an expanded special autonomy status or to be independent as a sovereign state.

The result of the referendum showed that an overwhelming 78% of the people of East Timor were in favour of independence. Indonesia had formed anti-independence Timorese militia to intimidate pro-independence sentiment, and following their defeat in the vote, they carried out killings and destruction of 70% of all infrastructure across all areas of East Timor. This situation led to a widespread political and humanitarian crisis.

The 1999 crisis also attracted international attention through the intervention of hundreds of donor agencies. The emergence of local NGOs in East Timor that partnered with these donor agencies for the distribution of humanitarian aid to remote areas resulted in the growth from 14 NGOs in 1998 to 515 NGOs by 2002 in East Timor (dos Santos & Wigglesworth, 2000).

In addition to international intervention through humanitarian assistance, UN support was also continued with the formation of a transitional government called the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET)⁴ to prepare for the transition process of East Timor into a sovereign state that is de jure recognized by the international community. The end of the UN's role in preparing for the East Timor transition process was marked by the declaration of the restoration of independence of the RDTL on 20 May 2002.

The Peasants of Ermera

The establishment of the RDTL at the restoration of independence on 20 May 2002, was perceived by peasants in the Municipality of Ermera as opening the door to government policies and actions that would finally support them.

The restoration of independence was understood by the peasants as an opportunity to openly reclaim the ownership rights of their ancestral lands, which had been confiscated during foreign rule in East Timor.

By relying on the principle of formal legality, plantation owners who had just returned from abroad claimed ownership rights over their plantations. However, the peasants who had

⁴ UNTAET provided an interim civil administration and a peacekeeping mission in the territory of East Timor, from its establishment on 25 October 1999 until its independence on 20 May 2002, following the outcome of the East Timor Special Autonomy Referendum. The transitional administration was established by the [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1272](#) in 1999.

occupied the plantations rejected these claims as they considered the plantation owners to be foreigners who no longer had rights over the plantations.

At that time, the peasants were occupying the plantations based on traditional ownership claims. They argued that these plantations were the lands of their ancestors, which during the Portuguese colonial period, had been seized to develop coffee plantations.

Farmer activists traced the social and cultural history of their communities and then pointed to several sites within the plantation, such as their clan's *uma lulik* (sacred house), sacred springs (*be matan lulik*), sacred stones (*fatuk lulik*), and sacred trees (*aihun lulik*), as well as rivers and other sites around the plantation, which according to local people's beliefs were considered sacred (*lulik*). These locations were believed to be their source of livelihood and became places for rituals to ask for rain, drive out pests and to pray to the spirits of their ancestors.

The mobilization of collective actions for reclaiming plantations later developed into the organisation of a farmers' social movement coordinated by UNAER (*Uniaun Agrikultores Ermera/Ermera Farmers' Union*). This was possible because farmer activists were able to take advantage of the opportunities for change to consolidate their power more broadly through their partnerships with young urban activists from civil society organisations. This partnership was built because the activists already had the same historical background and commitment on how to build a better future for their new country.

The research focused on analysing the social movements of farmers in Ermera through a case study at UNAER, with the aim of exploring the determinant factors that contributed to the emergence and development of the peasant social movement in Ermera, as well as how UNAER developed organizational strategies to strengthen and empower the movement.

As a pressure group that influences the public policy-making process, this social movement is a political choice for Timorese peasants to fight for their interests and influence state policies that are directly related to the real interests and needs of farmers. Social movements in this context have relevance to the political process of the new state of Timor-Leste, especially the contribution of the peasant movement to the struggle for democracy and development of social justice, which is based on the basic principles and goals of the state as outlined in the RDTL constitution.

The research study

This study considers the collective action of occupation of colonial plantations by farmers in the areas of Sakoko, Lequisi and Maudiu which began in 2001. These actions were organized by several farmer activists with the support of an NGO called *Kadalak Sulimutu Institute* (KSI)⁵. In the following year, the occupations of colonial plantations expanded widely to other places in Ermera. KSI activists and peasant activists who organized these actions during the struggle were actively involved in the clandestine movement network organized by FRETILIN to fight against the illegal occupation of Indonesia and demand the independence of Timor-Leste.

These activists then established peasant organizations in their respective villages to organize and consolidate activities related to plantation occupation actions that had been carried out. In the following years, these peasants' actions were increasingly widespread in various regions in Ermera, including occupying a state plantation of 12,000 hectares located in Fatubesi. In 2010, the peasant organizations in these villages declared the establishment of the UNAER to organize the peasant social movement in Ermera.

This study explores the emergence of the peasant movement in Ermera, its strengthening strategies, and the social situations that sustain its existence. The study focuses on the peasant social movement carried out by UNAER, by discussing the factors that led to the emergence of this movement, its organizational strategies and the social conditions that allowed this movement to come up with dynamic movement patterns.

My interest in this field stems from my experience of involvement in community organizing in several regions in Timor-Leste from 2000-2006 when I worked for an NGO called Sahe Institute for Liberation (SIL). At the time, I was also teaching in the Community Development Department of Universidade Nasional Timor-Lorosa'e (UNTL),

SIL developed several programs, including public discussions, journal publications, popular education, and community organization. From 2001-2005, I often visited the villages for several empowerment and community organizing activities. At that time, KSI conducted community organizing programs in several areas of Ermera Municipality, including Lequisi and Sakoko.

⁵ KSI is an NGO founded by several former pro-independence student activists, who at that time were engaged in advocacy and empowerment of basic communities.

SIL and KSI were NGOs created to respond to the humanitarian crisis that occurred in 1999. The presence of these NGOs in the early 2000s played a very significant role in the process of building the new state of Timor-Leste.

These NGOs initially facilitated humanitarian assistance to people who had just come out of the political crisis in 1999. They also organized programs that were directly related to the real needs of the community in the process of rebuilding self-confidence based on a firm belief that the independence of Timor-Leste required the real liberation of the people from all forms of oppression and exploitation.

The programs of these NGOs, such as popular education, community discussion, journal publication, conflict resolution, as well as community organizing, are formulated to provide alternative perspectives and progressive ideas on community development that are reflected in the historical roots of Timor's national liberation and are also based on the principles of sustainable development.

Several students from the Department of Community Development at UNTIL, who were conducting fieldwork at the two NGOs, also visited the communities facilitated by KSI in Ermera, to understand how community organizers in these villages carried out their programs. The students learned from the experiences of community organizers in Ermera and discussed those experiences in relation to the theories of community development they got from their lecturers and the literature they read. I coordinated the fieldwork subjects from 2008-2014 and became interested in these issues.

From these experiences, both while working in NGOs with community activists and organizers, as well as with students during the teaching and learning process at the UNTL's Community Development Department, I was inspired to conduct research on the Ermera peasant movement to find out how it emerged, including exploring the peculiarities of its organizing strategies which strengthened this movement's bargaining position from the local level to the national level.

Structure of the thesis

This study analyses the emergence of the Ermera peasant movement, its strengthening strategies, and the social situations that resulted in changing resistance patterns. The study focuses on the organizing strategy of the movement by UNAER, discussing

its determinants and reinforcing factors, as well as the enabling factors of its operation with both hidden and open resistance patterns. Peasant protests, both hidden and open in nature, occurring in the era before and after the restoration of independence, inspired UNAER to organize a peasant social movement to demand agrarian reform. The study focuses on UNAER's strategy in organizing and strengthening the Ermera peasant movement.

There are three main themes that are the focus of analysis in this thesis: leading factors, enabling factors, and reinforcing factors of the Ermera peasant movement. The analysis of the leading factors consists in an historical reflection on the emergence of social movements in Timor-Leste. The analysis of enabling factors focuses on the social situation that enabled this movement to come up with its resistance strategies and patterns. Finally, the analysis of reinforcing factors focuses on strategies to strengthen the movement through the use of existing resources, both internal and external.

In chapter 1: I briefly describe the history of East Timor as well as the social and political changes that followed, which also contributed to the process of emergence and development of the peasant social movement in the country. This chapter also explains the reasons behind the choice of thesis topic and research location which also has implications for the choice of methodology.

In chapter 2: Based on a literature review on peasant and social movements, I explain the conceptualization of farmers and social movements as well as the factors that led to the emergence of peasant social movements, which are the focus of this research.

In chapter 3: I briefly describe the history of the growth and the development of peasant movements globally from the past to the present, with several examples of cases in Asia and other countries, including the impact of the global market economy that has contributed to the growth of the contemporary peasant social movement. This chapter also analyses the forms of resistance and social conduciveness that have led to the existence of peasant movements, which are always dynamic in accordance with existing social conditions and the level of political repression

In Chapter 4: I present two models of the peasant movement: the covert movement and the open movement, reviewing Scott's theory of hidden resistance and Tilly's theory of collective action, to then discuss them in the context of the Ermera peasant movement.

In chapter 5: I describe the reasons behind the choice of research topic and location, the paradigm and methodological approach selected, including how data was collected and analysed.

In chapter 6: This chapter provides a framework and conceptualization related to the early emergence of the peasant movement before the restoration of independence of Timor-Leste. I present research findings on the colonial legacy and the emergence of the peasant movement in the form of hidden resistance (covert movements), by tracing the experiences of the peasants during the Portuguese colonial period and the Indonesian occupation, which led to the discontent of the peasants against the occupying governments at the time.

In chapter 7: This chapter provides a framework and conceptualization of the origins of the peasant movement in Ermera, driven by a process of social and political change. I present research findings on the enabling factors for the transformation of the peasant movement from a hidden resistance and/or a closed movement to an open and organized movement. I investigate empowerment opportunities for farmer activists to be able to mobilize peasants in coordinated collective actions, which marked the emergence of an open peasant social movement.

In chapter 8: This chapter provides a conceptual framework related to the strategy for organizing the peasant movement. I present research findings on UNAER's strategies in organizing the Ermera peasant movement that relied on mobilizing internal and external resources to empower and strengthen the movement.

In chapter 9: This chapter presents an analysis of the research findings with reference to theories presented in chapters 2, 3 and 4 that are relevant to the history and development of the Ermera peasant movement and its organizing strategy by UNAER.

Chapter 1: Background to East Timor and the choice of research topic

1.1. Introduction

This chapter briefly outlines the history of East Timor and the social and political changes that followed, which also contributed to the emergence and development of the peasant social movement in the country. This chapter also describes the reasons behind the choice of research topic and research location which has implications for the methodological choices. The positioning and the philosophical basis adopted in this thesis to approach the phenomenon of the peasant social movement is explained.

To understand the context of this thesis, a brief description is made of the early life of the Timorese people before and after the arrival of the Portuguese from the socio-cultural, political and economic perspective. This is followed by a brief description of the emergence of the peasant social movement in East Timor, the reasons underlying the choice of the research topic and location.

1.2. East Timor before the arrival of the Portuguese

According to Magalhães (2015), the history of Timor is divided into four periods: pre-colonial, Portuguese colonial, the Indonesian occupation, and the independence era. The relationships and the processes of change in these periods are fundamental in understanding the current development of Timor-Leste. Although the study of the first period is still ongoing, the relationships between these periods is fundamental in understanding Timor-Leste today (Sousa, 2017).

Timor is said to have been first inhabited more than 30,000 years ago by hunter-gatherers who after 25,000 years found the means to develop agriculture (Fox, 2000). According to Sanderson (2013), the monopoly of hunting and gathering ways of life did not end until 10,000 years ago, when some people began to subsist from agriculture. They lived in small groups known as local, where each group was more or less politically autonomous and economically self-sufficient. The main subsistence unit was the family and many local groups were usually linked by marriage into broader cultural units, sometimes known as

tribes. An ethnic group was a network of various groups whose members all followed the same cultural pattern and spoke the same language (Sanderson, 2013; Service, 1966).

The indigenous inhabitants of Timor are of diverse racial and cultural types. Archaeological and ethnographic research points to successive waves of Negrito, Melanesian and Proto-Malay immigrants (Hill, 2002:1). A number of ethnic groups marked their differences by the language they spoke, the lands they inhabited, the crops they grew, the animals they reared, the myths they shared, and the ancestors to whom they traced their origin (Shepherd, 2014:4). The predominance of Malay physical characteristics and non-Austronesian or 'Papuan' languages in the interior is believed to indicate the earlier arrival of the Melanesian waves of immigration (ibid: 2).

There are today more than twenty ethno-linguistic groups that have developed over the ages (Durand, 2016:27). The peoples of Eastern Timor are more divided linguistically than those of the western end of the island; up to 31 separate languages are spoken in the east while only four or five have been identified in the west (Hill, 2002:1). These ethnolinguistic groups include: Fatuluku, Makassae, Nauhete, Midique, Kairui, Tetum, Galoli, Idaté, Mambai, Tokodede, Kemak, Bunak, Atoni and Helong (Shepherd, 2014:4).

The Ermera people mostly come from the Mambai ethnolinguistic group.

“They are Austronesian-speakers ... and inhabited the mountainous interior of central Timor. One of approximately twelve distinct ethnolinguistic groups on the eastern half of the island, the Mambai are no more representative than any of their neighbours of what various parties in the contemporary controversy described as 'the East Timorese' or 'the people of Timor'. Although there was a certain sense of unity among East Timorese people, it needs to be emphasised that diversity was a characteristic feature of social life on the island” (Elizabeth G. Traube, in Peter Carey and G. Carter Bentley, 1997: 43).

The largest ethnic group on the island is the Tetum. Speakers of the Tetum language in one of its several variant forms are found in a number of separate areas. Tetum forms of social organisation have influenced other groups (Hill, 2002:2). These ethnolinguistic groups “did not comprise political units but were intersected by a multitude of ill-defined kingdoms (Pt: *reinos*) headed by indigenous rulers or *liurai* (Shepherd, 2014:4). Several historical and ethnographic studies suggest that since at least the 14th century, Timor was divided into two major kingdoms: Sombay or the confederation of Servião, in the West and the kingdom of Behale (Wehale) or the confederation of Belos (Belum), in the East. Servião in the west

inhabited by the Atoni people; and Belos in the east are inhabited by the Tetum people (Boxer, 1960; Taylor, 1998; Ormeling, 1956; Lemos, 1991; Shepherd, 2014).

The political structure had three main administrative levels: the village, the principedom and the kingdom, each with its own head. Other sources of political power resided in clan leadership. Clans generally tracing themselves to six generations. A royal and aristocratic status was accorded to some kingdom leaders (Taylor, 1999:7). These kingdoms were neither unified nor centrifugal in any sense which would be familiar to European notions. They combined loosely-knit localized territorial groups in a general hierarchy of clans, each related through exchange (Taylor, 1999:2).

Hamlets of four to ten houses (*aldeia*) were gathered into villages (*suco*). Groups of villages composed the kingdom (Durand, 2016: 28). The village comprised several hamlets, spread over a wide area. Each hamlet contained the members of a particular clan (Taylor, 1999:7). Every village had two sacred houses (*uma lulik*) (Durand, 2016: 28). Traditional houses are a central element in the socio-cultural dynamics in Timor-Leste (Sousa, 2017).

Ruled by a headman in association with a council of elders, the village was part of a principedom (*suco*) headed by a family which was itself subject to the ruler (*liurai*) of the kingdom in which it existed (Taylor, 1999:7). This organizational structure continues today, even though Catholicism has spread widely over the country during the past decades (Durand, 2016: 28). Each Timorese kingdom, principedom and clan possessed value systems whose ideologies highlighted the importance of exchange, and justified the hierarchy influenced by this exchange (Taylor, 1999:7).

As patrilineal or matrilineal clans, the *sucos* were further divided into lineages (*feto foun* and *mane foun*) whose physical location was found in hamlets (*knua*) scattered principally in the uplands. Across all of these domains, Timorese groups comprised three classes: rulers and aristocrats (*liurai* and *dato*), commoners (*ema*), and slaves (*atan*) (Forman 1977; Fox 2000; Glover 1971; Hicks 2004; McWilliam 2002; Lazarowitz 1980; Roque 2010a; Traube 1986 in Shepherd, 2014: 4-5).

Some kingdoms recognized a higher authority, notably the Waiwiku-Wehale kingdom at the centre of the island. But this was more of a spiritual authority than a political one (Durand, 2016: 27). The traditional religion of the Timorese was animist, the belief in '*luliks*', composed partly of ancestor worship, partly of spiritism, which penetrated every corner of Timorese existence influencing action on all possible aspects of life (Margaret King, 1963:156).

Despite their diversity, Timorese culture showed many common features, including an attachment to the sacred (*lulik*) in the organization of society (Durand, 2016: 27). "*Lulik*", in the Tetum lingua franca, is sometimes translated as 'sacred' or 'forbidden' (McWilliam et al., 2014:1).

Lulik and its equivalents refer to a whole range of objects, places, topographic features, categories and periods of time (see Traube 1986; McWilliam 2001, 2005; Hics 2004; Palmer and Carvalho 2008; Shepherd 2013). *Lulik* can also be an object of worship in a special building called an *uma lulik* (sacred house) or an ancestral grave. The Timorese were often reluctant to move from one place to another, as it required abandoning these *lulik* areas (Metzner, 1977:19). They were very afraid of breaking the *lulik*. Transgressions of *lulik* matters carried sanctions which, depending on the nature of the infraction, had far-reaching consequences, ranging from fines, rebukes and social ostracism to illness, misfortune and death (McWilliam, 2014:2).

The Timorese had successfully maintained a society with specific characteristics, distinct from neighbouring societies in the Southeast Asian Region (Taylor, 1999:5). According to Durand (2016: 27-28), most of the cultures were originally based on a dual conception of the world. Bipartition was the predominant principle, which identified pairs of polar opposites, such as female/male, indoor/outdoor, stationary/active. However, the elements of these pairs were not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, society needed to find a balance between them in order to live in harmony.

Rocks, trees, and water sources were often thought of as vessels of supernatural spirits or powers. The world of the living was connected to the world of the dead. East Timorese writer, Josh Trindade, describes the *Lulik* as a philosophical, religious and moral order that represents the core of Timorese value, and for that reason it remains an important guide to East Timorese intentions and actions across all areas of social life (Trindade 2011 in McWilliam et al. 2014:2).

At all levels, economic, political and ideological, its reproduction was maintained by a number of complex mechanisms, unified through an elaborate system of exchange. The basic structure of this system can best be illustrated by focusing initially on its economy (Taylor, 1999:5). Social relations in Timorese society are shown in the kinship system and differences in status, which are culturally bound strongly in the institution of traditional houses (*uma lulik*).

From the economic perspective, the life of the Timorese people was supported by a subsistence economy, where the organization of production was influenced profoundly by the distinctive nature of the Timorese terrain.

“The main topographical feature of the island is its rugged mountainous backbone, interspersed with fertile valleys and permanent springs. To the north, mountains protrude into the sea, whilst in the south they give way to a broad coastal plain. Lowland areas are also found in the west and northwest. In this terrain the flow of water is seasonably based. In the dry season (May to October) rivers are no more than stony corridors, whilst in the monsoon season (November to April) they become torrents of often impassable water. The vegetation produced by the climate and terrain varies from savanna and grassland in the plain areas, to bushland on the hill slopes, and to evergreen and tropical forests in the mountainous areas. Under these conditions, only a limited amount of land-use was possible. Irrigated cultivation could be undertaken only where water supplies were available from flood plains, in the vicinity of springs, or on swamp land. Most agricultural production was of the slash and burn type, with land-use being rotated to preserve the soil. Several crops were grown: rice, maize, cassava, yams, sweet potatoes and a variety of fruits. Livestock, such as pigs, goats, sheep and buffalo, were grazed on the hill slopes. Production was mainly for local subsistence, but goods were regularly exchange at local market. The only goods exchanged externally were sandalwood and beeswax” (Taylor, 1999: 5-6)

Access to a large area of land is very important in shifting cultivation with a slash-and-burn system. It can be said that at this time there was almost no individual control of large lands. Ownership, tenure and access to land were more collective in nature and were defined on cultural basis. The slash-and-burn pattern, apart from relying on flexible access to large areas of land, was also cultivated by mutual cooperation among the villagers. Community life in this phase can be categorized as a pre-capitalist society where agricultural production activities were organized collectively and inspired based on cultural traditions inherited from their ancestors.

The production work units were the household garden, the field and the irrigated rice fields. Economic organization was based primarily on the extended family, responsible for the maintenance of its type of unit. However, this pattern of work organization based on a large family was expanded following each agricultural cycle (Taylor, 1998:10). Community life was characterized by high collectivism, social solidarity and exchange.

The level of agricultural technology was low, so all aspects of work always required extensive cooperation. Production took place both in the context of the extended family and in the village context. Each had a sexual division of labour regulated by rites. For example, in

the cycle of rice cultivation, planting was undertaken by women and harvesting by men. Outside of agriculture, weaving was a woman's job, while men make iron tools and so on (Taylor, 1998:10). Economic relations were not only influenced by the division of labour in the production process, but were also influenced by the exchange system, both the exchange of goods and the exchange between people. Goods were taken from the community as a tribute to the heads of society from various kingdoms (Taylor, 1998:11).

Pre-colonial society in Timor was administratively managed based on a traditional system of government by relying on a subsistence economy, all of which were strongly tied to the cultural system and beliefs of the people. The supreme ruler of the kingdoms that existed in various regions was the *liurai* (king). The *liurai* had unlimited power over the land and the people also had to pay tribute to the king. Each kingdom had its own territory. The king's legitimacy was strengthened by cultural traditions and rituals that were considered sacred in local beliefs. This was what made the power of the *liurai* very large.

Each clan was led by a head who received tribute and took care of inter-clan marriages. Each clan offered tribute to the local king. The relationship of exchange of goods, humans and sacred objects, applied to all social levels and spread throughout the system (Taylor, 1998:4). In the Wehale kingdom, for example, a 'nai boot' (landlord) presented land to families for use, in exchange for which they paid rent as a reward, which was called *rai ten* (in exchange for fertilizer). Goods were also exchanged for women or men in marriage (Taylor, 1998:11).

According to Taylor, this exchange ensured the maintenance of a balance between the land and its growers in an economic unit. Thus, the number and capacity of the labour provided in this exchange would be in accordance with the subsistence needs of the local population (Taylor, 1998:11).

The status of individuals in Timorese society was determined based on an economic as well as cultural perspective. According to Taylor (1998), status was obtained by individuals in various ways, such as land area and fertility of cultivated land, knowledge of traditions, ownership of sacred objects, age and wealth, the most important of which was the hierarchy developed through production and exchange. This meant that in the political system of Timorese society, the position of power was held by the highest individual in the tribute and exchange system (Taylor, 1998:12-13).

The greatest political power lay with those who received the most tribute and or held the most strategic position in the kinship exchange system. In the kingdom of Wehale, the king received tribute for his position as ruler of the land and the highest determinant of marital exchanges that included the royal family. Meanwhile, in the Belu and Servião Kingdoms, tribute was given to the rulers who controlled trade. Tributes were given at the end of the harvest (Taylor, 1998:13-14).

Social relations in society were also regulated based on customary law and cultural traditions that were considered sacred. There was a customary law that regulated people's behaviour in dealing with others and the surrounding natural environment, known as "Tara Bandu". The organizational structure of the Timorese community with the management of their socio-economic life based on cultural mechanisms like these in some ways still continues to this day. Although Catholicism is widespread throughout the region, the belief in lulik remains as one of the main characteristics that mark the distinctive socio-cultural life of the Timorese people. Although colonialism and its aftermath came with legal, rational and centralized governance, in practice, the influence of traditional leadership legitimacy based on cultural processes of ancestral heritage still continues today.

I argue that socio-economic and political life based on a strong and sustainable subsistence culture, in clan-based social relations like these, is an important factor that allows resistance to all forms of exploitative and repressive external intervention to occur. Social relations and mechanisms for managing the lives of the Timorese people reproduce the discontent of the weak, which may be manifested in the form of hidden individual protests, transforming into a resistance movement. This will be further elaborated later.

1.3. The arrival of the Portuguese

Long before the Portuguese and Dutch entered the region, the island of Timor was part of a trade network that was politically concentrated in East Java and then Celebes (Sulawesi). This network was tied to commercial trade with China and India (Fox, 1977; Taylor, 1998). Since at the least the fourteenth century, Chinese merchants anchored at a number of coastal sites to exchange gold, silver, porcelain and cloth for the island's prized sandalwood (Fox, 1977:61).

The commercial value of the island is recorded in documents published during the Ming Dynasty in 1436. In these documents, the island is described as an area with mountains covered with sandalwood trees, which did not produce other materials (Taylor, 1998:2).

In the early 16th century, Malacca, located on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula, was a political powerhouse of the upper class and the most commercial trade centre in Southeast Asia. The port of Malacca controlled trade along the spice island route from eastern Indonesia to India and China. European and West Asian commodities found trade routes to the Far East via the seasonal markets of Malacca. For this reason, Malacca became the most important strategic target of the Portuguese (Taylor, 1998:5).

In 1511, the Portuguese succeeded in conquering Malacca. With the conquest of Malacca, on 15th August 1511, the doors to the famous Spice Islands and to Timor from which sandalwood came, so highly valued in the East, opened to the Portuguese (Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1965:33). Seeking a stake in the profitable sandalwood trade, the Portuguese first arrived in Timor in 1515. By 1561, the Portuguese had brought Dominican missionaries who began to settle in Solor (Oliveira, 1949:75).

The first permanent Portuguese settlement was built in 1566 on the island of Solor, where Dominican priests built a stone fort to protect the indigenous people who converted to Catholicism. At this stage, Portuguese ships made annual visits to Timor to trade in finished goods and to transport sandalwood to its colonies in Macau and the Chinese coast, selling it to Chinese merchants (Hill, 2000:2-3; Taylor, 1998: 5). A community known as "Topasse or Black Portuguese" grew around the fort (Taylor, 1998; Hill, 2002). The Topassee group first appeared in colonial historical writings "as a mixed race...descendants of Portuguese soldiers, sailors and merchants from Malacca and Macau who intermarried with Solor women" (Boxer, 1960:351, in Taylor 1998:6).

In 1613, the Dutch conquered Solor and the inhabitants of the fort were allowed to retreat safely to Larantuka (a nearby island) with the Portuguese. In Larantuka, the Topasse people are known as Larantuqueiros because of their new place of residence (Hill, 2000:3). After this move, the Topasse group began to control the trade network between Solor, Larantuka and Timor, especially the sandalwood trade. Initially, their efforts were assisted by groups of Dominican priests. In the process of controlling this network, they began to settle in Timor itself, although their presence was not really felt until after 1642 (Taylor, 1998:6).

The mid-17th century was a turning point in Timorese history, as in 1642 the Portuguese launched a successful military attack against the central indigenous polity of Wehale. Although the basis for the Portuguese justification was the insistence on defending the recently Christianized coastal rulers, the attack was intended to prevent the Wehale from trading with Macassan Muslims (Fitzpatrick, 2002: 30; Schlicher, 1996: 97-8, Shepherd, 2014: 6, Taylor, 1998: 6).

They moved directly to attack the western kingdom of Sonbai and their guardian kingdom, Wehale. The Portuguese saw Wehali as the political and religious centre of Timor. The Portuguese victory was obtained quickly, easily and brutally (Taylor, 1998:6). The Portuguese tried to expand their influence beyond the coast in order to control trade in the interior (Taylor, 1998:6). Since almost all the kingdoms throughout the island (both Belu/bellos/babali/Wehale and Sombai/Servião) were on the coast, the Portuguese had difficulty penetrating inland. For this reason, they first formed alliances with indigenous chiefs from coastal 'maritime communities' through which they entered systems of customary exchange with 'indigenous peoples' in the mountains to pursue their political and economic interests (Traube 1995 in Wigglesworth, 2010:28).

Topasse faction migrations increased tremendously after this raid. The Topasses lived in Lifau (now Oecusse) on the northern coast. From this area, the Topasse group prepared their forces to deal with any internal threats to their position, both from the local community and from the Dutch forces who were approaching Timor from the West (Taylor, 1998:7). The power of the Topasses stemmed from their trading abilities and proximity to the Timorese. A number of *lirais* built armies and wielded great power, especially in the 16th and 17th centuries, which was the age of a bustling sandalwood trade. Those who succeeded in organizing labour and sending sandalwood pieces to the beach had a monopoly on the textiles, iron tools, and weapons traded on the island (Ian Glover, 1972, in Hill, 2000:4). The Topasse group then manipulated the *liurais* in a trade war aimed at controlling sandalwood (Hill, 2000:4).

In 1633, the Dutch troops managed to subdue the Portuguese in Kupang, the western part of the island of Timor (Taylor, 1998:7). Although an armistice agreement was signed in Lisbon in 1641, the war continued and in 1651 the Dutch captured Kupang, finally settling in the western part of the island, with the treaty being formalized in Lisbon in 1661 (Lemos, 1991:20). In Timor, the conflict between the Portuguese and the Dutch took the form of a

struggle for control over the sandalwood trade (Hill, 2000:6). Initially, Portuguese contacts with Timor were limited to coastal trade missions, extracting sandalwood and other resources through treaty arrangements with regional heads (Pinto & Jardine 1997 in Wigglesworth, 2010:28).

The establishment of colonial power in Timor occurred in the 18th century, namely in 1701, when the first governors of Solor and Timor were appointed. Portuguese Timor was dependent on Goa from 1702 until 1844 when it was transferred to Macao, and finally became a separate territory in 1896. Initially, the government was run by military captains (*capitães-mores*), and missionary authority and Portuguese control over the entire territory was not established until after the war of conquest that occurred between 1894-1908 (Hill, 2000; Lemos, 1991; Sousa, 2011).

In 1859, the Portuguese and the Dutch signed the Lisbon Treaty which marked the end of nearly two centuries of long-standing conflict and war between these two colonial powers on the island of Timor. This momentum provided an opportunity for Portugal to begin the real occupation of the territory. Territorial control went hand-in-hand with important economic changes, namely the need for colonial powers to organize land and labour on a new basis (Gunn, 2000:232). State policies were issued to explore the potentials of enabling the plantation system to be built by relying on the exploitation of indigenous peoples through forced labour and tax collection.

Coffee plantations were then built on lands seized or confiscated from the natives to be given or sold to investors, including colonial officials and deportees (*deportados*) (see Clarence Smith, 1992; 1985; Gunn, 1999; 2005; Aditjondro, 2000, Sousa, 2011). The natives were then obliged to work on the plantations. Land tenure, compulsory labour and the establishment of coffee plantations became the main components that marked colonial security against Timor which was effectively implemented during the reign of governor Celestino da Silva.

“The central component of pacification was neither military occupation nor the establishment of a colonial bureaucracy, but rather land and the imposition of mandatory labour services by the indigenous population on coffee plantations. Under Governor Silva large tracts of land were alienated, some through outright seizure and others through forced sales. The recipients of these grants and sales of land were a mixed lot, including both Portuguese officials and deportees (*deportados* and

degradados) who represented the dregs of white society in the colony.” (Kammen, 2015:104).

Thus, the systematic exploitation of indigenous peoples actually occurred when the governor Celestino da Silva opened plantations followed by exploitative policies which in turn led to rebellions and other forms of resistance from the indigenous peoples.

The colonialists forced the people to plant coffee and open plantations and then taxed the natives (Clarence Smith, 1992; Sousa, 2011, Gunn, 1999; 2005). Consequently, from the start, Portuguese rule in Timor faced rebellions from local kings who were scattered in several areas of the island (see Pélissier, 2007). These rebellions were the rejection of the influence of colonial power which threatened the existence of traditional power and the life of the Timorese subsistence community.

The last and largest rebellion was carried out by the King of Manufahi, Dom Boaventura from 1910-1912, in opposition to Portuguese domination over the economic system and the lives of the people of East Timor in general (Hill, 2000, Sousa, 2011, Feijó, 2016, Durand, 2009). With modern war equipment, the Portuguese managed to easily win the war against the Timorese kingdoms, which would however continue to reject the installation of foreign powers in Timor (Durand, 2009:77).

Revolta de Manufahi pode construir uma referência histórica de vulto, como mais tarde a Revolta de Viqueque (1959) viria chamar a atenção para que a hora dos ventos de mudança estava a chegar - e eles seriam observados com atenção por importantes actores internacionais mesmo antes de Portugal dar sinais de que a sua descolonização se iria processar (The Manufahi Revolt may comprise a major historical reference, as later the Viqueque Revolt (1959) would draw attention to the fact that the time for the winds of change was coming – and they would be closely watched by important international actors even before Portugal began to show signs that its decolonization would take place (Feijo, 2016: 11-12).

This rebellion had an anti-colonial character (Sousa, 2011; Hill, 2002), which later inspired the emergence of FRETILIN's idea of a national resistance movement in 1975 (Hill, 2002). The idea of FRETILIN's national resistance, which was based on the ideology of people's liberation, and hence provided the ideological basis for the emergence of a peasant social movement in Timor.

1.4. The Emergence of the Peasant Movement in Timor-Leste

The intervention of outside powers in Timor was marked by the establishment of colonial power which then produced exploitative policies that were implemented repressively against the colonized nation to fulfil colonial economic interests. They faced the emergence of resistance from the indigenous people, both in the form of rebellion from the kings and in the form of covert disobedience from the peasants, leading furthermore to the organization of a national liberation movement to fight for the independence and liberation of the Timorese nation (dos Santos, A.B., 2008).

Long before Portuguese colonialism, the life of the Timorese people was supported by a traditional system of clan-based kinship patterns and a subsistence economy with a strong collective tradition. The harmonious lifestyle of the subsistence community had been disrupted by the presence of external intervention, either through exploitative state policies, or through trade and markets. This colonial intervention, according to Hill (2002), caused rural transformations that led to the destruction of the subsistence economy due to the process of rural capitalization and monetisation.

According to Chilcote (1999:55), colonialism also disrupted the culture of the people. The colonial rulers, according to him, had built a system to suppress the cultural life of the people who were colonized by creating social inequalities among the indigenous population who were assimilated into colonial society or by dividing and deepening divisions in society.

Thus, colonialism disrupted the lives of the natives. Scott (1981) mentions two important transformations that occurred during the colonial era in Southeast Asia, the implementation of what Eric Wolf called "a certain cultural system, namely from North Atlantic capitalism" and the development of a modern state under colonial auspices. Both forms of transformation radically damaged pre-existing patterns of social insurance and desecrated the moral economy of the subsistence ethic. The subsistence ethic is rooted in economic habits and social exchanges in peasant society. Violation of these norms, according to Scott (1981:10), can be expected to lead to resistance – not solely because needs are not met, but because rights have been violated.

Although the Portuguese were able to conquer Timor and advance with their systematic exploitation of the territory, the conquest effort initially encountered major obstacles due to strong resistance or rebellions carried out by indigenous kings (*liurai*) in

various regions of Timor (Pélessier, 2007; Gunn, 2005; Shepherd, 2014, Hill, 2002; Taylor, 1999).

According to Taylor (1999:11), the main obstacle to the Portuguese conquest of Timor lay in the strong intermarriage relations in Timorese culture which made the indigenous people's resistance to Portuguese authority stronger and durable. This was described by the Governor of Timor in 1882 in the following terms:

“Marital exchange is our Governor's major enemy because it produces ...an infinity of king relations which comprise leagues of reaction against the orders of the Governors and the dominion of our laws. There has not yet been a single rebellion against the Portuguese flag which is not based on the alliances which result from marital exchange.” (in Taylor, 1999:11).

The Portuguese encountered Timorese people whose lives were bound by a subsistence economic system rooted in a pattern of strong kinship relations and full loyalty to traditional power. The centrality of exchange in Timorese society, which had been reinforced during earlier periods of Portuguese influence, was now clearly seen by the colonial power as a barrier to the control of its colony (ibid).

The strength of the rebellion by the traditional rulers in Timor, rooted in the social relations of its cultural system, forced the Portuguese to find a strategy to conquer Timor. The Portuguese tried to weaken the influence of traditional power by breaking the traditional structure of social and political relations through the application of "divide and rule" tactics, as had been applied by the Dutch in the Dutch East Indies. Indigenous kingdoms were approached and those that were successfully conquered were pitted against other indigenous kingdoms that were not subject to colonial authority. This colonial effort greatly affected the socio-cultural life and the economy of the indigenous people.

According to Shepherd (2014:7), the Portuguese led a series of 'pacification campaigns' in a way that mirrored the activities of the Dutch in the West. Employing divide and rule tactics, the few Portuguese commanders at the top permitted their indigenous armies to conduct head-hunting warfare to beat their adversaries – burning villages, decapitating males, taking women and children as slaves, and destroying crops, sparing only the coffee plantations (Pélessier 2007; Roque 2010a, in Christopher Shepherd, 2014:7).

With the resistance quelled, the Portuguese introduced their policies to undermine the system of political alliances based on kinship exchange. The position of *liurais* was undercut by the abolition of their kingdoms. The colony was re-divided into administrative

units, broadly based on the *suco* (princedom) system. A measure of administrative power was thus given to the unit below the kingdom level in the indigenous hierarchy. Portuguese policies at the end of the century thus had two objectives: to undermine the indigenous system of kinship exchange and to create a basis for a systematic economic exploitation of its colony (Taylor, 1999:11).

The campaigns continued into the twentieth century under the long governorship of Celestino da Silva (1894-1908), enabling the Portuguese to extend control over native land, oust or imprison belligerent *liurai* and foment loyalty among the aristocratic class (Christopher Shepherd (2014:7). Ultimately, the Portuguese were able to control production as well as trade in Timor, including settled the Chinese in townships, restricted their movements and obliged them to sell indigenous produce at official marketplaces. At the administrative level, the Portuguese began to overlay their own military command structure and undermine the *reinos* which they eventually abolished (Christopher Shepherd, 2014: ibid).

The colonial domination of the economic system in Timor caused the indigenous people's economy, which was based on traditional subsistence, to be disrupted by the intervention of the plantation-based colonial economic system, geared towards production for export. The plantation economy relied on the exploitation of the natives through a system of forced cultivation, forced labour, control and expropriation of indigenous lands, as well as other colonial policies such as head taxes and others which heavily burdened the natives.

Colonialism led to the process of marginalization of the indigenous people which can be seen from the processes of exploitation, oppression and discrimination which in turn caused them to fight. Scott (1981:17) says that structural changes in the colonial economy not only narrowed the subsistence frontier for many farmers but also exposed them to new and greater risks of subsistence crises.

When the Portuguese left Timor-Leste in 1975 due to the civil war and the invasion of Timor-Leste by the Indonesian military, the lives of the peasants remained unchanged. The Indonesian military as well as the government regained control of state and private plantations that were left by their owners. Then, the occupying administration implemented a monopolistic economic policy with an excessive security approach to force farmers to only sell their coffee to a company owned by the military apparatus, known as PT. Denok Hati-mas Intercorporation (Aditjondro 2000).

The discontent of the indigenous people emerged during the time of foreign rule, but they could not openly protest collectively against the exploitation and oppression they experienced, because of strong state repression. However, small individual and uncoordinated resistance was carried out clandestinely (dos Santos, 2008).

Historically, peasant resistance in Timor-Leste can be traced not only from major uprisings by the kings in the early period of the conquest of Timor, but also from covert disobedience and other forms of protest. Although individual and small in scale, peasant resistance, with its distinctive pattern protected by social networks in the subsistence culture, continued to be sustainable and became the basis for the emergence of collective action, forming the basis of a peasant social movement, after the restoration of Timor-Leste's independence in 2002. In 2010, the youth farmer organizations that started this movement later joined and established UNAER, to accommodate and at the same time coordinate the peasant movement in Ermera.

According to Fauzi (2005:14), the rural people's movements that have existed from the past until now, are relatively sustainable challenges to the power that oppresses certain groups of people in rural areas. These disruptive and continuous challenges are a collective response to the deterioration of living conditions due to the use and abuse of power on the part of the holders of economic and political power.

The presence of Portuguese colonialism led to rural transformation. This transformation occurred not only through a political struggle that caused traditional institutions to be disrupted, but also the introduction of a centralized, legal and production-oriented management of social and economic life for the market. Colonial intervention thus disrupted the economy of the indigenous people who had been strongly tied to the cultural system of their society. Fitzpatrick (2002:33) considers that customary institutions in East Timor were disrupted and factionalised by colonisation and war.

The transformations imposed by colonialism caused the local kings to revolt. In the history of the rebellions of the Timorese kings against the Portuguese, the Manufahi war was the largest and marked the end of the pre-nationalist phase of resistance (resistances that were more regional in nature) and the starting point for the rise of the spirit of Timorese nationalism. When the *Revolução dos Cravos* (Carnation Revolution) broke out in Portugal on 25 April 1974 to overthrow the Caitano regime, FRETILIN was the only political force that firmly declared national resistance to colonialism and organized the people in the regions to

rise up against colonialism. It was inspired by the Manufahi Rebellion concept of national liberation movement

According to Helen Hill, the organized resistance to colonial rule in Timor-Leste that emerged after the Lisbon coup on 25 April 1974 until the Indonesian invasion in December 1975 was the only time in Timor-Leste's history that support for independence could be expressed openly and peacefully (Helen Hill 2000: 52).

Historian Terence Ranger (1968) argues that in order to understand the character of the modern nationalist mass movement, it is necessary to study the "primary resistance" movement that preceded it, namely the pre-nationalist resistance in certain places. According to this author, pre-nationalist resistance helped to shape the environment which later became the breeding ground for nationalist politics. Primary resistance contributed to the thinking of colonial rulers as well as the first nationalists, disrupting the peace of the colonial settlers and, in certain cases, leading to the development of forms of organization or political aspirations relevant to the subsequent anti-colonial struggle (Hill, 2000:52-53).

The emergence of FRETILIN's national resistance was based on critical reflection on the previous primary resistances. FRETILIN spearheaded a broader resistance movement by evoking feelings of nationalism for the oppressed Timorese to rise up against colonialism and anticipate the emergence of neo-colonialism. Resistance in this phase developed into a national liberation movement.

The colonial exploitation and subjugation of the Timorese people prompted several of Timor's educated elite to build a political organization called *Associação Social Democrata Timorense*/Association of Timorese Social Democrats (ASDT) which was later transformed into FRETILIN. In 1974, FRETILIN organized the people and carried out national liberation programs, heralding the themes of nationalism in its political programs. Hill (2000) found that there were seven main themes in FRETILIN's nationalism, namely: (1) nationalism as opposition to Portuguese rule; (2) nationalism as the reassertion of Timorese culture after four centuries of Portuguese colonialism; (3) nationalism as national unity; (4) nationalism as defining East Timor as different from Indonesian Timor; (5) nationalism as economic advancement of Timorese peasants; (6) nationalism as freeing the economy from colonial control and preventing neo-colonial economic domination; and (7) nationalism as the exercise of the right to self-determination. These themes of FRETILIN nationalism can be regarded as the basis for FRETILIN's social revolution in Timor.

If the idea of FRETILIN's national liberation was inspired by the previous primary (pre-nationalist) resistance, the emergence of the Ermera peasant social movement was inspired by the spirit of Timor's national liberation. On 28 November 1975, FRETILIN unilaterally proclaimed the independence of the *República Democrática de Timor-Leste*/Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (RDTL), followed by visionary and revolutionary political programs. However, it lasted only a week before the Indonesian military invaded at the end of 1975. This foreign military invasion forced FRETILIN to change its strategy to resistance through guerrilla warfare to defend the independence of the RDTL. The armed struggle continued for 24 years, built on support from the people and operating on three fronts, namely, the guerrilla front, the diplomatic front, and the clandestine front. In this phase, the rural peasants played an important role in supporting the struggle for independence, through the clandestine front.

Timor-Leste became the first new nation of the 21st century on 20 May 2002 after a quarter of a century under Indonesian occupation and conflict. The country experienced basic social and economic unrest after its people voted for independence from Indonesia in a referendum in August 1999.

The ideology and revolutionary spirit of FRETILIN's national liberation became the main impetus that encouraged the birth of a peasant social movement in Ermera. In the context of farmers, exploitation stems from problems of access to resources and means of production, such as land and other sources of livelihood that were controlled by a handful of wealthy people who were mainly interested in fulfilling their economic interests.

The Ermera peasant social movement was marked by the farmers' demand to reclaim land ownership rights in the early 2000s from the plantations, both private and state-owned plantations. The Ermera peasant social movement arose amidst social tensions between rural farmer (subsistence farmer) groups and elite Timorese plantation owners whose position was strengthened by exploitative colonial policies. The peasant protest actions were not only based on the spirit of national liberation, but also supported by facts and evidence of culture-based claims by subsistence farmers such as the existence of cultural sites, sacred water sources and fruit trees planted by their ancestors on the lands, the same lands they claimed before they were seized for plantations in the colonial era.

1.5. Description of the research location and the reasons for its choice

This research is focused on the coffee plantations in the Municipality of Ermera, Timor-Leste. In 2015, the population of Timor-Leste was 1.183.643 of which 70% lived in rural areas (Census 2015). The land available to 66% of households was less than 1 hectare. Only 2 percent of the households' agricultural holdings were 10 hectares or more in size, which made up 52% of the total agricultural land. The majority of the population live from subsistence agriculture in extended family networks where customary practices determine gender roles and relationships (dos Santos & Wigglesworth, 2015).

Ermera is one of the municipalities of Timor-Leste, with a total population of 125,702 and 20,671 households (2015 census). There are 52 *sucos* (villages) and 277 *aldeias* (hamlets) spread over 5 *postos administrativos* (sub-districts). Its capital is Gleno, which is located 30 km to the southwest of the national capital, Dili. Most of the population in this area speak "Mambai" and many economically survive selling local produce such as vegetables and fruits at the local market.

The Municipality of Ermera is widely recognized as the largest coffee-producing area in Timor-Leste. The total area of coffee plantations in 2017 was 32,135 hectares, with a total production at the time of 4,020 tons. Even though this area is rich in coffee, during the colonial period and Indonesian illegal occupation, most of the people lived in poverty and were oppressed in an exploitative system. Most people are subsistence farmers who only have a small plot of land, which is cultivated with very simple equipment and only hopes for rain every year. With these limitations, they had to produce not only for family needs, but also for colonial obligations, such as forced labour and paying head taxes.

There are fertile villages spread wide with coffee plantations, which were built during the colonial period. Coffee trees grow profusely under the large Albizia trees, which are lined up beautifully to shade the coffee trees and other plants. Some of the older people who are still alive know well the people who planted these Albizia trees.

In some places, plantation sites have been built around villages and the surviving elders know very well the history of the nursery and planting that they (or their parents and ancestors) have done for this "oppressing tree". Blood, tears, and pent-up anger blend together in these vast and fertile plantations (dos Santos, 2008).

The facts show that although this area is very fertile, the life of the subsistence farmers of Ermera in the pre-independence period was very poor. Moreover, the poverty of the peasants arose in the midst of the coffee plantations they worked on. Since the Portuguese era until now, coffee is an export commodity that has a high selling value on the world market bringing large profits to the country, but unfortunately the subsistence farmers remain poor. This contrasting social reality illustrates the real social conditions caused by colonialism and authoritarianism from repressive external powers. The emergence of the Ermera peasant movement is a manifestation of the discontent of the peasants who have been suppressed and only found their way through the momentum gained from the restoration of Timor-Leste's independence.

Ermera society is dominated by the Mambai ethnicity who were marginalized during Portuguese colonialism. Elizabeth G. Traube (in Peter Carey and G. Carter Bentley, 1997:42) writes that:

“On Timor the Mambai were regarded by other groups as one of the poorest, oldest and most 'backward' peoples of the land. Their economy was based on shifting cultivation and animal husbandry. Maize was the staple crop, and Mambai also cultivated dry rice (an important ceremonial food), as well as taro, yams, sweet potatoes, cassava, millet, pigeon peas, and beans. Coffee, introduced by the Portuguese and raised by individual families, was the most important cash crop, sold in order to purchase such commodities as clothing, school supplies, kerosene, and to pay the annual colonial head-tax.”

Although coffee is very valuable, during the Portuguese era and the Indonesian occupation, the people of Ermera did not enjoy the results, because coffee plantations were mostly controlled by the feudal elite, the government and people from outside. Peasants were only employed as mandatory labour in plantations to pay head taxes and to fulfil their primary needs. The life of the poor peasants at that time was only supported by shifting cultivation and subsistence agriculture as explained earlier in this chapter.

In 2008, I conducted research in two villages in Ermera (Lequisi and Sakoko) to examine the causes of collective action by subsistence farmers in both villages to occupy private plantations and demand agrarian reform. This research showed that the coercive efforts of the colonial government to secure its policies and to control the lands of the indigenous people were carried out by military tactics to force village heads and traditional elders to submit to the colonial government. The repressive efforts of the colonial

government caused the village heads and traditional elders to move their inhabitants to barren areas near their previously fertile villages.

The political crisis of 1999, which brought Timor-Leste to the gates of independence, gave farmers the opportunity to question their economic marginalization. In 2002, while the restoration of independence was in progress, subsistence farmers in several villages in Ermera also took action to occupy private plantations as a form of reclaiming the land that had been taken during the long period of foreign rule in Timor-Leste.

A structural change at the state level occurred at the time of the restoration of independence, which provided a political opportunity to consolidate the power of the peasants who formed a social movement that openly demanded the new government of the RDTL to immediately implement agrarian reform in Timor-Leste as a solution to injustice which has been rooted in the agrarian inequality that was born by the colonial system. From 2002 to 2017, peasants have succeeded in reclaiming state and private coffee plantations spread across various areas in Municipio Ermera.

Starting from the action of peasants who reclaimed several private plantations in the villages of Sakoko, Lequisi and Maudio in 2002⁶, it then developed into a social movement for farmers, after being organized by youths from several conflict areas with the support of KSI. The farmers had also occupied a 12,000-hectare Portuguese plantation called *Sociedade Agrícola Pátria e Trabalho* (SAPT), which was controlled by the Indonesian military from 1976-1999. From 2002-2017 farmers successfully occupied this and other large plantation sites in Ermera. 18 have been used for agriculture by community members. The reclaiming or occupation action was carried out by farmers and organized by village youth, then coordinated under UNAER which they formed themselves as a forum for organizing peasant social movements in Ermera.

The establishment of UNAER as a farmers' union in Ermera was declared on 27 February 2010, by 15 founding members of the board, representing farmer organizations spread across conflict areas in Ermera. The UNAER statute states that the domination and

⁶ From interviews I have conducted with several key informants on 12 February 2017 in Gleno and Ponilala, that in 2000-2002 landowners who were abroad during the Indonesian occupation began to return to claim ownership rights to the plantations they had left. The farmers refused and protested their claims by taking action to occupy the plantations organized by young people, such as ASdS and his friends in Sakoko, JT and his friends in Liquiisi, ALGMS and his friends in Maudio. Meanwhile, AdS and others also organized farmers to occupy the SAPT plantation located in Fatubesi, Ermera.

occupation of agrarian resources from a small group of people must be eliminated because it is contrary to the principles and values of social justice.

Based on the historical context and social changes that influenced the dynamics and development of the movement as described above, I conducted this research in Ermera to explore more deeply about the growth and development of the peasant movement after being organized by UNAER.

This research will discuss how the intervention of outside powers and the changes that followed, caused local farmers to be more critical in facing and responding to any process of change that has implications for their lives. By reflecting on the history of peasant resistance, I will show how the ideas and perspectives of farmers regarding the social and political changes that are taking place have enabled UNAER to develop a movement organizing strategy that focuses on critical reflection on peasants' expectations for change that is more accommodating to their interests (or what in the farmers' perspective, they call 'social change that is socially just for farmers').

1.6. Motivation and rationale

I have been involved in civil society organizations working on various community organizing and empowerment programs since 2000. Through these empowerment activities, I met many farmers in rural areas in Timor-Leste. Their perspectives and experiences inspired me to carry out this research.

From 2000-2006, I worked at the 'Sa'he Institute for Liberation' (SIL) in Timor-Leste. I met fellow activists from KSI who connected me to the Ermera peasant movement. KSI has been working in Ermera since 2001 with community empowerment programs that rely on building critical awareness of community members to actively participate in the community development process.

KSI's bottom-up approach relies on dialogical and participatory processes. The history of the community and local wisdom as well as the inspiring experiences of each community member are reflected upon and contextualized as important instruments in the community development process. As a result, internal strengths and potentials from within the community (local resources) as well as external supports can be mobilized to drive transformative change.

In 2003, I visited Lequisi and Sakoko, two neighboring communities facilitated by KSI. At that time, I witnessed how KSI and peasant activists encouraged the community to work

together to build schools in their villages with local materials and to identify teachers from educated village youth. They also built cooperatives to respond to the economic needs of the family. Peasant organizations were also established to organize peasants to be actively involved in every process of community development, including in the reclaiming of private plantations to demand agrarian reform. This happened not only in Lequisi and Sakoko, but also in Maudiu and other places in Ermera.

During my involvement in various activities with the peasants, I could feel how the peasants were bravely fighting for their interests. In fact, they faced some of their comrades with whom they had fought for independence, but who were now distinguished by position and status. A few of their old comrades benefited from political change, becoming government officials who were known to threaten the peasants who supported them when they fought together against Indonesian military repression.

Even though Timor-Leste is already independent, the structural tensions caused by the legacy of colonial policies continues to exist and reflection on such situations is urgently required. The peasants are concerned that the old exploitative structures have been maintained by the new elites who have political and economic power. Therefore, the Ermera peasants continue to strengthen their partnership with KSI to carry out an open and organized social movement under UNAER. They have demanded that the government immediately implement the agrarian reform program, as promised by FRETILIN during the struggle for independence. The Ermera peasant movement developed rapidly because it received broad support from the peasants and civil society organizations, both at the local and international levels.

The peasant social movement was driven by the discontent of the peasants with the colonial plantation owners who tried to control and dominate the livelihoods of local communities for their own interests. Therefore, the peasants took collective actions of protest. Their actions also received solidarity from other civil society organizations who shared the same concerns as the peasants.

Tarrow (1998) views social movements as collective opposition by people who share solidarity and common goals in a process of continuous interaction with elites, opponents and authorities. Thus, a social movement is an attempt to achieve certain goals through actions that challenge the status quo, authority and established culture. People who work in a movement have feelings of solidarity and collective identity and a common claim to those

they oppose. To continue and strengthen their resistance (collective actions), the form of struggle may change into a social movement (Sukmana, 2016:4-5).

In this context, I argue that the social movement of the Ermera peasants emerged from contradictions and structural conflicts rooted in the colonial agrarian heritage. Singh (2010) states that social movements arise from contradictions and structural conflicts in society that are relatively permanent and generally unavoidable. This is inherent to the nature of the formation of human society and social organization. Because social conflicts have always existed, the potential for social movements to emerge is always there. The sociological context for the Ermera peasant movement in this study will be analyzed based on this perspective. There is extensive literature on peasant social movements in connection to the conflict theory which I review in Chapter 2.

I argue that the peasant movement in Ermera did not just happen. There are several factors that have caused its development and durability, both openly and covertly. There was a certain conduciveness that allowed the discontent of the peasants to gather into a collective force. They rose to fight openly in the form of collective actions which were then institutionalized after Timor-Leste's independence as a peasant movement organization under the coordination of UNAER. Therefore, this research has been conducted with the goal of exploring the causes and conduciveness that allowed this movement to develop and strengthen.

Chapter 2: Conceptualization of peasant social movements

This chapter describes the conceptualization of peasant and social movements that are the focus of this research. In this review of the literature, I describe the concepts of farmers' and social movements as well as the factors that lead to the emergence of peasant social movements.

2.1. Definitions of farmers' and peasant movements in this study

Based on classical literature, the concept of peasants collectively is often defined as a group of farmers who support themselves through subsistence agriculture, and whose lives are subordinated to the domination of landowners and the state. In this exploration of definitions and understandings of 'peasant' and 'farmer', it should be noted that while these terms refer to both men and women, I have left unchanged the writers' singular use of the pronoun 'he'.

Scott (1976:166) states that:

"(...) the peasant is born into a society and culture that provide him with a fund of moral values, a set of concrete social relationships, a pattern of expectations about the behavior of others, and a sense of how those in his culture have proceeded to similar goals in the past. (...) We are thus in the presence of cultural values and forms in all peasant social action."

Many writers have provided definitions of the concept of farmer from different perspectives. According to Moore (1967:111), it is impossible to define peasantry with absolute precision because distinctions are blurred at the edges in social reality itself. According to Scott (1976), most definitions of the peasant include at least two features:

First, he is a rural cultivator whose production is oriented largely toward family consumption needs; this defines his central economic goal. Second, he is part of a larger society (including non-peasant elites and the state) that makes claims upon him and this, in a sense, defines his potential human antagonists (or collaborators) in attaining that goal. (Scott, *ibid*: 157).

Eric Wolf (1969) defines peasants as people who are involved in cultivation and make autonomous decisions regarding the process of cultivation. The category thus includes tenant farmers and sharecroppers as well as owner-operators, as long as they are in a position to

make the relevant decisions on how their crops are grown. It does not include landless laborers.

Wolf (1969: xxii) further distinguishes between the concepts of peasant and farmer.

According to him:

The major aim of the peasant is subsistence and social status gained within a narrow range of social relationships. (...) To ensure continuity upon the land and subsistence for his household, the peasants most often keep the market at arm's length, for unlimited involvement in the market threatens his hold on his source of livelihood. He thus cleaves to traditional arrangements which guarantee his access to land and to the labor of kin and neighbors. (...) In contrast, the farmer enters the market fully, subjects his land and labor to open competition, explores alternative uses for the factors of production in the search for maximal returns, and favors the more profitable product over the one entailing the smaller risk. (Wolf, 1969: xxii-xiii).

In this study, what is meant by farmer refers to two important concepts: "peasant" and "farmer". The concept of "peasant" referred to in this study is defined as agricultural labourer or farmer who does not own land or has very limited land. They are farmers whose products are used only to meet family consumption needs, not to be traded to meet tertiary needs. Meanwhile, the concept of "farmer" is defined as those who own their own land or are plantation owners and their products are more than sufficient to fulfil primary and secondary needs, and also to be traded. Thus, the concepts of "peasant" and "farmer" in this study mostly refer to the definition of Scott and Wolf.

For the most part, the term "peasant" is reflected in the life of subsistence farmers whose agricultural systems are more traditional in nature, where the work they do is supported by simple and manual skills and technologies. Social interaction between them is firmly tied to customary norms and traditions in accordance with the belief systems and culture that they belong to.

In subsistence agriculture, the means of production, including land, are traditionally controlled and organized based on local cultural traditions, are more non-capitalistic in nature with a small scale of production, and are family-based. Their kinship is very close and social solidarity among them is also high. The family is the most important unit in the subsistence agricultural economy.

Most subsistence farmers support their families by working as agricultural laborers or cultivating their own very limited land. Their relationship with the market is very limited

because their agricultural production is oriented towards family consumption, rather than the market or trading. Eric Wolf, as quoted by Popkin (1979: 9), argues that:

Market production occurs only when a peasant is unable to meet his cultural needs within local institutions. If the peasant, who is oriented to local norms and roles, sells a cash crop, the money is only "to buy goods and services which he requires to subsist and to maintain his social status rather than to enlarge his scale of operations.

According to Wolf (1985), the concept of "peasant" is synonymous with household-scale farming, while the concept of "farmer" is synonymous with commercial farming. The life of the peasants, according to Scott (1976; 1985), relies more on mutual assistance which is inspired by the spirit of collectivity and high social solidarity. Their social relations are based on local beliefs and culture which are also directly related to their customary institutions. Therefore, according to Polanyi (1957), peasants do not need markets because their needs are met through barter mechanisms and exchange processes that occur in their institutions.

In this study, subsistence farmers who cultivate based on the traditional shifting cultivation pattern are also categorized as peasants. Scott (1993) argues that subsistence farming is not a guaranteed way of life. However, traditional farming patterns are formed because of their long-term reliability in meeting the calorie needs of a stable population (Scott, 1993: 32). The key to stable subsistence is stable access to arable land (Scott, 1993: 35).

The main problems of subsistence farmers are closely related to access to land which is very limited (related to increasing population growth) and changes in the climate that are sometimes erratic. Based on the results of his research in several regions in Southeast Asia in the early twentieth century, such as in Upper Burma, Tonkin and Annam in Indochina, East and Central Java in Indonesia, Scott (1976; 1981) argues that for subsistence farmers who own limited land, their livelihoods are highly dependent on nature and their reciprocal relationships with landlords or their patrons. For this reason, subsistence farmers always try to avoid risks or always put safety first. Avoiding risk and prioritizing safety are the main characteristics of poor, weak subsistence farmers (Scott, 1976; 1985).

In his book, "The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia", published in 1976, Scott describes the very precarious life of subsistence farmers in Southeast Asia, due to the influence of natural factors, such as bad weather and limited access to production resources, especially land, but also because of the exploitation

they experience, which has driven them to take up resistance in distinctive forms and patterns in order to survive.

According to Moore (1967: 111), a previous history of subordination to a landed upper class recognized and enforced in the laws, sharp cultural distinctions and a considerable degree of de facto possession of the land constitute the main distinguishing features of peasantry. In Moore's opinion, there are three characteristics of peasantry: legal subordination, cultural distinctiveness and, especially, de facto possession of the land (Landsberger, 1974:7). Wolf (1955) emphasizes the characteristic of ownership as being the most critical for the definition of peasantry (in Landsberger, 1974: *ibid*).

External intervention (in this case, the state and capital/market) in the lives of rural communities has led to agrarian changes that have given the state and commercial farmers (plantation owners) unlimited power over the peasants and their sources of livelihood. As a result, their lives are subordinated in a system of exploitation that is controlled repressively by the state and the market.

The local people of Ermera were pushed into a colonial economic system controlled by the interests of the global market. As a result, the subsistence lifestyle, which is closely tied to the culture and traditions of their ancestors (as explained in Chapter 1), was disrupted by repressive colonial policies, which legalized their exploitation through the plantation system.

Plantations were established on people's lands and to ensure increased production, the government issued coercive policies to be able to mobilize indigenous peoples and their natural resources as an important element in efforts to meet the needs of the state. This meant the peasants were systematically exploited through their pattern of patron-client relationships with the state and the capitalists.

The management of production in subsistence societies is collective in nature and it is inspired by high social solidarity and mutual cooperation rooted in close family support. In the context of Ermera, this management is directly integrated with the community's socio-cultural life and local beliefs, which in some cases are contrary to the law of the market.

Long before colonialism, the life of the Ermera people was regulated on the basis of customary law which prioritized the harmony of human life with its ecology. The local beliefs of farmers are supported by the mystification of the relationship between humans and nature and their sources of livelihood. Colonialism promoted an approach to the management of people's lives based on a 'legal rational' perspective and exploitative market law. This

disturbed the lives of people who depend on traditional, culture-based local systems. In this context, it can be said that subordination driven by the intervention of foreign powers marginalized the community's subsistence way of life and forced them into a market economy system. Therefore, the local community rose in protest.

2.2. The conceptualization of the farmers' social movement in this study

This research is based on the conceptual framework that the emergence of an open and organized peasant social movement, after the restoration of Timor-Leste's independence, is rooted in the historical legacy of colonialism and exploitative and repressive foreign military occupation. Colonial policies, including forced labour, the imposition of a head tax, and the establishment of plantations on confiscated lands, as well as foreign military domination, suppression and deprivation of political and economic rights before independence, had a profound impact on the Timorese people. Therefore, when independence was restored in Timor-Leste, opportunities arose for social groups that were marginalized during the colonial period to consolidate power through social movements to fight for the rights that had been usurped during colonial rule.

In this study, what is meant by the resistance or social movement of farmers are all forms of protest carried out by subsistence farmers who, in the categories of Wolf (1969) and Paige (1975), are classified as a lower-class group and farmers who cultivate plantation lands, as well as in Scott's (1976; 1985) category, classified as poor farmers. This group carries out resistance or social movements against upper-class groups (plantation owners or commercial farmers) and demands the government implement agrarian reform policies as a fair solution to complex agrarian problems, due to foreign interventions that have occurred.

Historical facts show that most of the rural peasants in the third world have taken the path of opposition to challenge the emergence of new powers that oppress them. According to Fauzi (2005:14), people's movements that have emerged in the countryside over time are relatively sustainable challenges to the powers that have oppressed certain groups of rural people. These disruptive and continuous challenges are a collective response to deteriorating living conditions as a result of the use and abuse of power by the holders of economic and political power.

Studies conducted by Moore (1966), Wolf (1969), Migdal (1974), Paige (1975), Scott (1976; 1985) and Popkin (1979) show that the emergence of rural peasant revolts was due to

the penetration of capitalism and the state. Capitalism led to the emergence of exploitative social relations, which in rural history were closely related to agrarian problems.

Paige (1975) emphasizes that agricultural conflicts are disputes between two class groups, namely the lower class and the upper class. He called the upper-class groups non-cultivators, who earn income only from agricultural produce even though they are not farmers. Meanwhile, the lower class (cultivator) is a group of peasants who cultivate the land, and this group is the one that fights back in the conflict.

Researchers who have examined the emergence of peasant protests in the developing world (Moore, 1967; Wolf, 1969; Landsberger, 1974; Popkin, 1979; Skocpol, 1979; and Scott, 1976; 1985; Eckstein, 1989; Shin, 2014; Mustain, 2007; Wahyudi, 2005 and Kartodirdjo, 1984), emphasize that the capitalistic Western colonialism, the spread of markets, industrialization, commercialization and state hegemony are the causes for the emergence of peasant social movements. Shin (2014) considers the logic and rationality of peasant protests and resistance by looking at the socio-economic situation of peasants. He especially observes the various effects of colonialism and commercialization on the different rural class strata, which resulted in different forms and motives of peasant protest and resistance (Shin, 2014: 177).

Peasant movements also develop based on social relations that are rooted in the cultures of the peasant society. Scott's research in Sedaka, Malaysia, shows that the daily resistance of poor farmers is due to the daily exploitation they experience from their patrons as well as the state. This daily resistance from the peasants can function effectively because of the moral values held by the peasant community itself and this is the strength and weapon used in their resistance.

Meanwhile, Kartodirdjo (1984), in his study of the Banten Peasant Rebellion in 1888, saw that the radical peasant movement in Java, Indonesia, had a certain ideological content which became a source of motivation and a bond of solidarity among the peasants to fight. According to the author, the ideology of the radical peasant movement stems from the religious values raised by influential local figures (the leaders of the movement), to consolidate collective power to carry out rebellions. Kartodirdjo's (1984) research shows that the dissatisfaction of the peasants can explode into a rebellion or a radical movement, if the tension continues and causes a large part of the population (in this case, the peasants) to be politically marginalized and lose their privileges.

According to Mustain (2007: 350-351), the impact of colonial penetration and domination that gradually disrupted people's lives, especially those rooted in religion and/or belief, gave rise to resistance movements from the local community. They obtained their ideological basis from revolutionary leaders and movement organizations, which were created to direct and operationalize the movement through the mobilization of human and material resources according to space and time.

The emergence of farmer resistance is due to the injustice experienced by farmers which they can no longer tolerate. This injustice is rooted in an unequal social structure that causes certain social groups to control and/or dominate collective livelihood sources, both related to socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects, which causes other social groups to be marginalized or subordinated in development processes. As a result, social movements emerge from groups that feel disadvantaged in this unjust social structure. According to Sergey Mamay (1991), the mechanism for the emergence of social movements is preceded by the existence of certain types of social contradictions. From here, dissatisfaction related to certain social interests arises, such that social forces are born which are accommodated in social movements.

The emergence of the peasant movement in this context, from the perspective of conflict, can be understood as a form of protest against social injustice that arises from an unequal social structure. These forms of protest can be seen in collective actions, both organized and unorganized, either covert/closed (hidden) or open, which are characterized by the use of methods that sometimes conflict with formal legal procedures and generally applicable social norms.

Several researchers who have analysed peasant protest actions and resistance show that the expanding role of the state in promoting rural transformation, which ultimately marginalizes peasants, is a major factor in the emergence of peasant resistance and protests. Susan Eckstein (1989) states that there are two reasons for the emergence of peasant resistance: (1) resistance occurs because there is injustice and the oppression peasants experience can no longer be tolerated, so they dare to take risks by confronting state hegemony directly; (2) due to the rise in the cost of living as a result of economic crises which the peasants could not overcome, while the response of local, national and cultural institutions was less favourable.

The study of the emergence of peasant protest movements, especially in Asia, largely relies on historical factors and the socio-economic situation of the farming communities themselves. Colonialism and the penetration of capitalism into the lives of rural communities have created ongoing social tensions, both caused by social conflicts based on political economy and cultural clashes. When most of the population is excluded or marginalized, both economically, politically and socio-culturally, social tensions arise, leading to the emergence of resistance movements and/or social protests.

Scott's studies (1976; 1981; 1985; 2000) concluded that the resistance of the Asian peasantry to state hegemony and the penetration of capitalism was more of a hidden, individual and uncoordinated struggle. These patterns of resistance tend to occur under repressive social conditions, that do not allow the weak peasants to carry out open resistance. Thus, the peasants conducted hidden actions of resistance so that they would not be known to the public or to their patrons. According to Scott, the hidden actions of the peasants are based on the principle of 'safety first' and/or 'avoiding risk'. With these patterns of action, the weak peasants can survive in repressive situations and at the same time continue to fight back.

Based on the results of his research in Sedaka, Malaysia, Scott (1985; 2000) shows that the hidden actions of the peasants that are carried out every day are their reaction to the daily forms of repression or exploitation they experience from the landlords, as their common enemy. Globally, the hidden actions of the peasants, according to Scott, are present as a form of resistance to the impact of the green revolution which is felt to threaten the survival of the peasants. Although the resistance of the peasants is carried out in a hidden and uncoordinated manner (in terms of the organization of the movement), it has had a great impact on reducing the production and profits of their patrons.

Several other researchers, such as Mustain (2007) and Hotman Siahaan (1996) also refer to Scott's study. In his study of the peasant movement against the state in Indonesia, Mustain (2007) shows that colonialism has inherited agrarian-based social problems. Colonial intervention has given rise to a legal gap which, in the process, has led to a cultural gap. As a result, peasant resistance movements have arisen. Mustain's study also shows that in repressive situations, such as during the New Order dictatorship (pre-reformation period) in Indonesia, the peasant resistance movement appeared in the form of hidden resistance as stated by Scott. However, when social and political changes occurred (after reformation), it

gave the opportunity for the peasants to consolidate their collective power by taking advantage of the support of students and pro-democracy activists in Indonesia. At the same time, the movements of the peasants that previously existed in secret were able to be expressed openly and massively.

The emergence of open resistance to take advantage of this external support indicates that the poor and weak peasants need external strength so that the hidden resistance can be consolidated as a collective force that is able to oppose openly those who exploit them.

Eric Wolf (1969) said that:

The poor peasant or the landless laborer who depends on a landlord for the largest part of his livelihood, or the totality of it, has no tactical power: he is completely within the power domain of his employer, without sufficient resources of his own to serve him as resources in the power struggle. Poor peasants and landless laborers, therefore, are unlikely to pursue the course of rebellion, unless they are able to rely on some external power to challenge the power which constrain them. (Eric Wolf, 1969: 290).

Social and political conduciveness enabled the peasant resistance to develop into a broad social movement. Smelser (1963) distinguishes six conditions for collective action and/or social movements to occur: (1) Structural conduciveness; (2) Structural strains; (3) Generalized beliefs; (4) Precipitating factors; (5) Coordinated group (mobilization); and (6) Operation of social control. According to Giddens (1993:645), Smelser's model is useful for analysing sequences in the development of social movements and collective action in general:

Structural conduciveness refers to the general social conditions promoting or inhibiting the formation of social movements of different types. **Structural strain** refers to tensions – in Marx's terminology, contradictions – which produce conflicting interests within societies. **Generalized beliefs**, since social movements do not develop simply as responses to vaguely felt anxieties or hostilities. They are shaped by the influence of definite ideologies, which crystallize grievances and suggest courses of action that might be pursued to remedy them. Revolutionary movements, for instance, are based on ideas about why injustice occurs and how it can be alleviated by political struggle. **Precipitating factors** are events or incidents that actually trigger direct action by those who become involved in the movement. These four sets of factors combined, Smelser argues, may occasionally lead to street disturbances or outbreaks of violence, but such incidents do not lead to the development of social movements unless there is a **coordinated group** which is mobilized to act. Leadership and some kind of means of regular communication between participants, together with a supply of funding and material resources, are necessary for a social movement to exist. Finally, the manner in which a social movement develops is strongly influenced by the **operation of social control**. The governing authorities may respond

to a challenge by intervening in the conditions of conduciveness and strain which stimulated the emergence of a movement. (Giddens, 1993: 644-645).

Smelser's view above shows that the emergence and development of a social movement cannot be separated from the existence of social and political conduciveness, which allows structural tensions or contradictions in society to be brought to the fore. As a result, solidarity (collective identity) is formed among groups marginalized by the system or structure. When social changes occur that have an impact on structural changes, these marginalized groups will take advantage of the opportunities for these changes to consolidate common strengths. McAdam et al. (2001) refer to this as the 'framing process' – to be able to express their resistance in an open and organized manner against those who have harmed them.

According to McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001: 40-42), in the classical social movement agenda, the factors that come into play are: (1) 'social change processes', which trigger changes in the political, cultural, and economic environments that (2) provide 'political opportunities' for challengers to engage in successful collective action that vary over time, such that "These variations shape the ebb and flow of a movement's activity." (Ibid: 41). Other factors are (3) forms of organization (informal as well as formal) that "offer insurgents sites for initial mobilization at the time opportunities present themselves and condition their capacity to exploit their new resources," (Ibid) so that (4) they can carry out a '*framing*' process: "a collective process of interpretation, attribution, and social construction, mediates between opportunity and action." (Ibid). The framing process raises the awareness of people who feel aggrieved and leads them to take action collectively to fight for their interests. "Movements frame specific grievances within general collective action frames which dignify claims, connect them to others, and help to produce a collective identity among claimants." (Ibid). The next factor is (5) '*repertoires of contention*', which offers the means by which people engage in contentious collective action.

The use of transgressive forms offers the advantages of surprise, uncertainty, and novelty, but contained forms of contention have the advantage of being accepted, familiar, and relatively easy to employ by claimants without special resources or willingness to incur costs and take great risks. (Ibid: 42).

Thus, the classical agenda made three enduring contributions to the study of social movements:

First, it made strong claims regarding the close connection between routine and contentious politics, helping to reframe the study of social movements as the proper

province of both sociology and political science. Second, calling attention to the role of “mobilizing resources,” it represented a powerful challenge to the stress on social disorganization and breakdown in the older collective behaviour paradigm. Third, it produced a credible picture of mobilization into social movements that was supported by a good deal of empirical evidence correlating the factors outlined above with increases in mobilization. (Ibid: 41-42).

Based on the description above, I argue that the process of emergence and development of the peasant social movement in Ermera is closely related to the existence of social and political conduciveness that led movement activists to formulate strategies for organizing social movements openly (as suggested by Smelser, 1963).

As a social movement, the resistance or protest of the Ermera peasants came in various forms and was developed based on the social and political conduciveness that allowed it to exist. In repressive situations, the peasant resistance or protest was present in a hidden/covert way (as described by Scott, 1976; 1985). However, when social change occurred, enabling movement activists to be empowered and to take advantage of external support, they built framing processes and mobilizing resources (consolidation of collective power), which allowed the covert resistance to develop into open and coordinated collective actions (as outlined by McAdam, D., Tarrow, S., Tilly, C., 2001).

Therefore, in this study, the peasant social movement is understood as any form of protest or resistance from the peasants against the policies of the state and/or the wealthy. The forms of peasant resistance that occurred covertly or openly, whether carried out individually or collectively in the form of collective action, both uncoordinated and coordinated within the movement organization, were considered important in this study as long as the action arose because of a common goal that must be fought collectively by the farmers.

2.3. The theoretical foundation of social movements

Social movements arise from conflictual social situations. In conflictual situations, social groups that feel aggrieved by the elite in the existing social structure will build solidarity and mobilize strength against it. In this context, social movements are a product of the social and political environment around them. Social changes in the system can allow the emergence of a social movement (Sukmana, 2016:182).

Singh (2010) proposes a classification system from various theoretical traditions in the study of social movements and collective action into three categories: (a) classical, (b) neo-classical, and (c) new social movements or contemporary social movements. The classical tradition includes most of the studies on collective behavior such as crowds, riots and rebellions, mainly by Western social psychologists and historians before the 1950s. The neo-classical traditions are linked with the main traditions in the study of old social movements. Most of the writings in the neo-classical tradition were published after the 1950s. This tradition is further divided into two old social movement models: functionalist and Marxist dialectics.

Meanwhile, the tradition of new social movements or contemporary social movements, according to Singh (2010), emerged in American and European society in the 1960s and 1970s, derived from the waves of wide-scale movements around issues that were more humanist, cultural and non-materialistic. The aims and values of these movements are essentially universal and directed at protecting and defending the human condition for a better future life. In contrast to the old social movements, the new social movements do not engage in ideological discourses that advocate “anti-capitalism”, “class revolution” and “class struggle”. The new social movement, according to Singh, is not interested in the idea of revolution and the revolutionary overthrow of the state government system. In relation to the peasant movement, Singh considers that contemporary movements in general do not support the potential for peasant revolts or agrarian struggles.

In contrast to Singh (2010), Crossley (2002) divides the analysis tradition of social movement studies based on time dimensions and regional settings. He classifies the analytical tradition of social movement studies before the 1970s and after the 1970s, which emerged with regional settings, which he groups into social movement studies in the context of European and American settings.

According to Crossley (2002), in the era before the 1970s, the tradition of analysis in the study of social movements in the United States was shaped by the perspective of collective behavioural thinking. However, in the post-1970s era, the perspective of resource mobilization or political processes was more dominant. Meanwhile in Europe before the 1970s, the analysis of social movement studies was influenced by the Marxist tradition, and after the 1970s, the perspective of the new social movements was more dominant in the analysis of social movements in Europe.

The study of American social movements before the 1970s placed its emphasis on a collective behavioural approach. Crossley (2002) explains that the collective behavioural approach: (a) describes the emergence of a movement as a response to grievances, deprivations, isolation, structural strain or other forms of suffering. The stereotypes of collective behaviour theorists believe that the existence of various difficulties (hardship) objectively causes the emergence of forms of protest and movements; (b) illustrates how protests and movements provoked by suffering are irrational psychological responses, as manifestations of mob psychology or collective hysteria; (c) explains that those involved in a mob are isolated individuals who cannot be well integrated within society; and (d) social movements cluster together with various other forms of collective behaviour, fashions, crazes and panics, without considering their uniqueness and their natural truth.

The study of social movements in Europe in the period before the 1970s was influenced by the Marxist (Hegelian) tradition of the philosophy of history. The emergence of movements in Europe at this time was more of a modern movement in relation to society and its "historical role". The Marxist tradition assumes that the keys of a society are marked by the conflicts and contradictions that give birth to the movement.

According to Marx (in Giddens, 1993: 625):

The development of the society is marked by periodic class conflicts which, when they become acute, tend to end in a process of revolutionary change. Class struggles derive from the contradictions – unresolvable tensions – which societies embody. The main sources of contradiction are to be traced to economic changes, changes in the forces of production. In any fairly stable society, there is a balance between the economic structure, social relationships and the political system. As the forces of production alter, contradiction is intensified, leading to open clashes between classes – and ultimately to revolution.

After the 1970s, social movement theorists began to abandon the collective behavioural tradition of thinking and the Marxist tradition of analysing social movements, giving rise to new perspectives. The new tradition in the study of social movements that has developed in Europe since the 1970s is dominated by the views of the New Social Movement. The tradition of social movements only started to be developed from the 1960s in Western society, which have included the environmental movement, peace movement, second wave feminism, animal rights, and so on. The view of the new social movement is a post-Marxist notion. Most of the social theory and political sociology in Europe until the middle of the twentieth century was dominated by debates on Marx's thought, such as the idea of a

proletarian revolution. The theoretical view of the New Social Movement, outside the framework of the capitalist model of society suggested by Marx, rejects the priority of the concept of class struggle and the concept of class as an agent of historical change. The New Social Movement theorists have attempted to identify the essence of conflict and movements in the new era.

In the period after the 1970s, in the United States, the analysis of social movement studies followed a tradition of thought that relied on the perspectives of resource mobilization and political process.

In *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Charles Tilly (1978) distinguishes four main components of collective action: (1) the organization of the group or groups involved; (2) mobilization, which involves the ways in which a group acquires control over sufficient resources to make collective action possible; (3) the common interests of those engaging in collective action, what they see as the gains and losses likely to be achieved by their policies or tactics; and (4) opportunities, which can be utilized to pursue common goals. Effective collective action, such as that which culminates in revolution, usually moves through the successive stages 1 to 4 above (Tilly, 1978: 7-10).

In Tilly's view, social movements tend to develop as a means of mobilizing group resources either when people have no institutionalized means of making their voices heard, or when their needs are directly repressed by the state authorities (Giddens, 1993: 630). Therefore, social movement theories endeavour to understand conflictual social life and mostly rely on the study of the relationship between state and society as well as social change.

Typical modes of collective action and protest vary with historical and cultural circumstances (Giddens, 1993:630). Thus, social protest, and ultimately revolution, tend to occur in circumstances in which there some improvement in people's conditions of life (Ibid: 629).

Oberschall, McCarthy & Zald, Gamson, and Tilly (in Pichardo, 1988) examine the various elements needed in a social movement including the process of these elements, especially the resources mobilized in a movement. This concept is the basis for the resource mobilization theory about social movements.

According to Klandermans (1984), resource mobilization theory emphasizes the importance of structural factors, such as the availability of resources to a community and the position of individuals in social networks, and stresses the rationality of participation in social

movements. Participation in a social movement is seen not as the consequence of predisposing psychological traits or states, but as the result of rational decision processes whereby people weigh the costs and benefits of participation (Klandermans, *Ibid*).

From the perspective of resource mobilization theory, the development of social movements is seen as a product of environmental forces, both internal and external to the movement. Internal factors include leadership, level of available resources, group size, and degree of internal organization. Meanwhile, external factors include: the level of societal repression, extent of external sympathizers, and the number and strength of political groups. The interaction of these various factors is referred to as determining factors for the development and behaviour of a social movement (Pichardo, 1988).

In addition to the resource mobilization approach which developed as the main basis for analysing social movements in the United States, in the 1980s, another approach emerged: the political systems and processes approach, which encouraged open and closed opportunities for protest activity. According to the perspective of the political systems and processes approach, rational actors tend to take action when there is a great opportunity (Sukmana, 2016:15). This view provides the basis for a framework of thought in the development of a new paradigm which is referred to as the 'political opportunity structure' or 'political process' approach.

Such an approach illustrates how political opportunities can influence the success or failures of activist mobilizations. A changing political environment can open key opportunities for activists or indeed governments and 'interest' groups to take advantage of shifting political changes (Tarrow, 1998; Tilly 1978; McAdam 1988; & Meyer 2004). Tarrow (1998) notes that "when institutional access opens, rifts appear within elites, allies become available, and state capacity for repression declines, challengers find opportunities to advance their claims" (1998:71) (McAdam 1988:130, Crossley 2002:110, Rucht 1988:305). The key element of 'political opportunity structure' is the fact that it represents a resource which is an act or event external to the movement (Lacey, 2013: 24-25).

In general, there are two approaches that can be used to identify political opportunities that trigger the emergence of social movements: (1) proximate opportunity structure; and (2) state-centred opportunity structure (Sydney Tarrow, in McAdam, D., McCarthy, J. D., Zald, M. N., 2004: 41-44).

Tarrow describes how the proximate opportunity structure approach emphasizes the signs/signals received from policies in the community environment or from changes that occur in community resources and capacities. In particular, this approach is divided into two types: (1) Policy specific opportunities, which consider that political opportunities for the birth of a social movement can arise because of a government policy that is not in accordance with the aspirations of society or is not implemented by the government properly. Such government policies can provide opportunities for the presence of a social movement. Political opportunities can also arise as a result of the decreasing legitimacy of the government, or even because the legitimacy of the state is not recognized by the community. (2) Group-specific opportunities, which look at the structure of opportunities that are focused on the changes that occur or are experienced by certain groups, either their goals or their existence in society. These changes can also trigger collective action. The causes of these changes can be derived from various factors, such as politics, economy, ideology, culture, war, and so on.

The state-centred opportunity structure approach, on the other hand, focuses on the state and the aspects within it that are the source of opportunities that can be used to generate collective action. In particular, there are two types of state-centred opportunity structure approaches. The two types are: (1) cross-sectional statism; and (2) dynamic statism. In the cross-sectional statism approach, the state is the arena of routine political competition in which class, status and political conflicts are played out. Meanwhile, the dynamic statism approach focuses on state change and how this state change produces or reduces political opportunities. Tarrow shows that this approach highlights the changes that occur in a country and their effects on social movement actors.

All social movements are struggles to fight oppression or domination of a social and political force (Sukmana, 2016: 191). Thus, social movements are political phenomena in society that arise due to social causes stemming from structural problems and are carried out by people or groups who feel disadvantaged by the existing social structure. These people or groups then organize a common force to fight for their interests, through social movements.

Social movements can be seen from the existence of protests, rebellions, resistance, or similar actions which indicate the intention of the perpetrators and those involved in them to demand changes, improvements or reforms to existing structures that are considered exploitative or unfair. According to Giddens (1993: 642), "a social movement may be defined

as a collective attempt to further a common interest, or secure a common goal, through collective action outside the sphere of established institutions". A social movement is a form of protest which, in the view of Tilly (1981), has similarities with the concept of collective action. Collective action is a concept defined by Tilly et al. (1981:17, in Loflan, 2003:7) as all events involving the gathering of people with shared resources (independently), including joint efforts to achieve certain goals.

According to Tilly et al. (1981), the idea of collective action is used to refer to the actors who try to destroy the system and people who try to make minor changes to the power and the majority as they aspire to. From Tilly's perspective, collective action encompasses very broad patterns of behaviour whose network and power deserve to be reckoned with: not only those behaviours that authorities call "protest," "rebellion," or similar, but also activities in the form of petitions, parades, bloc voting and various other ways of gathering that are tolerated and even supported by the authorities (Tilly, 1981, in Lofland, 2003:8). In Tilly's view, it can be said that social movements are carried out by people (actors) who try to destroy the system or to demand structural changes.

In the study of the Emera peasant movement, this behaviour can be observed in how rural communities respond in their own way to outside interventions that do not benefit them. The presence of social movements in the form of organized collective actions in an open and massive manner, can be understood as a defensive reaction from the peasants to a transition that leads to social change which, according to farmers, must be safeguarded so that the process of change truly brings social justice to the peasants.

2.4. Peasant movements as social movements

Social movements are increasingly believed to be an important tool for bringing about social change when people collectively are faced with various social problems (Sukmana, 2016: ix). Social movements have assumed a more stable position within modern social structures (Esteves, Motta & Cox 2009) and over the latter half of the twentieth century, have increasingly been studied as a normal part of mass politics (Klandermans & Tarrow 1988:14).

The study of social movements has developed into a multi-disciplinary subject and has benefited from research in anthropology, sociology and politics (Lacey, 2013:4). Today, the

study of social movements is well established, with specialized journals, book series, and professional associations (Della Porta, D., & Mario Diani, 2014:1).

In the sociology literature, social movements are described at the simplest as a collective effort to promote or resist change in society or groups (Giddens, 1993; Sukmana, 2016). Macionis (1999: 607) states that social movements are organized activities aimed at encouraging or inhibiting social change (Sukmana, 2016:4). Macionis' definition emphasizes two main characteristics of social movements, namely the existence of organized activities and the existence of goals related to social change. In line with Macionis, Spencer (1982:504) says that social movements are collective efforts aimed at a new life order change. Spencer's definition emphasizes two main things, namely the existence of collective efforts and the demand for better social change (Sukmana, 2016:4). From these views, it can be said that social movements are collective efforts organized into collective actions to demand social change.

Some sociologists consider social movements more a form of collective action rather than a form of collective behaviour. Collective action is defined as an action that aims to increase the status, power, or influence of an entire group, even for a person or several people (Zomeren, 2009, in Sukmana, 2016:1). Locher (2002:233) states that differences in social movements from other forms of collective behaviour, such as crowds, riots and rebellions (rejection or insubordination), can be seen in three aspects, in that they are organized, deliberate, and enduring.

From an organizational perspective, according to Locher (2002), a social movement is well-organized, there is a clear leader, there is a division of tasks among the participants and a carefully designed strategy. In contrast, other forms of collective behaviour (such as crowds, rioting, rebelling, fads) generally appear or occur in an unorganized manner and cooperation among participants is also temporary or only momentary with an unclear leader.

From a deliberate perspective, Locher argues that a social movement occurs due to consideration, while most collective behaviour occurs without planning. According to him, participant involvement in social movements is based on consideration and awareness. They are generally driven by membership appointments. Social movements also seek publicity and aim to attract as many people as possible to support the movement. Meanwhile, most forms of collective behaviour occur without prior planning in the absence of full consideration and awareness of the participants for their involvement.

From the perspective of endurance, Locher says that social movements generally last a relatively long time (long-lasting) or are enduring. Meanwhile, collective behavior occurs in a very short time. For example, a riot may last only a few minutes, a few hours or a few days; a fad (fashion fever, fashion) might happen for a few months only. Furthermore, social movements exist for several years or even decades.

Historically, social movement theories have developed from the basic concepts of class-based social movements (old or classical social movements) to the concept of non-class social movements (contemporary social movements or new social movements). According to Vilaça (1993: 61), the problems of social movements, especially new social movements, are closely related to the state crisis and modernity.

Studies related to the old social movements are closely related to the economic problem of production which assumes that economic exploitation is the dominant social problem. Furthermore, the new social movements also question the issue of identity more broadly. The question of identity, according to Vilaça (1993), can be discussed at the level of social movements, either using the local dimension as a reference or not. Those who do not use the local dimension represent social categories that are initially discriminated against or affected by the same type of problem (women, homosexuals, ethnic groups, etc.). Their movements have sparked struggles for human and civil rights without the need for the physical closeness of their members and correspondence with a particular territorial basis (Vilaça, 1993: 69). On the other hand, local movements are related to the areas in which they carry out their struggles. Thus, space is the main element in the construction of their identity. The product and producer of social relations, space is the territorial basis not only of social practice but also of symbolic representation and practice that develops in it (Vilaça, 1993:69-70).

In addition to dealing with the dimensions of space and time, social movements also develop alongside ongoing social changes and political developments. According to Martin and Halpin (1998), social movements have relevance to the developing political climate. Meanwhile, Rosenthal, Fingrutd et al. (1985) saw that each social movement has a special relationship with other social movement organizations that have the same or similar mission. Social movements tend to require network support. As a social movement, the peasant movement is carried out with various instruments, one of which is the realization of agrarian

unionism. This institution has a positive impact on the lives of farmers, both in the economic, social, and self-expression fields (Wahyudi, 2005: 9).

The peasant movement is a social movement that is normative in nature, because it only demands changes in part of the system that covers the life of farmers. According to Charles Tilly (1998), the peasant movement is a second phase of movement, the phase in which social movements are often referred to as political processes, rational actions, resource mobilization models of collective action, and the social movement itself.

Most of the studies that have examined the peasant movement assume that outside intervention (state and capital) in the life of farmers has led to social transformations that have resulted in the marginalization of the peasants. This situation has given rise to the emergence of revolutions and/or resistance from peasants that occurred in various places in the form of collective actions, whether present in the form of open or covert resistance as has been studied by James C. Scott (1976, 1985, 1989); Wolf (1969), Migdal (1974); Moore (1966); Paige (1975); (Popkin, 1979); Lenin (1960); and Mao (1939):

There are three important theoretical approaches in explaining peasant revolutions and revolts or peasant social movements. One, moral economy theory, which interprets the peasant movement as the resistance of peasants to intrusions from the modern state and from capitalist development, to protect their long-shared values and norms, especially their right to subsistence (Scott, 1976: 3–4). Second, the Marxist theory which regards the peasant revolution as a struggle by the oppressed classes against their oppressors (Lenin, 1960: 172–87; Mao, 1939: 118–26). The last one, rational choice theory, views the peasant movement as a process of self-interested peasants seeking to promote their individual benefit through revolution (Popkin, 1979: 18–27; 1988: 9–14).

The three traditions, though obviously different, all equate the essence of peasant revolution with collective action, whether it be called rebellion, revolt, or struggle, and try to explain what motivates large numbers of peasants to participate in collective action. Moral economy emphasizes the right to subsistence claimed by rural communities; Marxist theory underlines class interests and class consciousness shared by oppressed classes; rational choice theory spotlights revolutionary strategies carefully designed to meet the private interests of peasants. (Gao, Y., 2016).

In another view, the peasant movement can also be categorized as a new social movement, when the peasant movement is present to demand social justice and equality

rooted in multidimensional problems in people's lives, such as economic, cultural, and environmental issues, among others.

Singh (2010) argues that social issues related to problems of social inequality, domination and submission of individuals and groups; domination and power structures from one over the other – whether it is in the form of caste, class, ethnic group, gender, or at the global level, one country over another, is a social reality commonly found in most societies and is manifested in the activities of daily social life transactions. These situations of social inequality and domination, if exercised and maintained by social institutions, will in turn produce a reverse situation in which there is resistance, rejection and rebellion against the domination systems.

According to Singh (2010: 20), social movements express the collective efforts of society to demand equality and social justice and reflect people's struggles to defend their identities and cultural heritage. According to Pichardo (1997: 411), the new social movement paradigm is a new development in social theory which emphasizes both macro-historical and micro-historical social movement elements. For the theorists of new social movements, there are multidimensional factors that cause the emergence of social movements.

As a social movement, the peasant movement can be studied within the theory of collective action. According to Charles Tilly (1978), collective action theory examines actions taken together to pursue common goals. Tilly et al. (1975: 5) agree that changes in society affect social movements. The main shift from local to national power structures has an impact on the organization and form of social movements (Singh, 2010: 138).

Singh (2010, *ibid*) argues that Tilly et al. (1975) clearly describe how economic transformation, urbanization and state formation generate shifts in the character of social movements and actions. The reorganization of everyday life transforms the character of conflict (Tilly et al., 1975: 86). Collective action theory usually aims to understand the factors and conditions that produce organized collective action that is intended to encourage or oppose a change that is directly related to the lives of the people or groups involved in the collective action.

This study uses the perspective of the old social movement, to explain the emergence of peasant resistance in the period before the restoration of Timor-Leste's independence. It analyses the patterns of peasant resistance that arose as a form of resistance or protest to

the transformation imposed by the intervention of capitalism and state hegemony, which Scott (1976; 1985) and others have discussed.

I argue that the processes of political change or transformation have greatly affected the character and dynamics of the Ermera peasant social movement. Therefore, historical factors and the process of state formation are considered to play an important role in influencing the emergence and development of this peasant movement.

The penetration of capitalism that occurred through the intervention of foreign powers that tended to be repressive caused most of the population (in this case, the local communities and/or subsistence farmers) to be excluded or marginalized, both economically, politically and socio-culturally. As a result, social tensions arose that were structural and continuous. This situation gave rise to a movement and/or social protest from the peasants, which started as a covert form of resistance and later developed into an open and organized movement.

Chapter 3:

A brief history of the growth of peasant movements

After reviewing social movement theories, I will briefly describe the history of the development of peasant movements from the past to the present. This chapter analyses the growth of the peasant movements globally in Asia, the forms of resistance and social conduciveness. It considers the impact of existing social conditions, levels of political repression, and the impact of the global market economy on the growth of contemporary peasant social movements.

3.1. Review of the growth of peasant movements

All peasant movements are rooted in the history of exploitation, both in the feudal and colonial times as well as in the present. The peasant movements during these historical phases was born with different characteristics. This section briefly discusses the growth of peasant movements starting from the colonial period to the present day.

Historically, peasant movements began to grow in the pre-colonial period. The case study of the Banten peasant rebellion in Indonesia in 1888, conducted by Kartodirdjo (1984:444) concluded that the rise of the peasant revolution not only reflected the conditions brought about by colonial domination, but also that protest movements were well known in pre-colonial times, although less frequent. Thus, the growth of peasant movements in Southeast Asia occurred in the pre-colonial period, namely in the era of feudalism, then continued and developed during the colonialism era until now.

Exploitation is rooted in unjust social structures that have dominated people's lives from feudal times to the present. In feudal times, kings had unlimited power over land and people were forced to pay tribute to the royal family. After feudalism was conquered and lost its power in the countryside, the capitalist rulers and the colonial state became a source of peasant oppression and resistance (Fauzi, 2005:15), because the presence of colonialism and global capitalism strengthened the systematic exploitation of peasants. Thus, exploitation seems to be the main cause behind the growth of peasant movements.

For centuries, rural agriculture relied on the strength of subsistence, the role of the family and forms of cooperation that were based on strong community solidarity. The management of rural life was based on traditional systems that were strongly associated with

the local cultures. Rural subsistence production was consumption-oriented, while colonialism came with a capitalist economy, where production was more intensified and governed by trade interests.

The presence of colonialism and capitalism in rural areas threatened the welfare and social status of peasants. State policies were considered to have destroyed the socio-cultural fabric of poor farmers, leading them to vent their anger and form resistance movements against the wealthy and the state (Mustain, 2007:22).

Colonialism led to structural changes in society that had an impact on the lives of poor farmers, from the economic and socio-cultural perspective. In his study of the impact of colonialism on the lives of subsistence farmers in Southeast Asia, Scott (1976:157) emphasizes that:

“The evidence within the Southeast Asian context indicates that structural change in the colonial period permitted elites and the state, to their short run profit, to increasingly violate the moral economy of the peasantry and become more exploitative. In Lower Burma and parts of Vietnam, as we saw, the particular configuration of demographic pressure, market fluctuations, and state action produced a flash point of actual rebellion.” (Scott, 1976:157).

Colonialism and capitalism have caused fundamental changes in the socio-economic structure of rural subsistence communities which in turn have led to the emergence of resistance from farmers. Colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of land and another people's property (Loomba, 2016: 3). Modern colonialism, according to Loomba (2016: 4-5), not only took tribute, property and wealth from the conquered countries, but also changed the structure of their economies, pulling them into complex relations with the parent countries, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between the colonies with their colonial states.

Colonialism and capitalism have created complex relations, by connecting the life of farmers with the domination of world market power. Paige (1978:1) states that “In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the social and political life of large areas of Latin America, Asia, and Africa was transformed by the world market in agricultural commodities which developed in response to the demands of the industrial economies of Europe and North America”.

Wolf (1969) views the world market, which he calls "North Atlantic capitalism", as the main driving force behind revolutionary change. He conducted a comparative study of the

relationship between agricultural commodity markets and the peasant revolutions of the 20th century. He identified the revolutions that involved the participation of peasants, particularly in Mexico, China, Russia, Algeria, Vietnam and Cuba. These revolutions took place in various agricultural systems including the hacienda economies of Latin America, the manorial economies of Russia, the sharecropping economies of China and Vietnam, the plantation economy of Cuba, and the migratory labour economy of Algeria (Paige, 1978:7).

According to Marx (in Sanderson, 2003:169), capitalism is an economic system that allows several individuals to control vital productive resources, which they use to achieve maximum benefits. Marx calls these individuals the bourgeoisie who employ a group of people Marx calls the proletariat. The proletariat produces goods which the capitalists then sell on the market for profit. The capitalists can make a profit because they pay the laborers (the proletariat) less than the pure value of the goods produced. In Marx's belief, capitalist profits do not grow only through the process of selling goods alone, but they come from the production process carried out by the proletariat. Therefore, capitalism demands the existence of a working class who sells labour for wages. It is only through the exploitation of labour wages that the capitalists profit.

Capitalism has created social classes which strengthen the exploitative social structure, which in turn leads to the emergence of social movements among the oppressed and exploited social classes, including subsistence peasants against landlords and/or commercial farmers as well as the state. According to Landsberger (1974:10), the key dimensions in the case of 'the peasantry' and their movements are the economic and political ones.

Rural peasant communities who were supported by a subsistence economy in a distinctive pattern of socio-cultural relations, suddenly experienced changes as a result of external intervention (in this case, the state or colonialism and the market or capitalism). The penetration of capitalism and state hegemony in rural life gave birth to new unequal structures, creating new elites that controlled the sources of life in rural areas, such as land and peasants. The position of these new elites was strengthened by state policies, even though their social relations with rural subsistence farmers were exploitative and repressive in nature. The presence of these new elites caused the decline in the authority of traditional leaders. (Kartodirdjo, 1984, Wahyudi, 2005).

Several studies conducted in Indonesia (such as: Mustain, 2007; Wahyudi, 2005; Fauzi, 2005; Siahaan, 2002: 1999; Kartodirdjo, 1984) show that the resistance of the peasants during the colonial period until the reformation period was caused by a legacy of unfair colonial policies that the state continued to defend. Even after independence, the state continued to encourage national development that relied on the rural industrialization process, which in turn had forced the subsistence peasants into the control of the market mechanisms.

This situation disrupted the lives of subsistence farmers and their customary institutions. In fact, Batterbury, S.P.J. et al. (2015) show that in several areas in Timor-Leste “customary institutions contribute significantly to sustainable and equitable rural development and the establishment of improved access to and management of land, water and other natural resources”.

According to Popkin (1979):

“Peasants do not need markets because their needs are satisfied within their institutions: the alleged propensity of man to barter, truck and exchange is almost entirely apocryphal. If there is to be a labour market, traditional institutions must be destroyed, and prevented from reforming. Thus, to include [labour and land] in the market mechanism means to subordinate the subsistence of society itself to the laws of the market.” (Popkin, 1979:10).

When state development policies only benefit investors (including plantation owners and commercial farmers) and coercively subordinate subsistence farmers to market mechanisms, resistance will inevitably emerge. It can be said that forced subordination led to resistance from the peasants which was driven by social changes derived from the demands of global economic development.

Paige (1978:1) says that the agrarian states of what was then called the underdeveloped world mostly participated as suppliers of primary agricultural products that were economically dependent. He argues that the demands of the industrial economies led to specialized forms of agricultural organization adapted to production for world markets and created profound changes in the traditional patterns of land tenure and rural class relations. According to him, these new forms of agricultural organization, new systems of land ownership and of social classes were based on the productive requirements of a relatively small number of export crops.

Shepherd & Palmer (2015) confirm that, throughout the long history of colonial and post-colonial regimes in the South, governments have intervened in rural agricultural

processes and crop cultivations to promote market-oriented production that serves the needs of states. The general picture that emerges is that the peasantry was forced or encouraged to modify their agriculture from subsistence crops to market ones, as city states, colonial powers, and independent nation-states expanded their territorial reach, extended their control over land and labour, and sought to advance their national 'economies' (Shepherd, C., & Palmer, L., 2015).

From the colonial era to the present, rural life has been controlled by the state and investors. The intervention of capitalism has always been encouraged and strengthened by the state through its repressive policies. This situation led to a forced rural transformation. Rural areas where people's lives were rooted in local traditions were turned into plantation areas where production was oriented to the needs of the global market in an effort to sustain the country's economy. People's lands including customary lands were seized and controlled by the state to establish commercial plantations. The rural farmers were then forcibly deployed to work on these plantations as plantation cultivators.

If the relationship between poor peasants and feudal elites during the feudal era was exploitative through the process of slavery and payment of tribute, then during colonialism, the relationship between poor peasants (subsistence farmers) and the state and investors was of a patron-client type of relationship which was exploitative in nature. The subsistence farmers were clients whose position was weakened by repressive state policies that benefited investors (in this case, plantation owners and/or commercial farmers).

The essence of the notion of exploitation is "that some individuals, groups, or classes benefit unjustly or unfairly from the labour of, or at the expense of, others." (Lewis L. Lorwin, 1931:16). According to Scott (1976:158), there are at least two characteristics of exploitation. First, exploitation is seen as a relationship between individuals, groups, or institutions; the existence of an exploited party implies the existence of an exploiter. Second, exploitation is an unfair distribution of effort and rewards, in turn requiring some standard of distributive equity against which relationships may be judged. The existence of injustice implies a norm of justice.

Feudal and colonial structures were very oppressive to the weak peasants. Even after colonialism ended, new countries were unable to deal with the new power of neo-liberal capitalism which continued to undermine the lives of rural communities. Fauzi (2005) examines the emergence of rural people's movements in Third World countries as a collective

reaction to the strong influence of neo-liberalism pumped by transnational companies and capitalist countries.

The social life of peasants in exploitative social conditions like these is what drives the growth and development of peasant social movements in the Third World, including in Southeast Asian countries, from the colonial period to the emergence of contemporary peasant movements.

Classical studies show that the rebellions or peasant revolutions in the 19th century occurred because of rural transformation imposed from outside. This transformation resulted in the disruption of the subsistence way of life of the peasants who were initially tightly bound in social relations.

Kartodirdjo (1984:447) concluded that the peasant rebellion in Banten, Indonesia, in 1888 was an expression of social protest against social change imposed from outside by Western domination. According to him, the peasant protest movements in the 19th century were traditional revolutionary movements, because they wanted the restoration of the traditional order (Ibid:445). The presence of colonialism was understood to have damaged the social order of rural communities, where traditional structures were still very strong, and their existence was supported by the local cultural system.

Colonialism led to a transformation from traditionalism to modernity or modernization. The consequences of modernization, according to Kartodirdjo, include disruption of traditional institutions, social incompatibility, and widespread feelings of insecurity and reputation in society (Kartodirdjo, 1984:446-447). From an institutional perspective, colonialism introduced forcibly a centralized modern bureaucratic system whose rationale was legal in nature. This colonial intervention disrupted traditional rural institutions. According to Kartodirdjo (1984), traditional authorities were threatened by the entry of a secular modern bureaucracy, centred on colonial authority (Ibid:447-448). This was what prompted traditional leaders (or local leaders) to organize peasant resistance, aiming to restore traditional rural life which was considered tarnished by the presence of Western colonialism.

Peasant resistance in the colonial period was more regional in nature, meaning that the protests were born from conflictual relationships between rural peasants and the state and landlords, conflicts whose character were limited to problems at the local level. Peasant

resistance in this phase was closely related to the intervention of the colonial capitalist state which had disturbed the social harmony of the traditional rural subsistence life.

The growth of peasant social movements in Southeast Asia shows that not only ideological aspects and class relations were the main drivers, but cultural factors also determined their growth and development. Even in subsequent developments, local culture and beliefs were defined as weapons that were important in strengthening the peasant movement, which was unique to Southeast Asia.

Scott (1976) argues that the central economic and political transformations of the colonial era have systematically raped the peasants' vision of social justice, which has led to the growth of peasant revolts or revolutions in Southeast Asia. In his research in several areas of Southeast Asia, he found that the life of rural communities is generally characterized by the existence of distinctive traditional cultural practices in which rural subsistence farmers are rural land cultivators under the power of other social classes.

According to Scott (1976), traditional society has a moral tradition that cannot be separated from the problem of subsistence. The social order of the peasant's life resulted in an internal life security system that could normatively be enforced to meet the needs of all village people. Colonialism carved out the limitless exploitation imposed on the peasants so that new social differentiation was formed, agrarian displacement, decline from a morality that prioritized togetherness, and the growth of greedy agrarian capitalism (Fauzi, 2005:22). These formed the bases for the growth of the peasant movements in Southeast Asia.

After the end of colonialism, the economies of post-colonial countries were designed based on the pressure and influence of the interests of neo-liberalism. Post-colonial countries did not have the ability to stem the influence of neo-liberalism, so that the commercialization of agriculture and the capitalization of rural life became major issues that were not only voiced in the villages, but also at the national, regional and even global levels.

Wolf (1969) states that the twentieth-century peasant revolts can no longer be regarded as simple responses to local problems but rather as direct reactions to the social shocks that hit them, driven by even bigger social change. According to Wolf (1969), capitalism has disrupted the social balance that had existed before in farming communities and has transformed them into economic actors.

Wolf (1969) says that:

“What is significant is that capitalism cut through the integument of custom, severing people from their accustomed social matrix in order to transform them into economic actors, independent of prior social commitments to kin and neighbours.” (Wolf, 1969:279).

The spread of the market allowed feudal landlords to establish relationships with outside capitalists. They worked together to control the land and dominate the livelihoods of local communities and then exploited the rural peasants for the sake of capital accumulation.

Facilitated by the feudal elite, the colonialists and capitalists had access to ownership of people's lands and customary lands as well as local people's sources of livelihood. The spread of the market in this context led to the emergence of commercial farmers or plantation owners in rural areas and their position was strengthened by the policies of the colonial government because they shared common interests. This situation led to the transformation of rural areas through the industrialization process which disrupted the subsistence way of life of the local people and their culture. This prompted the emergence of resistance from the rural subsistence peasants in the colonial era.

Even though colonialism ended, the situation of the peasants has never changed. Post-colonial countries continuously promote national development policies that are more in favour of the interests of the capitalists than the peasants.

The choice of development policies by post-colonial governments, as happened in Indonesia during the New Order government, prioritized agricultural commercialization and industrialization, which in turn marginalized peasants. This situation triggered the emergence of discontent among the peasants, leading them to support student movements which demanded reform in Indonesia in 1998. After the reformation, the peasant movement in several regions in Indonesia massively and openly fought against all the forms of oppression and exploitation they experienced.

Contemporary peasant protests are no longer driven by traditional leaders as in the 19th century in the colonial period, but are driven by students, NGOs activists as well as intellectual youth both from villages and other areas outside the countryside. The issues raised in peasant movements are no longer local in nature and are not just echoed in the villages but affect national policies and may become global issues. Contemporary peasant problems are a global concern because they are closely related to agricultural industrialization

and commercialization which not only have economic impacts, but also broad social and environmental impacts (Mustain, 2007; Wahyudi, 2005; Fauzi, 2005).

Based on the contexts described above, in this study, I argue that the emergence of contemporary social movements does not only question the problem of exploitation based on colonial agrarian conflicts, but also more broadly questions about environmental issues, inequality, culture, and human rights. If the peasant struggle in the previous phases focused more on exploitation based on socio-economic and cultural relations in an exploitative social structure over a limited geographic rural area, the contemporary peasant social movement is rooted in broader social problems, which involve all those who are marginalized or feel disadvantaged by the injustices of the economic system of neoliberalism. This situation allows the peasant movements to be empowered and consolidated from the local level to the international level, thus giving birth to peasant social movements that are stronger in influencing the public decision-making process.

3.2. The impact of the global market economy and the growth of the peasant movements

This section describes the growth of the peasant movements in Southeast Asia in the post-colonial period, which have been driven by the impact of the global market economy. The end of colonialism in Southeast Asia marked a new phase of post-colonial exploitation of the peasants originating from the choice of national development which prioritized the interests of investors rather than the interests of the peasants. Industrialization and commercialization of land for the benefit of a global market economy has caused the lives of the peasants to be continuously exploited and therefore, they continue to carry out movements demanding social justice (Mustain, 2007; Fauzi, 2005; Wahyudi, 2005).

Unable to face pressures from global economic powers, post-colonial countries ultimately only continued to implement exploitative and repressive colonial policies rather than seek to improve or change them. The confiscation of traditional agricultural lands as well as customary lands, as happened during the colonial period, continued into the post-colonial period (Mustain, 2007; Fauzi, 2005; Wahyudi, 2005).

Kathleen Gillogly, an American anthropologist from the University of Wisconsin, describes the alarming phenomenon of farmers and agriculture in Southeast Asia. In an

interview conducted by Ninie G. Syarikin⁷, Gillogly said that many farmers in rural areas in Southeast Asian countries depend on the sale of agricultural products they produce to support their family. However, she continued, these traditional agricultural lands are now being taken over by large agricultural businesses, highlighting particularly the palm oil plantations in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Gillogly further explained that what is common in the Southeast Asian region is the widespread commercialization of agriculture, which has led to frequent land expropriation, so that many people lose their land as it is taken over for agricultural businesses. This is what she thinks has caused major problems.

The problems of the peasants today are directly related to the impact of a development model based on the market-driven ideology of neoliberalism that has been promoted by international financial institutions since the 1980s. This model is characterized by the globalization of markets, and the investment and production processes of Transnational Corporations (TNCs), with the support of international financial institutions which are regulated through a global trade organization called the World Trade Organization (WTO). According to the ideology of neoliberalism, growth is achieved as a result of normal "free competition" and a "free market" which is believed to be a more efficient way of allocating scarce natural resources to meet human needs.

Free market ideology rejects state interference in the economy and relies on market mechanisms and laws. This notion of liberalism was initiated by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). In this ideology, the government should not interfere in the economy. Therefore, state enterprises must be privatized and the state must stop subsidies to its people. In the end, the principles of development which are oriented towards "common welfare" and "communal ownership" should not be realized. Under pressure from investors, the state continues to encourage the privatization and commercialization of agriculture which ultimately only makes farmers suffer and this is the factor that causes the growth of contemporary peasant movements.

According to Donald Zagoria (in Wahyudi, 2005:9-10), agricultural commercialization causes farmers to become more critical and revolutionary regarding the various forms of exploitation they experience. The current wave of peasant protests, apart from being

⁷ Voice of America (7 October 2013). <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/pertanian-tradisional-tersingkir-oleh-bisnis-besar/1764595.html>, accessed on 12/11/2020.

triggered by social problems derived from a colonial heritage, is also due to state development policy choices that emphasize economic growth, driven by the global market economy. This political choice of state development has been criticized, because it is considered not to bring happiness, but rather, it can reduce the quality of people's lives and cause environmental degradation.

Thus, the concept of sustainable development has emerged. This concept was popularized in the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report called "Our Common Future" published in 1987. This report defines sustainable development as a development process with the principle of "meeting the needs of the present without sacrificing the needs of future generations". There are three main dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, environmental and social dimensions. These three dimensions are interrelated and are the main pillars of sustainable development. Rogers et al. (2008:219) suggest 10 dimensions of sustainable development: poverty reduction, participatory development, consensus building, non-government organizations, gender and development, involuntary resettlement, indigenous peoples, social exclusion, social analysis, and social development indicators.

Peasant movements emerged not only as a form of resistance against the system of exploitation, but also as a reaction against the role of the state which seemed passive in defending the interests of its people and even facilitating the interests of investors.

The resistance of the people of Kedung Ombo, Indonesia⁸, arose because of their demands for compensation for their land affected by the dam project which they considered unfair. The peasant protests then extended to democratic demands which were mostly raised by student groups. Edi Sudrajat and Imam Bukhori (in Wahyudi, 2005:10) argue that the resistance of peasants in Indonesia was due to the denial of the traditional rights of farmers by the rigid state bureaucratic approach and repressive actions of excessive security forces. Studies on peasant resistance from the colonial period to the New Order era show that the land management system, which only benefited the state rulers and investors, led farmers to lose their rights and access to their land. These conditions led to the emergence of resistance and protests from the peasants.

⁸ The research was conducted by Prasetyohadi, Helio Maria Pinto Soares, Danang Widoyoko et al. quoted in Wahyudi (2005: 10).

Colonialism in Southeast Asia inherited social problems related to unequal access to land. A case in point is the agrarian structure in rural Philippines, which is currently marked by the possession of very large lands in the form of hacienda plantations. This is a direct legacy of Spanish colonization that began in 1565 and continued by the United States. Under the rule of the United States, the concentration of land control by the hacienda landlords remained completely unchanged.

After more than 300 years of colonization, the Philippines became independent in 1946. However, Philippine independence failed to change the position of the hacienda landlords. These conditions prompted rural farmers in the Philippines to organize themselves in a peasant movement organization called *Pambansang Ugnayan ng Nagsasariling Lokal na mga Samahang Mamamayan sa Kanayunan* (National Association of Independent Local Citizens' Organizations in the Countryside - UNORKA), demanding that the government immediately implement agrarian reform as a solution to the problem of land inequality inherited from the colonial era (Fauzi 2005:110-120).

Southeast Asian peasants also face problems directly related to infrastructure projects. The peasants are often victims of evictions carried out by the government for the sake of large-scale projects. In Thailand, smallholders and indigenous groups, mostly victims of evictions related to reservoir development projects among others, joined the peasant network called *Assembly of the Poor* (AOP), which was formed in December 1995. It mobilized the people to hold demonstrations and camp in front of the Government Office to petition the government to change its development policies and make them more appropriate for the poor (policies that are more pro-poor).

AOP also demanded that the government recognize the rights of the people to manage their natural resources, decentralize authority to local organizations, and change the political system so that it is in line with the concept of "People-Centred Development". AOP even demanded legislative amendments to comply with the principles of environmentally sound development. They also demanded that the government recognize and support the participation of people's organizations in planning and implementing development projects (Fauzi, 2005:190-191).

Neo-liberalism has also had a direct impact on environmental and cultural issues, which has led to the emergence of social movements demanding the recognition of the existence and customary rights of local communities. *Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara*

(The Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago/AMAN) in Indonesia represents indigenous communities, as well as regional customary organizations, and directly organizes social movements through mass mobilization, network development as well as advocacy to gain recognition for their territories and customary rights. According to Fauzi (2005:191), AMAN has succeeded in using cultural issues to argue for reclaiming territories and their customary rights. AMAN promotes community customs as the identity of its struggle and articulates discourse on customs, customary law, and indigenous peoples through mobilizations, demonstrations, protests, campaigns, meetings with officials, as well as the uses of legal instruments and international agreements. AMAN has wide support from NGO networks both at the national and international levels.

Some of the example cases above show that the resistance which was originally based in rural areas derived from agrarian conflicts has now spread and is closely related to all aspects of human life. This resistance is coordinated in the form of a network of movements that have spread from the village to the national and international levels. The resistance arises because marginalized groups of people can no longer survive in the existing conditions, so they muster together the strength to fight.

According to Touraine (1977; 1981), social movements cannot be understood as isolated forms of association, which only emerge as irrational responses to social divisions or injustices, but instead develop with views and strategies on how these can be overcome (Giddens, 1993: 645-646). Touraine (1977; 1981) emphasizes that social movements reflect the stress placed on modern societies (Ibid: 645), as noted by Giddens (1993):

Modern societies are marked by what Touraine calls historicity - an outlook in which knowledge of social processes is used to reshape the social conditions of our existence. For instance, identifying the nature and distribution of inequalities in schooling was one of factors that promoted the rise of the civil rights movement in the United States. Touraine has been less interested in the background conditions that give rise to social movements than in understanding the objectives social movements pursue. Social movements do not just come about as irrational responses to social divisions or injustices; they develop with views and strategies as to how these can be overcome. Social movements, Touraine suggests, cannot be understood as isolated forms of association. They develop in deliberate antagonism with other groups - usually with established organizations, but sometimes with rival movements. All social movements have interests or aims which they are for; all have views and ideas they are against. (Giddens, 1993: 645-646)

The development of social movements that adapt to social changes and global developments has led to the institutionalization of social protests in the form of organizations (as stated by Lofland, 2017), so that resistance strategies in a social movement can be developed more broadly and coordinated. Giddens (1993) further notes:

Touraine argues that social movements should be studied in the context of what he calls fields of action. The term refers to the connections between a social movement and the forces or influences against which it is ranged. The process of mutual 'negotiation' involved in a field of action may lead to a change in the circumstances the movement sought to contest, but also to a merging of the perspectives held by each side. Either way the movement may evaporate - or become institutionalized as a permanent organization. Trade unions became formal organizations, for example, when the right to strike and modes of bargaining acceptable to both workers and employers were achieved. These were forged out of earlier processes of confrontation involving considerable violence on both sides. Where there are continuing sources of conflict (as in the relationships between employees and employers), new movements still tend sporadically to re-emerge. (Giddens, 1993: 646).

According to Eckstein (1989), peasants are usually willing to take risks by engaging in direct confrontation if they consider injustice intolerable, and when demands for their needs suddenly rise, as well as if local and national institutions and conditions tend to require them to wear collective robes. Thus, as stated by Jos Hafid (2001), peasant resistance arises from the accumulation of disappointment, oppression, and the deterioration of the peasants' energy and self-respect. According to him, the state and the power of capital have cheated the people (peasants) on their own land. For this reason, the peasants rose to fight.

The view of Hafid (2001) is in line with James C. Scott (1985) who considers peasant resistance as a result of the expanding role of the state in the process of rural transformation through the green revolution. Scott thinks that state policies have destroyed the socio-cultural order of poor peasants, so they vent their anger through resistance against the wealthy farmers and the state.

Resistance and protests by peasants are always based on the problem of oppression and exploitation by the state, security forces and the owners of capital who forcibly take over the economic surplus from the land. (Wahyudi, 2005:11). The emergence of peasant protests, according to Siahaan, H.M. (1999), can be seen in three factors, namely the widespread commercialization of agricultural land, the development of new value systems, and the ambiguity of the role of the state in making reformist choices, or oppressing peasants.

In this context, peasant resistance occurs in relation to the field of power around them. Wolf (1969: 290) asserts that “the decisive factor in making a peasant rebellion possible lies in the relation of the peasantry to the field of power which surrounds it”. If the structural pressure has exceeded the tolerance limit, the farmers will fight back in their own way.

In his study of the peasant movement in Kalibakar, Indonesia, Mustain (2007) found that peasant resistance emerged to reject state policies regarding land tenure issues which tended to exploit farmers and prioritize the interests of investors. From the results of his research, he concluded that: the problem of the peasant resistance movement is a product of contradictory state policies, or what the peasants understand as deprivation and/or a threat to the source of life for farmers. According to this author, if land-grabbing is carried out in the context of development and involves other parties (such as the private sector with tendencies to coercion and nuances of corruption, collusion and nepotism), then the level of resistance of the peasants will be violent, militant, emotional and destructive (Mustain, 2007:364).

According to Silva, G.E. (2015), social movement protests may also have significant indirect policy effects. These refer to outcomes in which they influence allies or public opinion, which then independently influence outcomes.

As shown above, the emergence of peasant movements is clearly a form of protest. The protests of the peasants are closely related to the changes driven by state power and capitalism which have led to social injustice. As a result of this situation, the peasants consolidate their common power through the organisation of social movements so that they can be directly involved in influencing political policies that have a direct impact on their lives.

In this understanding, the Ermera peasant movement is clearly a social protest, because it was born from a new idea that demanded the state implement agrarian reform. The movement also rejected the monopoly over land and other sources of livelihood. This movement was born as an effort to bring social justice for the peasants. Thus, it was the social conditions of the peasants that encouraged the emergence of this peasant movement.

Lofland (2017:2) describes the dimensions of protest as: (1) dissent or objection; (2) that is relatively extreme in the context; (3) strongly felt; (4) directed to some person or institution with power over one; (5) in a solemn and formal fashion; (6) that is done publicly; (7) and is based on a sense of injustice. These dimensions of protest put forward by Lofland are evident in the Ermera peasant protest movement. The Ermera peasant movement

rejected and objected to the peasants' living conditions resulting from their marginalization during the time of foreign rule. This could no longer be tolerated, and this movement was formed to demand or fight for social change that is socially just.

Chapter 4:

Analysis of the patterns of resistance in peasant movements

In the previous chapter, we have seen that social movements and peasant protests come with dynamic patterns and strategies to adapt to the process of social change. In this chapter, I argue that peasant movements as social protests do not always have to be carried out openly, solemnly and formally, as previously described by Lofland (2017:2) in Chapter 3. Social groups that are marginalized in a repressive social structure cannot manifest their dissatisfaction by protesting in an open manner.

I will show two general patterns of peasant resistance movements: covert movements or hidden resistance patterns, where the forms of protest are more covert and carried out individually. In contrast, in the open movement, the forms of protest are more collective, open and organized.

4.1. Different forms of resistance and their identity construction

The social movements of peasants are closely related to historical factors and social changes. According to Woods (2003), in recent years rural issues have been forced to the forefront of the political agenda in countries across the developed world. Woods (2003) argues that:

“Agricultural reform and income levels as well as the future of rural services and other related issues, have been represented as debates in which traditional elements of rural lifestyle and culture have come under threat, and have consequently provoked the mobilization of a new wave of rural protests and campaigns.”

Changes due to rural transformation driven from outside have placed the peasants in a conflictual relationship with the state and the owners of capital. This situation led to the emergence of peasant resistance in various forms. Therefore, peasant social movements can be conceptualized as:

“a distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action: are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; share a distinct collective identity.” (Della Porta, 2006: 20).

As a social movement, peasant resistance comes in various forms or patterns. Based on the descriptions in Chapters 2 and 3, it can be said that there are two general patterns of

peasant resistance: a covert movement or hidden patterns of resistance and an open resistance pattern.

The two patterns have different characteristics. The emergence and the development of both lies in the relationship of the peasants to the field of power that surrounds them (Wolf, 1969; Scott, 1976; 1985; Mustain, 2007). They can also be influenced by structural conduciveness (Smelser, 1963) as well as social and political changes, which gives them the opportunity to be present in these forms (McAdam et al., 2001; Martin & Halpin, 1998).

According to Della Porta (2006: 21), in conflictual collective action, social movement actors are engaged in political and/or cultural conflicts meant to promote or oppose social change. Based on this understanding, peasant social movements can be understood as a form of protest because they appear as opposition to changes that do not benefit the peasants. Therefore, the peasants build strength collectively to fight those who have harmed them. They have consolidated their power through the mobilization of resources and support, both from among the peasants themselves and from outside parties who share the same vision, goals and concerns as the peasants.

Consolidation of power in this context can also be understood as a process of identity construction. Identity construction is “the process by which social actors recognize themselves—and are recognized by other actors—as part of broader groupings, and develop emotional attachments to them” (Della Porta, 2006:91). Collective identity in this sense allows actors in a movement to clearly identify or distinguish their friends and their opponents. According to Della Porta (2006):

“The construction of identity therefore implies both a positive definition of those participating in a certain group, and a negative identification of those who are not only excluded but actively opposed. It also includes a relationship with those who find themselves in a neutral position. It is with reference to “protagonists, antagonists, and audiences” that movement identities are formed and come to life.” (Della Porta, 2006: 94).

In the New Social Movements (NSMs) theory, “identity production is an essential component of collective action” as it provides actors with the motivation (Woods, 2003: 316) so that movements can be further strengthened. The movement is strengthened when the peasants interpret and take advantage of the opportunities for change. This allows local resources and external support to be mobilized for the benefit of empowering the movement. This situation of change transforms the peasants’ resistance and/or hidden protests that

occur in repressive conditions into an open movement on a large scale. Thus, historical and cultural factors as well as social and political changes are considered to have direct implications for the emergence and development of peasant social movements. In this study, the resistance and/or protests of the peasants are shown to be a social movement that is not only present openly in the form of collective actions, but also appears in various forms of hidden actions or hidden patterns of disobedience behaviour.

In covert movements, as described by Scott (1976; 1985), the actors share the same values that are reflected in their collective identity, either as subsistence farmers, whose lifestyle and economy is based on local culture and beliefs or as people who are exploited or oppressed due to intervention from outside powers, which have led to the deprivation of their political, economic and cultural rights.

Covert movements or hidden resistance patterns are survival strategies in repressive situations. For the purposes of this study, these patterns are also the reaction of the peasant protest against the dominant political and economic policies, which have coercively marginalized them. When political structures do not provide space for the weak peasants to be able to express protest openly, solemnly and formally (as described by Lofland, 2017), hidden actions (as described by Scott, 1976: 1985) are a rational choice that must be taken by the peasants.

The covert movement of the peasants, with a collective identity as described above, generally occurs in rural areas where social life is communal and strongly tied to local culture and beliefs (Scott, 1976; 1985, Kartodirdjo, 1984 and Siahaan, 1996). The solidarity that is formed among the peasants is based on ancestral ties and traditional ideology. In rural communities with such social characteristics, peasant movements are more traditional (Kartodirdjo, 1984, Mustain, 2007; and Siahaan, 1996; 2002) and have more local dimensions (Vilaça, 1993). Meanwhile, open resistance is more massive (Mustain, 2007) in the form of collective actions or open, mass social protests (Tilly, 1978; 1981; Lofland, 2017). An organized social movement widely utilizes social networks, those built both informally and formally in the form of a movement organization (Locher, 2002; Lofland, 2017; Wahyudi, 2005).

The peasant movement in its open and massive form has a special relationship with other social movement organizations that have the same or similar mission and goals (Rosenthal, Fingrutd et al. (1985). Therefore, the movements are usually strengthened by the existence of support networks (Wahyudi, 2005), where the solidarity that is built is inspired

by political ideologies. Political ideology is considered one of the important instruments in influencing and/or mobilizing people's broad participation and support, because social movements aim to fight for the interests of the people in general, both at the local and global levels. Thus, collective actors emerge who define themselves and their opponents based on certain values and/or interests and they (the movement actors) are bound by a strong solidarity to support each other through complex networks of social movements.

Collective action cannot occur in the absence of a "we" characterized by common traits and a specific solidarity. Equally indispensable is the identification of the "other" defined as responsible for the actor's condition and against which the mobilization is called. The production of identities corresponds to the emergence of new networks of relationships of trust among movement actors, operating within complex social movements. Those relationships guarantee movements a range of opportunities. They are the basis for the development informal communication networks, interaction, and, when necessary, mutual support. (Della Porta, 2006: 93-94).

This kind of process allows peasant movements, which were initially local movements with a collective identity based on ancestral ties to develop into social movements that occur widely with the construction of a growing collective identity.

Identity construction should not be regarded simply as a precondition for collective action. It is certainly true that social actors' identities in a given period guide their subsequent conduct. At the same time, however, identity is not immutable characteristic, pre-existing action. ... It is through action that certain feelings of belonging come to be either reinforced or weakened. In other words, the evolution of collective action produces and encourages continuous redefinitions of identity (Della Porta, *ibid*: 93).

Such dynamics allow the establishment of social movement relationships which result in the collective identity of a movement being widely formed. Under these conditions, actors can develop strategies for institutionalizing protest in the form of social movement organizations.

Collective identity is strongly associated with recognition and the creation of connectedness. It brings with it a sense of common purpose and shared commitment to a cause, which enables single activists and/or organizations to regard themselves as inextricably linked to other actors, not necessarily identical but surely compatible, in a broader collective mobilization (Della Porta, 2006: 21).

The peasant social movements are rooted in history and exploitation that cause tension or contradiction in society. The peasant movements stem from the domination and exploitation of the state and the capitalists who have political and economic power over the

weak peasants. As a result, the peasants were marginalized both economically and politically as well as socio-culturally. Therefore, peasant movements, whether present covertly or openly, can be understood as forms of social protest against parties, which are considered to have been and (or feared) will continue to oppress and exploit them. According to Alberti (1972):

“The study of peasant movements requires two basic methodological rules for its proper understanding: first, the focus of the study must be both on the interaction process which binds the peasantry to its overlord and the social forces that impinge upon both poles of interaction; second, such study must necessarily deal with the historical contexts within which the interaction process between lord and peasant develops.”

Albertini's view above shows that the study of peasant movements cannot be separated from the unequal position in the relationship between the state and the capitalists with the peasants. As a result, the peasants were weakened and treated as objects of exploitation by the state and commercial farmers. When the exploitation experienced by the peasants can no longer be tolerated, they will protest through various forms of action, both hidden and open.

Scott's studies (1976; 1985) show that poor peasants, whose livelihoods depend on support from nature and their patron-client relationships with commercial farmers, do not express their protests openly. In a situation where the lives of the peasants depend heavily on the support of their patrons, their discontent is expressed in the form of veiled disobedience through hidden actions, which are carried out individually and uncoordinated.

Lipsky (1968:1145-46) views protest as a political action "characterized by showmanship or display on an unusual nature" that is undertaken by "relatively powerless groups." Operationally, in this use, protest refers mostly to histrionic press conferences, hearing room posturing, and abrasive press releases.

Meanwhile, according to Turner (1969:817) protest is an objective phenomenon and as a label imputed to the actions of others. As an imputed definition of action, the notion of protest competes with such alternative labels as "crime" and "riot" as a way to define and explain certain collective acts, namely mass violence, looting, and disruption.

According to Scott (1985:32), the resistance of the peasants who are weak “is marked less by massive and defiant confrontations than by a quiet evasion that is equally massive and often far more effective”. Several studies conducted by Scott (1976; 1985), which are also

reinforced by other researchers (Siahaan, 1996; Mustain, 2007), show that weak peasants who live in repressive situations manifest their dissatisfaction in the form of hidden insubordination. According to Scott (1985), actions such as stealing, slowing down work, pretending to be sick and stupid, saying "yes" face-to-face but swearing behind, are characteristics and forms of resistance from weak and helpless peasants against state policies and their patrons. These actions were carried out in secret, hidden and uncoordinated with the principle of "prioritizing safety and avoiding risk". These forms of protest do not exist openly and massively but tend to be secret in the efforts of the peasants, who are weak and oppressed, so that they can survive in their repressive situation.

The peasant social movement as a form of open protest only emerged after social changes occurred which resulted in weakening state control and repression. In this context, peasant social movements can also be understood as a means to fight for social change manifested in the form of organized collective action, which in Lofland's view (2017) can be considered as an organization as well as an action. According to Lofland, protest organizations are called social movement organizations or movement organizations. Its characteristics are fundamental criticisms of some or all aspects of the existing social order, usually manifested in the form of protest.

As a form of action, "protest" is also a collective action that develops widely and can be institutionalized to respond to the changes that occur. Protests can also take the form of violence. Thus, the concept of protest in relation to a social movement, according to Lofland (2017) consists of:

"(1) a surge of newly and independently founded or rejuvenated protest or violent organizations; (2) a rapid rise in the numbers of (and participants in); (3) an arousal of mass opinion; (4) all of which are directed to agents of contra! institutions; (5) in response to emerging changes in the macrostructure and/or actions of central institutions. A social movement involves changes in all the elements of the public arena and, most saliently, exhibit a "surge" or "wave" quality. Operationally, one knows when one is looking at a new (or revived) movement by, most obviously, such simple, quantitative measures as the number of relevant new organizations being formed, the degree of membership increase in existing movement organisations that are relevant, and the increase in numbers of planned and unplanned protest or violent actions." (Lofland, 2017: 22-23).

Referring to Lofland's perspective, it can be said that the peasant social movement is a form of protest that can exist covertly and openly, where its development depends more on the structural conduciveness of its existence. When social repression is strong, peasant

protests come in the form of hidden actions and disguised defiant behaviour. However, if social changes have a strong influence on structural changes that imply a weakening of control and repression, peasant protests will take the form of open and organized actions.

4.2. The covert movement or hidden resistance patterns

The covert movement or hidden resistance is manifested in the form of veiled insubordination that can be assessed from the typical behaviour patterns of the weak when they have to survive very difficult situations. In his monumental work called *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance (1985, Yale University)*, James C. Scott examines the protest behaviour of poor, weak peasants against the arbitrary, exploitative behaviour of powerful economic and political elites, both those from within the community and those from outside. From the results of his research in Sedaka, Malaysia, Scott (1985) formulated his theory regarding the daily forms of resistance from poor, weak subsistence farmers to the oppression and exploitation they experience every day from the rich:

“...*everyday* forms of peasant resistance — the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labour, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them. Most of the forms this struggle takes stop well short of collective outright defiance. Here I have in mind the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth.” (James C. Scott, 1985:29).

This peasant resistance occurred not only as a form of protest but also as a survival strategy for poor farmers in the face of the process of change that had repressed them. The existence of social changes driven by external interests caused the poor, local peasants to be legally subordinated under the domination of the state and plantation owners or commercial farmers.

The domination of the rich against peasants which is exploitative and repressive makes poor peasants unable to fight openly. Peasant resistance in these situations occurs in the form of daily resistance, with patterns of resistance typical of the weak. The resistance of the weak peasants takes the form of small, unplanned and uncoordinated actions. The actions were carried out every day in secret with great patience and care, showing that the peasants were protesting in the form of hidden insubordination.

“These Brechtian forms of class struggle have certain features in common. They require little or no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual

self-help; and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms.” (Scott, 1985: 29).

The individual actions of the peasants as described by Scott (in which the general perspective and elite norms are considered deviant) are manifestations of dissatisfaction and veiled forms of protest from weak peasants in defending their best interests. These actions constitute a collective reaction to an exploitative system and therefore can be understood as a form of resistance that occurs in repressive social situations that make weak people truly powerless to protest and resist openly. The struggle is marked less by massive and defiant confrontations than by a quiet evasion that is equally massive and often far more effective (Scott, 1985:32). Although “on some occasions this resistance has become active, even violent. More often, however, it takes the form of passive noncompliance, subtle sabotage, evasion, and deception.” (Scott, 1985:31).

The peasants' actions as described by Scott above are closed or hidden patterns of resistance, in which the forms of peasant action do not appear openly and massively. The actions of the peasants were more of a disguised form of disobedience. This was a logical and rational choice of movement strategy for the peasants who lived in very depressed situations, which made them unable to build broad collective power to express their discontent in an open and coordinated manner. Systematic exploitation carried out repressively makes them unable to fight it openly, except to manipulate it through hidden forms of resistance which are manifested through patterns of behaviour, which in elite perspectives contradict the prevailing norms.

Peasant movements in the form of actions such as stealing, lying, avoiding forced labour by pretending to be sick, sabotage, avoiding paying taxes, and other petty actions carried out without coordination, constitute social protests that can be understood as closed resistance patterns, because it is expressed in the form of veiled insubordination or hidden resistance. Thus, the peasant social movement with a closed resistance pattern can be assessed from the peasants' actions carried out individually with great patience and care, so that they are not known to others, to officials or to the ruling elite, because this can endanger them. Although this kind of action is also carried out by other individuals, the actions of these individual peasants are not coordinated with one another. The covert resistance occurs in social situations that place extreme pressure on the peasants making them completely unable to express their protest collectively, openly and in an organized manner. The exploitative

social conditions during the colonial period, as well as state repression that encouraged industrialization and rural capitalization, meant the peasant community lived oppression, used only as objects of exploitation to fulfil the interests of the rich and the state.

Colonialism, according to Scott, led to social changes that have implications for the economy of the subsistence farmers. "Economic change under colonialism steadily reduced the scope of subsistence safety-valves." (Scott (1976: 62). In his research on the life of subsistence farming communities in Southeast Asia, Scott (1976) shows how the structural changes that occurred in the colonial era have enabled the elite and the state to further violate the economic morale of the peasants and become more exploitative.

Mustain (2007: 23) states that the expanding role of the state in rural transformation results in:

1. Changes to the relationship between rich farmers and poor farmers. Rich farmers are getting richer and poor farmers are getting poorer. Such changes give birth to various forms of resistance from the weak in facing the hegemony of the rich and the state;
2. The emergence of the reality of the poor to form awareness to fight in various forms which constitute cultural defection;
3. The development of weapons of the resistance movement against the rich and the state. Weapons that are used in their own way, typical of the weak, such as foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth (Scott, 1985: 29).

In his research in Sedaka, Malaysia (1985), Scott shows that these actions are a form of resistance by peasants to the oppression and exploitation they experience from the state and landlords. This type of farmer resistance is carried out every day, so it is called daily resistance. Scott (1985) shows that everyday forms of resistance are a form of hidden resistance from peasants as a reaction to the everyday forms of repression carried out by landlords as their common enemy. Globally, these actions are a form of resistance and a form of protest from subsistence farmers against the impact of the green revolution which is felt to threaten the survival of the farmers.

The pattern of closed or hidden resistance from peasants, in Scott's perspective (1976; 1985), is a form of resistance from poor farmers or, in Landberger's (1974: 17) definition, is a collective reaction from farmers with low social status. Referring to Scott's view, in difficult and repressive situations, peasant resistance exists in disguise and is carried out every day

based on the principle of safety first and avoiding risk. The principle of safety first is a source of moral strength that allows farmers to resist change but who are ready to take up the fight if they are faced with a reality that does not give them other options (Mustain, *ibid*: 27). This principle is a key factor in Scott's moral economic theory.

Scott compares the styles of "everyday resistance" and open defiance, which aimed more or less at the same objective. According to Scott (1985: 32), in the "everyday resistance" sphere, for example, "lies the quiet, piecemeal process by which peasant squatters have often encroached on plantation and state forest lands; in the other, a public invasion of land that openly challenges property relations. In terms of actual occupation and use, the encroachments by squatting may accomplish more than an openly defiant land invasion, though the *de jure* distribution of property rights is never publicly challenged" (Scott, 1985: 32).

In a situation where their survival is threatened, peasants would react in various ways. Eckstein (1989) says that although farmers seem passive, reluctant, and silent, they can reject conditions they do not like by reducing production or ignoring important information from their oppressors (Eckstein, 1989, in Mustain, 2007: 30). Likewise, the hidden patterns of resistance from peasants expressed through petty actions such as stealing, lying, malingering, sabotage, etc., from the perspective of Scott's moral economy (1981) are a subsistence ethic. Subsistence ethics is the moral economic foundation of poor farmers who are weak in facing external attacks, as well as weather that makes them helpless to face it except through a "subsistence ethic" (Scott, 1981: 3), namely ethics to survive living in minimal conditions.

Subsistence ethics is thus a rule of "right and wrong", which guides farmers and rural communities in regulating and managing their sources of life (agrarian) to meet their needs in the community. The "ethics of subsistence" is the most important point of James C. Scott's theory of "The Moral Economy of the Peasant" (1976; 1981). In sociological studies, moral economy is an analysis of what causes a person to behave, act and carry out activities in economic activities which are stated as social symptoms that are likely to greatly affect the order of social life. In the theory of "The Moral Economy of the Peasant," Scott (1976; 1981) describes how this "subsistence ethics" underlies all the behaviour of the peasants in their social relations in the countryside, including their defiance of innovations that come from the rulers (the state and their patrons).

Scott (1976; 1981) found that Southeast Asian subsistence farmers who grow only for family food needs face very appalling conditions due to very small fields, traditional farming methods and sometimes have to endure crop failure due to weather pattern uncertainty. These conditions were exacerbated by other demands such as taxes levied by the state which in Scott's terms "had brought ghosts of hunger and deprivation" (Scott, 1981:1) to subsistence farming families in each village. This catastrophic famine and state of deprivation rendered them highly vulnerable to subsistence risks and thus led to the emergence of an "ethics of subsistence" (Scott 1981:3).

Subsistence ethics is the moral economy of the peasants. "The Moral Economy" is the peasants understanding of economic justice and their working definition of exploitation - their view of the levies on their produce, which can be tolerated or which cannot (Scott, 1981: 5). It is this moral economy that has guided subsistence farmers in managing the continuity of collective life and reciprocal social relations when facing structural pressures from new exploitative power relations. Structural pressure from the market (which is capitalistic) and the management of the colonial and post-colonial state as well as the modernization process in Southeast Asia, according to Scott, has upset the "moral economy" of these peasants and that is what has caused the peasants to revolt.

Scott's analysis rests on the scope of the family farm in relation to nature, state and the patron-client relationship with the rich. Thus, James C. Scott's (1981) moral economy theory is based on subsistence ethics and reciprocity norms. The ethics of subsistence, in Scott's (1981: 10) view, is rooted in economic habits and social exchanges in peasant societies. As a moral principle and a right to subsistence, Scott proves that an ethic of subsistence is the norm by which to judge the demands for surpluses that come from landlords and the state. According to Scott, the essence of the problem is who stabilizes his income against whose losses (Scott, 1981: 10).

According to the moral economic approach, "village" and "patron-client bond" are two key institutions that play a role in ensuring the fulfilment of the needs of community members. Scott (1993: 120) argues that peasant communities are determined religiously by their guardian deities and ritual life, as well as politically by their own customary law and power structures. The strength and uniqueness of this political tradition, according to Scott (1993), varies according to the ecological, social, economic and historical nature of the society itself.

In this context, the village is something more than just a physical aggregation of households. Ritually, the village is a separate part of the guardian spirit and local places of worship; economically, the village is a work exchange unit; socially, the village forms a status, exchange and social security unit; politically, the village is generally a dispute resolution unit, as well as administration and taxation (Scott, 1993: 120-121). Thus, the village has its own characteristics based on a local identity which is tied to the land and strong traditional values. The village will provide guarantees for minimum subsistence needs to all its residents as far as the sources of life that the village has allow it to do so. For this reason, the operational function of the village is to ensure a 'minimum income', by maximizing safety and minimizing the risks of its residents.

In this function, the village implements rules and procedures for the creation of a condition in which poor villagers (who gets what) will still receive guarantees of meeting minimum subsistence needs by creating a mechanism of generosity and assistance from rich villagers (who gives what). In this context, the patron-client bond becomes important. The patron-client association is another institution that forms the village partner. This institution is created under unequal socio-economic conditions, where some people control the sources of life, while others do not. The patron-client bond includes a reciprocal relationship between two people which is made specifically (personally) on the basis of mutual benefit, as well as mutual giving and receiving. Whether or not a patron-client bond will last depends on the harmony between the patron and his client in exercising the rights and obligations inherent in each party.

Village and patron-client ties are like two inseparable sides of a coin. The village plays a role in regulating the distribution of the sources of life and to ensure the availability of these sources of life for the needs of its citizens. Meanwhile, the patron-client bond becomes an institution that enables the distribution of wealth, the sources of life in the village, from the rich to the poor through economic practices and social exchanges among the villagers. The guarantees provided by the village and patron-client ties are aimed at meeting the subsistence needs of their village residents.

For farming families who live economically in minimal conditions, the guarantee of their survival depends very much on the strategy of utilizing the village and the patron-client bond to fulfil their basic needs. The strategy is to avoid risk (risk averse) and prioritize safety (safety first).

Scott (1976: 13; 1981: 19) says that:

"The distinctive economic behaviour of the subsistence-oriented peasant family results from the fact that, unlike a capitalist enterprise, it is a unit of consumption as well as a unit of production. The family begins with a more or less irreducible subsistence consumer demand, based on its size, which it must meet in order to continue as a unit...The cost of failure for those near the subsistence margin is such that safety and reliability take precedence over long-run profit."

On this basis, the resistance of the peasants, according to Scott (1981), is more risk-averse (not willing to take risks / reluctant to risk or avoid the danger line) or the principle of safety first. The principle of "safety-first" is what lies behind the many technical, social and moral arrangements in a pre-capitalist agrarian order.

The colonial regimes made no attempt to protect the peasants from market fluctuations, but would instead drive them more severely into a depressed state so that their own income would not decrease (Scott, 1981:15). Peasant resistance that appears in the form of risk-aversity and safety first can be considered an attack launched by the peasants due to overexploitation by the rich which they can no longer tolerate. Petty actions, such as stealing and lying, are a form of daily resistance from weak peasants who are helpless against the daily exploitation they experience from rich people. Due to weak conditions, farmers will not fight in an organized and widespread manner. Scott sees that the reluctance of farmers to fight is widespread, because farmers do not want to take risks, which may threaten their own survival. For this reason, these weak farmers always try to avoid the line of danger and safety takes precedence (risk-averse and safety first).

The act of avoiding risk (risk-averse) is a characteristic of traditional society. According to Scott, traditional society has a moral order that cannot be separated from the problem of subsistence. Subsistence farmers are poor, small-hold farmers and their lives are highly dependent on the provisions of nature and their relationship with their patrons. The unbalanced patron-client relationship between the feudal elite, the colonial elite and the poor peasants leaves them trapped in helplessness and exploitation. Even so, these poor peasants can still survive because of the high social solidarity and collectivism that is embedded in the existing social and cultural norms.

Scott's moral economic perspective was criticized by Popkin (1979). Popkin (1979) rejects the view of the moral economic approach that prefers the peasant movement as a

defensive reaction to defend traditional institutions and their reciprocal norms from the threats of capitalism and colonialism.

From the results of Popkin's research in Vietnam (1979), he was found that (1) the movements carried out by the peasants were anti-feudal movements, not movements to control or restore old traditions, but to build new ones; not to destroy a market economy, but to control capitalism; (2) there is no significant relationship between threats to subsistence and collective action, and (3) calculating involvement in movements is more important than the issue of class threats. In other words, there is a clear difference between individual rationality and group rationality (Mustain, 2007:44).

For Popkin, peasants are rational and creative people who also want to be rich. This opportunity is open to peasants and will be obtained if the peasants have free access to the market. According to him, the interference of political organizations from outside is the driving force for the awareness of peasants to become political entrepreneurs. Popkin (1979: 35) states that moral economists have viewed peasant political and religious protests as last-gasp, defensive reactions of a dying class. Popkin argues that peasant struggles are frequently battles to tame markets and bureaucracies, not movements to restore "traditional" systems.

Popkin considers that the moral economic approach to farmers places too much emphasis on the norms and procedures of the peasant community which are covered by the awareness of survival, as well as regarding the village as a ritual and cultural unit and an important part of the economic life of peasants as a source of their rights and resources. According to Popkin, the changes in the role of the village is not derived from the community of villagers, but from the individual choice of farmers themselves.

"My analysis of peasant society begins with a focus on individual decision making and expanded conception of the role of the village in peasant economic life. Modifying the (implicit) assumptions of moral economists, I shall consider gambles as well as risks, apply investment logic to villages and patron-client relations as well as to markets, and look at the conflicts and trade-offs between private and collective benefits involved in both village management and the life of the peasant. By applying theories of individual decision making to villages, we can begin to develop a deductive understanding of peasant institutions and move the analysis back one step to the level of the individual. By using the concept of individual choice and decision making, we can discuss how and why groups of individuals decide to adopt some sets of norms while rejecting others." (Popkin, 1979: 17-18).

Olson (1971) and Eckstein (1989) disagree with all of Popkin's explanations of rationality. The attitude of individual rationality, according to Olson, does not always encourage peasant rebellion. On the other hand, Eckstein considers Popkin's rationality theory to have forgotten the strength of state pressure to thwart forms of open resistance. When there is an act of resistance which is often considered to be against the law, peasants can take various actions to oppose it collectively which cannot be explained at the individual level where the theory of rational choice rests (Mustain, 2007: 35-36).

Closed resistance patterns with distinctive characteristics as described above are in accordance with the needs of farmers, because they can suppress selective incentives, namely the losses they have to pay under economic pressure and political repression (Mustain, 2007:24).

In the daily resistance of farmers, the activities are incidental or epiphenomenal which, in Scott's view (1993: 305), are more (a) disorganized, unsystematic, and individual, (b) chancy and selfish (lust for convenience), (c) do not have revolutionary consequences, and/or (d) their intent and logic imply an adjustment to the existing dominant system. Thus, according to Scott (1993), the daily resistance of farmers does not aim to directly change the established domination system but is rather as an effort to stay alive in that system (Mustain, 2007:25).

Actions such as stealing, hiding rice and their belongings from the eyes of tax collectors, escaping or stealthily avoiding the obligations imposed by the elite class (the state and the rich) and other acts of disguised disobedience, are a combination of the efforts of the weak peasants to pursue personal gain directly and the forms of resistance of the weak against the strong rich in everyday class relations. When the state facilitates the interests of the elite class through exploitative and repressive policy products, the resistance of the weak, lower-class peasants is present in the form of covert protests and daily forms of Scottian style resistance. However, when there is a transition that encourages social change which results in changes in the structural level that weaken the elite control power, the daily resistance of the weak lower-class peasants will also undergo a transformation into forms of open, organized and massive resistance.

The peasants' actions described by Scott above are the same as those of the peasants in Ermera during the colonial and Indonesian occupation era. In the colonial period, the peasants carried out hidden protests against the government's forced labour policy and head

tax. There were those who pretended to be sick to avoid forced labour, who did not want to report the date of birth of their children so that the head tax data collection officers did not record their real age, stole coffee beans and destroyed coffee plantations at night or when officers were careless, among many other minor actions they carried out during the period of foreign rule. These actions were a form of hidden protest from the peasants which in Scott's perspective are categorized as a form of resistance from weak peasants against the state and the rich who exploit them. Scott believes that the characteristics of subsistence farmers are always to prioritize safety and avoid risk, so these farmer actions were carried out with great patience and care. According to Scott, weak peasant resistance like this is carried out every day individually and not in a coordinated manner.

Scott's theory is used in this research to analyse the hidden resistance patterns of the Ermera peasant movement during the repressive foreign rule that did not allow the peasant movement to exist openly and massively. In this research, Scott's theory is discussed, particularly in relation to his view that covert resistance is carried out individually and not in a coordinated manner. I would argue that peasant resistance in the repressive social situations described by Scott, although done individually, can also be coordinated. The hidden protests of the Timorese peasants during the colonial period were effective because of the support of the peasant families who protected each other in the strong social relations based on customary clans. When the dissatisfaction of the weak accumulates into collective discontent related to broader interests, this hidden resistance may appear coordinated in a network of clandestine movements such as those that occurred during Indonesian rule. Farmers joined the network of the clandestine movement to jointly fight for greater change that also concerned the lives of farmers. When this change occurred, the hidden resistance experienced a transformation into open and massive collective actions, as happened in the momentum of the restoration of independence in 2002.

4.3. Open resistance or collective action

If in the closed movement or hidden resistance of the Scottian model, the peasants take small individual, uncoordinated and hidden actions, with the principle of first safety and avoiding the line of danger, then in the open movement, the peasants carry out collective, open protest actions coordinated in movement organizations. The hidden movement is a

form of peasant resistance in repressive social situations, which do not allow for open and collective organizing of protest actions. However, when social change occurs, it provides opportunities for the peasant movements to exist openly in the form of coordinated collective actions in social movement organizations or networks.

According to Fauzi (2005), the farmers' social movements in the Third World can exist openly and massively because of social and political changes. There are examples of cases of the emergence of popular movements that are open, collective and organized widely, such as: *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST) in Brazil; *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional* (EZLN) in Mexico, and also the Landless People's Movement (LPM) in South Africa. Meanwhile in Southeast Asia: Assembly of the Poor (AOP) in Thailand; *Pambansang Ugnayan ng Nagsasariling Lokal na mga Samahang Mamamayan sa Kanayunan* (UNORKA) in the Philippines, *Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara* (AMAN) in Indonesia, among many others social movement organizations that are widespread in various places.

MST is the largest people's movement in Brazil which organizes landless peasants to directly occupy latifundia lands (lands that are very large in tens of thousands of hectares) to demand that the state implement land reform policies. The socio-political changes that have occurred in Brazil have enabled MST to successfully play a role as a mediator between the poor and the state. After successfully organizing the people to occupy abandoned lands, MST then encouraged the state to legalize lands that had been occupied by the people, facilitating credit for production and other efforts for community empowerment in each new occupied territory. MST's struggle is based on the Brazilian constitution which states that land must function socially.

Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional (EZLN) in Mexico, or better known as the Zapatistas, have even fought a guerrilla resistance against state policies that tormented the majority of Mexican farmers. Peasant resistance in other places, such as in Africa and in Asia, is more of a collective action taken against all forms of exploitation of the peasants facilitated by state policy.

According to Fauzi (2005: 173-174), the end of dictatorial rule in Latin America in the 1980s was immediately followed by the collapse of dictatorial regimes and the use of procedural elections as a method of regime transition in Asia and Africa. He states that in 1996, there were 23 countries in Latin America that had adopted formal democracy in the administration and transfer of government power. Meanwhile in Asia, regimes that were not

democratic had also changed in the last decade, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, South Korea, Mongolia and Indonesia.

Mustain's (2007) research on the peasant movement in South Malang, Indonesia, shows that the peasant movement that emerged during the reformation era in Indonesia (in the period after the fall of the dictatorial regime of Soeharto) was very open, expressive, demonstrative, massive and expansive. Reformation in Indonesia made it possible to organize a broader peasant movement because it was supported by youth activists, students and other intellectuals. Social change also causes changes in the patterns of peasant social movements, from a closed movement in the form of disguised insubordination to an open movement in the form of collective actions. In a situation like this, it is also possible to develop a network of movements that expand to strengthen the existence and advocacy of social movements.

The emergence of peasant movements in the context of social change like this is in line with the perspective of McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001), which is stated in a book called "Dynamics of Contention". This perspective considers that social movements are conducive to communities that are undergoing a transition to social change, because transitional situations open opportunities for actors to respond and mobilize existing social and cultural structures, thus enabling communication, coordination, and commitment between actors in an effort to produce a common understanding and perception which will ultimately lead to shared awareness of what is happening.

In the process of social change, contention usually increases, especially when there are external resources and there are (political) opportunities that can be exploited. This tendency occurs and will continue as life situations push beyond tolerance. When institutional access is open and there is division among the elite, the position of the state as the holder of social control (repression) will decrease, so that alliances will emerge, and people who previously fought have the opportunity to launch their demands (Mustain, 2007:28).

The patterns of open movements can be assessed from the various forms of collective action that take place. The actions referred to are, for example, demonstrations, general meetings, press conference, among other actions, such as occupation of plantations to reclaim ownership rights and also to fight for common interests. These actions marked the emergence of open resistance from the peasants to state policy and the behaviour of the rich and the elite. From the perspective of Scott (1993:305), the peasant movement that appears in the form of collective, open and organized actions is a genuine resistance that is (a) more

organized, systematic and cooperative, (b) principled or selfless, (c) has revolutionary effects, and (d) contains ideas or goals which negate the basis of domination.

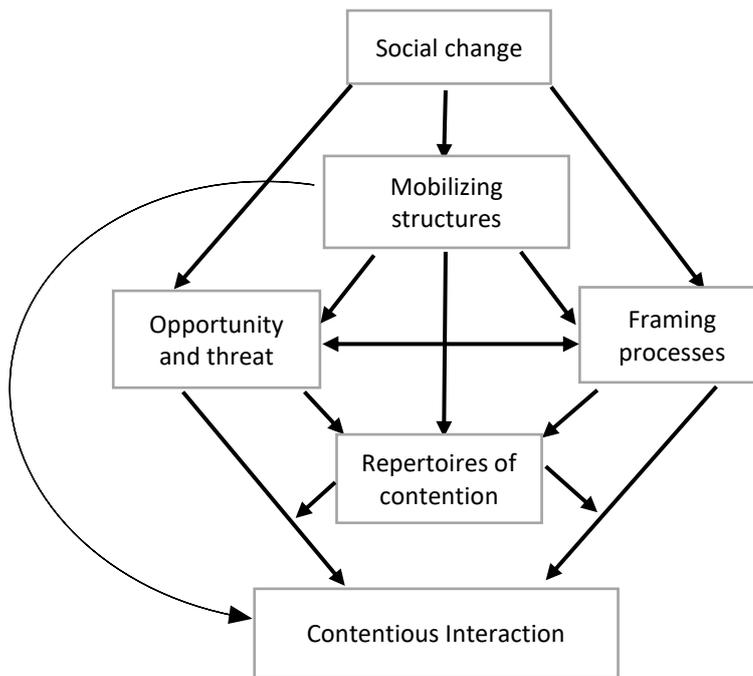
Political change has enabled marginalized people to consolidate themselves and then build collective strength to fight openly against the forms of exploitation and domination they have experienced. Political change also provides opportunities for actors to mobilize existing resources, both internal and external, to start organizing social movements openly. Organizing collective action by utilizing political opportunities and mobilizing resources can be explained by approaches to political processes and resource mobilization.

The "resource mobilization" approach was published in the work of John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (1973, 1977). Resource mobilization models emphasize the significance of organizational bases, resource accumulation, and collective coordination for popular political actors. In this approach, McCarthy and Zald stress similarities and convergences between social movements and interest group politics, and also the significance of organizational processes in popular politics (McAdam et al. 2001:15). Meanwhile, the "political process" analysis model emphasizes dynamism, strategic interaction, and response to the political environment. McAdam et al. (2001) played a role in the development of thinking about the political process approach, as well as in criticizing the resource mobilization model which they considered simpler (McAdam et al., 2001:16).

If the classic social movement agenda assigned central weight to social change, political opportunities, mobilizing structures, frames, and transgressive forms of action, McAdam et al. try to identify the dynamic mechanisms that bring these variables into relation with one another and with other significant actors. Their perspective puts each of the constituent parts of the classical agenda – opportunities, mobilizing structures, framing, and repertoires – into motion (McAdam et al., 2001:43).

A sketch of the classic social movement agenda to explain contentious politics from the perspective of McAdam et al. (2001) can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1:
The Classic Social Movement Agenda for Explaining Contentious Politics
Source: McAdam et al. (2001:17)



In a transitional situation towards social change, an actor (e.g.: a movement leader) has the opportunity to exploit the potential of local values (*framing process*) to mobilize a resistance movement. In this process, existing local institutions, organizations, and associations are used to mobilize the movement (*mobilizing structures*). However, structural mobilization efforts in the framing process still have to pay attention to the presence or absence of opportunities and threats, or the existing environmental situation, which McAdam et al. (2001) call the *repertoire of contention*, a path that culturally signifies when people interacting in political conflicts.” (Mustain, 2007:29).

In the context of this research, I argue that the shift from covert movements to open movements of collective actions was made possible by transitional circumstances. Political turmoil in 1975 caused the Portuguese colonial administration to leave Timor and open the door for the Indonesian invasion of Timor-Leste. Since then, FRETILIN organized the Timorese people to carry out widespread resistance throughout the region to fight for the independence of the country. During the period of struggle, FRETILIN mobilized people's participation and provided them with the ideology of liberation through literacy programs and political education as well as cultural activities (OPMT, 2020).

At that time, the peasants in the villages were actively involved in FRETILIN activities, causing the peasants to internalise the ideology of liberation. As a result of their ideological awakening, peasants were able to take advantage of the conflict situation to consolidate

collective power and initiate the organization of social movements. The movement organizing strategy relied on the mobilization of resources and external support, both from clandestine movement organizations and civil society organizations. In this context, it can be said that the changing conditions empowered movement activists to be able to carry out a framing process to present the peasant movement in an open and organized manner after independence.

These processes characterize openly social movements that exist through the organization of collective action, which can also be explained using collective action theory. According to Charles Tilly (1978), collective action theory is a theory that examines actions taken together to pursue common goals. Tilly (1978) stated that no matter how dissatisfied the people are, they cannot interfere in political action (including acts of violence), unless they are part of an organized group that has several resources (Mustain, 2007:39). According to Sukmana (2016), the determinant factors of a social movement in the form of collective and organized actions include: social movement organization; leader and leadership; resources and resource mobilization; networking and participation; and community opportunities and capacities.

Collective action that exists in an organized manner is closely related to the developing political situation. According to Della Porta et al. (2006: 14), "collective movements constitute an extension of the conventional forms of political action; the actors engage in this act in a rational way, following their interests; organizations and movement "entrepreneurs" have an essential role in the mobilization of collective resources on which action is founded."

In analysing collective action, Tilly (1978) uses two models: the "political society model" and the "mobilization model". The model of political society is the government (the organization that controls the main means of violence in society) and groups that fight for power. The mobilization model includes variables designed to clarify the patterns of collective action carried out by actors referring to group interests, the level of organization, the amounts of resources under collective control and the opportunities and threats used by certain competitors in relation to the government and another group of competitors (Mustain, 2007: 39-40).

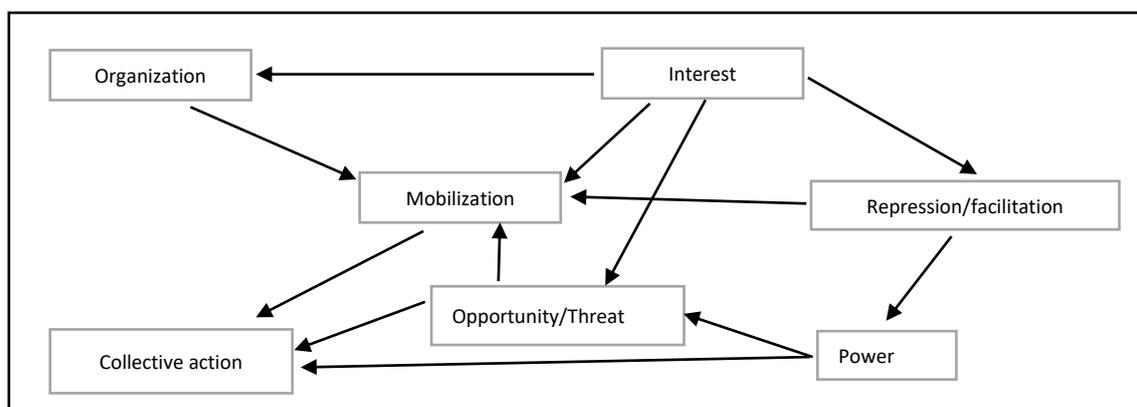
Tilly (1977) also developed a mobilization model of collective action. Tilly (1977:10), mentions five major components in collective action analysis: interest, organization, mobilization, opportunity, and collective action itself. The aspect of interests which concerned Tilly the most are "the gains and losses resulting from a group's interaction with

other groups” (Tilly, 1977:10). Thus, this aspect is closely related to economic issues and political life which allow collective action to emerge. The organizational aspect in Tilly’s collective action analysis is related to the group structure that most directly affects the capacity to act, based on its interests (Tilly, 1977:10). Thus, this aspect is closely related to the organization of movements and organizing collective action.

Consequently, the analysis of the aspect of mobilization is related to how the group obtains resources and makes them available for collective action (Tilly, 1977:11). Mobilization is the process by which a group acquires collective control over the resources needed for action (Tilly (1977:10). “Those resources may be labour power, goods, weapons, votes and any number of other things, just so long as they are usable in acting on shared interests. Sometimes a group such as a community has a complex internal structure, but few pooled resources. Sometimes it is rich in resources, but the resources are all under individual control” (Tilly, 1977:10-11).

The analysis of opportunities concerns the relationship between a group and the world around it. According to Tilly, changes in the relationship sometimes threaten the group’s interests. They sometimes provide new chances to act on those interests (Tilly, 1977: 11). This opportunity aspect relates to political opportunities, coalition opportunities, the level of repression or threats, as well as the relationship between the government and contenders who are struggling to gain power, whereas the aspect of political action is related to conflicts of interest. Collective action results from changing combinations of interests, organization, mobilization and opportunity (Tilly, 1977: 11).

Figure 2:
Charles Tilly’s Mobilization Model
 Source: Tilly (1978: 58)



Tilly (in Turner, 1998) distinguishes between a revolutionary situation and a revolutionary outcome. A situation is called revolutionary when some kind of collective action against the centre of power is clear. This type of action can take the form of demonstrations, riots, social movements, revolts, civil wars or other manifestations of antagonism to the state. Meanwhile, a revolutionary outcome will occur if the mobilization is greater than the state's ability to prevent this mobilization (Wahyudi, 2005:29).

This study assumes that collective actions that mark the emergence of an open peasant social movement are possible because of social change, a political opportunity for peasants to openly affirm the existence of the movement through the mobilization of existing resources, to strengthen their political existence and bargaining. Collective actions can occur not only because of political opportunities but also because common interests are manifested in the organization that has facilitated the operation of this peasant social movement.

The open organizing of peasant movements by UNAER has been effective because the level of state repression decreased, which allows collective power to be broadly consolidated through social movement networks from local to international levels. This has made the Ermera peasant movement stronger, establishing a strong bargaining position with the state and enabling them to influence public policies, both at the local and national levels.

4.4. Transitional circumstances and processes of democratisation

The transition to a social change has not only reduced state repression and control at the local level, but has also led to a process of rural democratization which has implications for opening space for the presence of a peasant social movement as social control of the nation-building process.

This condition causes the social movement to become strong. Thus, political bargaining between farmers and the state and the rich who have exploited them is possible. The life of the rural farmers was previously shackled in the strong state repression which caused the systematic exploitation of the peasants without others outside being aware. Peasants often harbour a deep sense of injustice, but this sense of injustice must be given shape and expression in organization before it can become active on the political scene (Teló, F., 2022). The occurrence of socio-political changes opened rural areas and made

communication between the peasants and the outside world possible. Therefore, the resistance of the peasants could be consolidated by utilizing external support, and further strengthened through movements actively participating in political processes to fight for the interests of the peasants.

The peasants also have access to education and community empowerment programs. Melucci (in Sukmana, 2016: 137) states that social movements are triggered by new situations of conflicts that are intertwined with everyday life. He further underlines the importance of free space between levels of political power and everyday life in which actors can consolidate collective identity, both through representation and participation.

The awareness as a people who have been oppressed and exploited is a collective identity which is then built and used by the peasants as a rationale to fight together. In this phase open resistance occurs. Open resistance patterns can be seen from the existence of organized collective actions supported by the development of a wider network in an effort to strengthen the social movement of the peasants themselves. If in closed resistance the actions were carried out individually and uncoordinated, then in open resistance, the actions occurred collectively, massively and organized, in which the peasant protests are expressed directly and openly, no longer in the form of hidden insubordination.

The peasant social movement that comes with an open resistance pattern indicates that the peasants already have a collective awareness, because they have started to actively participate in political processes. This process allows the peasants to have an ideological awakening to critically question the realities of their lives. This critical awaking gives the social movement strong ideological roots to enable a process of change that empowers or liberates the people.

Freire (2014) argued that revolutionary processes should happen through emancipatory forms of political mobilisation and popular education. He advanced the theory of 'dialogical action', by which liberation from various forms of oppression occurs when people question the reality in which they live. Freire emphasized the importance of dialogue as the essence of revolutionary action:

"I wish to emphasize that there is no dichotomy between dialogue and revolutionary action. There is not one stage for dialogue and another for revolution. On the contrary, dialogue is the essence of revolutionary action. In the theory of this action, the actors intersubjectively direct their action upon an object (reality, which mediates them)

with the humanization of men (to be achieved by trans- forming that reality) as their objective.” (Freire, 2014: 135).

According to Freire, revolution is a dynamic process to change the situation of oppression and encourage a sustainable process of people's liberation:

“Originating in objective conditions, revolution seeks to supersede the situation of oppression by inaugurating a society of women and men in the process of continuing liberation. The educational, dialogical quality of revolution, which makes it a "cultural revolution" as well, must be present in all its stages. (...) Dialogue, as the encounter among men to "name" the world, is a fundamental precondition for their true humanization.” (Ibid: 137)

Based on Freire's perspective above, social movements can also be understood as an alternative force and/or an important instrument in efforts to liberate the people. The presence of social movements encourages the process of changing people's lives in rural areas from being oppressed and isolated in exploitative and repressive feudal and colonial structures to becoming more democratic and socially just.

Rural areas that are open to access by outsiders, including the mass media and other social organizations, have contributed positively to the growth of collective farmer awareness. The peasant activists and movement leaders are formed by the change process. They collaborate with existing CSOs as well as activists from outside the village who are concerned with supporting each other in an effort to oversee the process of change directed at the creation of social justice. The peasant social movement in this context acts as a controlling force while social agents drive the social change that directly affects them. Social change enables activists or movement actors to meet in empowerment programs, contributing to a wider social movement. In this phase, peasant protests, which were initially only carried out by individuals in disguised forms, are now consolidated into a collective force that is openly present to question social processes that have not benefited them.

Farmers and marginalized social groups have been empowered, both by access to education and also to community development and empowerment programs. This condition gives the actors of farmers' movements the opportunity to develop themselves and at the same time build networks with social movement organizations in other places. This is the basis for the emergence of a widespread and global social movement. Guggenheim and Weller (1989) state that the general processes of capitalist expansion and the operation of

the state affect both the repertoire of dissatisfaction and possible forms of organizational action (cited in Fauzi, 2005:172).

In this process, the peasant movement gets the opportunity to consolidate its strength when dealing with existing social and political institutions to jointly and openly organize the fight for rural interests. The process of rural democratization thus also enables the peasants to be actively involved in political processes. Fauzi (2005: 173) states that in addition to the performance of neoliberal powers, rural people's movements are represented by an increasing number of formal democracies in Third World countries. According to him, this democratic transition is an important global trend that should be put in the new context of the movements of the rural people.

When changes have taken place in the context in which people operate, there will be a need for capacity development to adjust to a changing external environment (James, 2001:6). Capacity development or capacity building refers to strengthening the capacities of individuals or organisations to undertake defined tasks and activities. This is a natural part of the process of change (Wigglesworth, 2016: 39-40).

The process of social change also encourages the distribution of power. Jonathan Fox (1990:1) states that the distribution of rural power in developing countries also shapes and is shaped by national politics. Fox put forward the term rural democratization to show how the search for a new balance occurs in the interaction between society and the state. For the state, rural democratization requires an effective ruler with majority support, as well as formal and informal accountability to citizens living in rural areas. According to Fox, rural democratization cannot be separated from the general challenges of state democratization. (Fauzi, 2005:181)

I argue that the transitional circumstances that encourage the democratization process, both at the rural and national levels, create opportunities for the existence of open, collective and organized social movements. The transitional circumstances also allow activists from various places to meet to consolidate the movement, which facilitates rural movements to expand across village boundaries. Thus, peasant movement organizations, such as UNAER, can have links to other social movement organizations at the national, regional and international levels, with agendas that, although originating from agrarian-based conflicts at the local level, are brought to the surface and packaged and integrated with other global issues.

Chapter 5: Research methods and design

5.1. Introduction

After describing the conceptual and theoretical background of this research in the previous chapters, this chapter focuses the reasons why and how the research topic and location were determined, the paradigm and methodological approach that had been chosen, including how the data was collected and analysed.

The process of identifying the research topic was inspired by a deep sense of curiosity when I witnessed how rural farmers still continue to fight for justice even though Timor-Leste has become independent.

My background and personal experience during my activities with the community have influenced me in choosing a topic which also led me to determine the location and unit of analysis of this research as described in the introductory chapter (chapter 1).

My research topic is about the peasant movement in Timor-Leste with a case study on organizing the peasant movement in Ermera, a Municipality in Timor-Leste which is widely recognized as the largest coffee-producing region in the country. I have been in contact with this movement first as an NGO staff from 2002-2006 and later as a lecturer at Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL) in the Department of Community Development studying the theory and practice of community development.

5.2. Conceptual perspectives

This study aims to explore the determinant factors that have contributed to the organization of the open peasant movement by UNAER. Thus, this research is closely related to historical and cultural aspects which in its exploration are also directly related to understanding meanings from the perspectives of the research participants. Therefore, the paradigm of social constructivism was chosen.

The concept of research paradigm grew out of work by Thomas Kuhn, who published *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* in 1962. From Kuhn and others came the argument that "data and observation are theory-led, the theory is paradigm-led, and that paradigms are historically and culturally located" (R. Usher 1997:16). In relation to scientific research, the

paradigm plays an important role in orienting the actions of researchers in conducting research.

Research paradigms determine not only the approach or research methods used, but also the purpose of the research and the role of the researcher (Firestone, 1987 in Glesne, 1999:5). Creswell (2014) has chosen to use the term worldview as meaning “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990: 17). Others have called them paradigms (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Mertens, 2010); epistemologies and ontologies (Crotty, 1998), or broadly conceived research methodologies (Neuman, 2009). According to Creswell, worldviews as a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study (Creswell, 2014:6).

Based on the research paradigm that has been selected, the relevant research method to be used in this study is a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is of specific relevance to the study of social relations. Rapid social change and the resulting diversification of life worlds are increasingly confronting social researchers with new social contexts and perspectives (Flick 2002:2).

The historic origin for qualitative research comes from anthropology, sociology, the humanities, and evaluation (Creswell, 2014:13). Qualitative inquiry is often used as an umbrella term for various orientations to interpretivist research, such as ethnography, case studies, phenomenology, educational criticism, hermeneutics, or a number of other terms (Glesne, 1999:8).

According to Flick (2004:4), empirical field research analysed from the perspective of quantitative ‘objective’ research has found that despite all the methodological controls, the research and its findings are unavoidably influenced by the interests and social and cultural backgrounds of those involved. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative methods take the researcher’s communication with the field and its members as an explicit part of knowledge production instead of excluding it as far as possible as an intervening variable. The subjectivity of the researcher and of those being studied are thus part of the research process (ibid: 6). Whereas in the world of physical science there is assumed to be one reality, in the social world there is the reality of the researched and the reality of the researcher, which is influenced by our own experiences and knowledge. Thus, the world is socially constructed through different forms of knowledge, and we as researchers bring our understandings of their world into our research (Wigglesworth, 2010:16).

Many experts have provided a definition of the qualitative method, which according to them is an exploratory approach to understanding and interpreting the social phenomenon being studied. Creswell (2014:4) for example, says that:

“Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researchers making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honours an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation.” (Creswell, 2014: 4).

Common methods for conducting qualitative research include individual or group interviews, which I have chosen as the major form of data collection in this study. I conducted semi-structured interviews using an interview guide.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews are one of the most dominant and widely used methods of data collection within the social sciences (Bradford & Cullen, 2012). They are valuable because they allow researchers to explore subjective viewpoints (Flick, 2009) and to gather in-depth accounts of people’s experiences (Evans, 2018). Semi-structured interviews allow the interview process to run smoothly and are very open so that research participants can freely express their opinions, which also allows information to be explored by researchers in more depth.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using interview guidelines. The interview guide is not a rigid list of questions, but rather open-ended questions whose function is to provoke discussions focused on exploratory themes. Crotty (1998) says that “qualitative researchers tend to use open-ended questions so that the participants can share their views” (in Creswell, 2014:9).

The use of semi-structured interviews requires a certain level of previous study in the research topic area (Wengraf, 2001; RWJF, 2008; Kelly, 2010) because the interview questions are based on previous knowledge. The questions are determined before the interview and formulated using the interview guide (Mason, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2005, RWJF 2008). The interview guide covers the main topics of the study (Taylor 2005). It offers a focused structure for the discussion during the interviews but should not be followed strictly. Instead, the idea is to explore the research area by collecting similar types of information from each participant

(Holloway & Wheeler, 2010), by providing participants with guidance on what to talk about (Gill et al., 2008).

Semi structured interviews provide a framework for a range of questions, but this does not limit the researcher to a list of questions. In semi-structured or unstructured interviews, the researcher can open up fields of inquiry according to the focus which the interviewee places on the subject matter, rather than follow a fixed set of questions in a routine manner (Wigglesworth, 2010:17). The interviewee can introduce new topics of his or her own in the interview, while the interviewer will lead the questioning back to topics which have yet to be covered or have been covered in insufficient depth (Flick 2002:76). Thus, responses may extend well beyond the original conception of the questions, and open new areas of knowledge which are relevant to understanding the reality of the research participant.

The philosophical implications of qualitative research are based primarily on a constructivist framework (Stake, 1995; Glesne, 1998; Yin, 2003; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2014). Glesne (1998:5) says that:

“Qualitative methods are generally supported by the interpretivist (also referred to as constructivist) paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing. The ontological belief for interpretivists, therefore, is that social realities are constructed by the participants in those social settings. To understand the nature of constructed realities, qualitative researchers interact and talk with participants about their perceptions. The researchers seek out the variety of perspectives; they do not try to reduce the multiple interpretations to a norm.” (Glesne, 1998:5).

The advocates of the constructivism/social constructivism/interpretivism paradigm believe that:

“Truth is relative and that it is dependent on one’s perspective. This paradigm recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but doesn’t reject outright some notion of objectivity. Pluralism, not relativism, is stressed with focus on the circular dynamic tension of subject and object.” (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 18, in Nguyen, 2014:79).

In my research project, I was interested in the perceptions of young pro-independence East Timorese activists regarding the process of political change taking place in the country and the new roles they are playing in responding to this change. The paradigm of social constructivism was chosen because “a social constructionist approach can enable ideas to be unpacked in response to the concerns of the local participants, such that power inequalities between researched and researcher are minimized (Maxwell 2005:80).

By using qualitative method, I seek to explore and then interpret “the meaning that other people have about the world based on their perspective” (Creswell, 2014). Creswell asserts that:

Social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences - meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied.” (Creswell, 2014:8).

Meanwhile, according to Crotty (1998) as quoted by Creswell (2014:9)

“Humans engaged with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives – we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture. Thus, qualitative researchers seek understand the context or setting of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally. They also interpret what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researcher’s own experiences and background.”

There are various approaches in qualitative research: phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case studies and narratives (Creswell, 2014:12). The approach used in this research is a case study. The case study approach in social research was pioneered by Frederic Le Play in 1829 when he brought case studies into the social sciences (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

In the 1920s and 1930s, the University of Chicago’s Department of Sociology adopted the case study and developed various important theories in the sociological field. The case study approach was further developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss who elaborated a research method that was well known as Grounded Theory in 1967 (Nguyen, 2014:79).

Furthermore, Eckstein believed that the case study commonly used in social sciences took root from clinical studies in medicine and psychology (2009: 120). In recent decades, analysis and research using case studies has been widely used in science of Education, Social work, Nursing, Psychology, Anthropology, Economics, Politics and the like (Nguyen, *ibid*).

Case study research is a qualitative approach “in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a

variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, 2012, in Creswell, 2014:14).

In conducting this research, I have not only explored the determinant factors that have driven the emergence of the peasant movement in Emera and its strengthening processes, but also attempted to interpret and understand how the experiences of the peasants also contributed significantly in interpreting the process of change that has occurred which has also guided their attitudes and actions in an effort to create an organized social movement.

The participants' experiences related to the development of strategies for organizing and strengthening the peasant movement were formed through social processes rooted in their cultural and historical context. For this reason, exploratory approaches are very important so that researchers can understand well social phenomena and can interpret them based on their perspectives.

Loraine Blaxter, Christina Hughes and Malcolm Tight (2006:61) say that:

“Interpretivist approaches to social research see interpretations of the social world as culturally derived and historically situated. Interpretivism is often linked to the work of Weber, who suggested that the social sciences are concerned with *verstehen* (understanding). This is compared to *erklaren* (explaining), which forms the basis of seeking causal explanations and is the hallmark of the natural sciences. The distinction between *verstehen* and *erklaren* underlies that (often exaggerated) between qualitative and quantitative research approaches”.

By using an exploratory qualitative approach, I hope to explore and understand well the social relations in this study which are closely related to historical and cultural contexts as well as the dynamics of changes that have occurred which have implications for the lives of the peasants. As a researcher, I try to construct (explore, understand and develop) subjective meanings of the experiences of the participants in this study and then present them in written form based on their own perspectives. In an effort to build an understanding like this, it is undeniable that my background, personal experience, and subjectivity also influenced the results of this study.

The social constructivist approach recognizes that human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998 in Creswell, 2014:9). What creates meaning is basically the social environment, which arises both inside and outside interactions with the community. Thus, it can be said that this study aims to present a story informed by farmers from their own perspective.

Related to this, the research process is inductive in which the researcher creates meaning from the collected field data. In the data collection process, the researcher used open-ended questions so that participants could express their views freely and allow information to be explored better.

Qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005:2-4), is a field of inquiry in its own right that has emerged from the complex field of successive waves of theorizing at various historical moments. This method allows a variety of empirical methods to be used, including case study, personal experience, life story, interview, cultural texts, etc. that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Wigglesworth, 2010:16).

5.3. Research process

Research on the peasant movement in Ermera was started in 2007 for the purposes of my master's thesis. The research was conducted to study the collective action of peasants in occupying private plantations in two villages in Ermera (Lequisi and Sakoko). The research was inspired by an admiration for young rural actors who are not afraid to confront government officials, feudal landlords and the private sector to demand the government implement agrarian reform policies. The community organizers were young activists who had previously been actively involved in the clandestine movement. They mobilized subsistence farmers (peasants) to occupy private plantations in their respective villages from 2002-2003.

The peasants have occupied plantations based on historical and cultural claims. They formed farmer organizations in their respective villages and then mobilized existing resources, both internal and external to support and strengthen the organization of their collective actions. Relying on historical reflection and ownership claims based on cultural aspects, the peasants demanded the government to immediately implement the people's liberation programs that had been formulated in the FRETILIN political program in 1975, including agrarian reform.

According to my knowledge, until I resumed this research in 2017-2019, there had been no other research examining the peasant movement in Ermera, Timor-Leste. There are several studies related to social movements in Timor-Leste, including those conducted by Hill

(2002), Gunderson (2012) and Strating (2012), but they do not specifically examine the peasant movement.

Hill (2002) examines the Timor-Leste national liberation movement in the ideas of FRETILIN, 1974-1978. In her research, Hill found that there were FRETILIN ideas related to economic restructuring, which included nationalization and agrarian reform programs. However, Hill did not specifically discuss it in relation to the peasant movement. Gunderson (2012) has conducted research with a focus on developing a theoretical concept of social movement momentum by examining the origins, strategizing, and organizational dynamics of Timor-Leste's transnational social movements. Strating (2012) in her research shows how Timor-Leste achieved statehood by linking independence with democracy. Neither do the two studies specifically discuss social movements in relation to the peasant movement in Timor-Leste.

This study explores how external intervention has led to the emergence of a peasant movement in Ermera. The intervention of repressive external powers has encouraged the process of rural capitalization which has caused the indigenous people to be marginalized, both from the economic and political aspects as well as socio-cultural aspects. Thus, this peasant movement emerged not only to deterministically question class relations (economic inequality), but also social discrimination in a cultural context.

Its presence in the form of an open and organized movement was made possible by the social changes that have encouraged the democratization process. This changing situation has provided alternative options that have been strategically used by farmers to affirm their existence politically.

This movement utilizes internal resources, such as cultural claims, opportunities for change and external support as weapons used in their struggle for social justice. The emergence of the peasant social movement which coincided with the birth of the new state RDTL has significant relevance for Timor-Leste which is in the process of seeking alternative solutions to social problems posed by the long history of foreign intervention in this country.

5.4. Data collection

When I received a scholarship from the government of Timor-Leste for further PhD studies at the University of Porto (UP) in mid-2015, I decided to continue research on the peasant movement in Ermera with more focus on organizing the movement carried out by UNAER. In June 2016 the proposed research plan for writing my PhD thesis was approved and on 18 June 2016, I received permission from my supervisor at the UP to conduct research in the field. However, field data collection in several locations in Ermera was only possible after my research permit from the UNTL was issued on 26 June 2017.

I started my field work in Ermera by first reporting to the local police station that I would be conducting research in several villages and every village I visited I first asked permission from the village head or the local village head. Previously, I had reviewed several documents in the KSI office because KSI had been assisting the farming community in Ermera through conflict resolution and community empowerment programs. KSI has also facilitated UNAER with several programs aimed at strengthening this farmer union.

Seeking permission caused delays in field data collection. Field data collection for the first phase began in early April to late July 2017. The second phase began in February to May 2018 and the third phase began in April to November 2019. Although the field research was focused on Ermera, I also conducted interviews with several key informants in the Municipalities of Dili and Liquiça.

Data collection in the field was carried out through semi-structured interviews with informants, either individually or in groups. Before the interview was conducted, I explained to the participants the purpose of the research and several other matters related to the research code of ethics. I asked them to sign a letter of consent in Tetum (see appendix 1).

As described above, this research is qualitative research, where data were collected through semi-structural interviews using an interview guide with open-ended questions.

My main research question:

“What were the determinant factors that contributed to the emergence and development of the peasant movement in Ermera and how does UNAER develop organizing strategies to strengthen and empower it?”

Based on this main question, I developed subsidiary questions. These questions are:

1. What are the main factors causing the emergence of peasant resistance and what forms of resistance occurred in the beginning?
2. What are the factors that enabled the peasant movement to be maintained in an open and organized manner after the restoration of independence?
3. What are the factors that enabled UNAER to develop strategies for organizing social movements of farmers in an open and organized manner?
4. What are the sources of knowledge and experience of the farmers that enable them to participate and contribute to this movement?
5. What are the reinforcing factors that contribute to the peasant movement that UNAER has used in developing a strategy for strengthening the movement?

The data collection process was carried out using a semi-structured interview method based on the five research questions above.

As explained above, the organizing of the peasant movement did not just happen, but there were certain processes that also contributed to the success of its organization. These processes include: a situation of change that provides opportunities, participation and support from farmers as well as social organizations that share the same vision and mission. However, the contribution of these factors cannot just happen without being coordinated within a movement organization. Thus, the movement organization is the most important instrument in organizing a peasant social movement.

This research is focused on studying the role of UNAER in organizing the peasant movement. The analysis focuses on the strategy of organizing the movement carried out by UNAER, which is not only inspired by historical and cultural factors, but also UNAER's ability to take advantage of political opportunities and also mobilize available resources to emphasize the existence of this peasant movement and also to strengthen its advocacy.

In this study, data were collected through in-depth interviews, both individually and in groups with 10 key informants and 45 secondary informants and also secondary data copying and documentation. Key informants and secondary informants were selected based on the consideration that they were the initiators and organizers of the peasant movement in Ermera and/or they have been directly involved in UNAER activities, they know and understand well the goals and programs of UNAER, and also, they came from civil society organizations and support networks for the Ermera peasant movement as well as government and donors.

My interviews were conducted in Tetum, because the participants in this study could speak Tetum. Only for the interview I did in Maubara, I used the Tokodede language which is my mother tongue and also the language of the Maubara people. The list of people I interviewed is in the Appendix.

I also conducted interviews with several administrators of the *Movimentu Popular ba Reforma Agrária Liquiça/ People's movement for Agrarian Reform of the Municipality of Liquica (MPRAL)* and also farmers in Liquiça Municipality, especially in the village of Maubara Lisa, because the *Movimentu Popular ba Reforma Agrária/ People's Movement for Agrarian Reform (MPRA)* was born from there, which inspired the birth of a farmer syndicate in the Municipality of Liquiça called MPRAL, also supported by UNAER.

The initial processes for establishing the MPRAL were facilitated by KSI. For this reason, I interviewed several key informants from MPRAL to collect data related to the network development strategy that has been carried out by UNAER outside of Ermera and its impact on the process of strengthening the Ermera peasant movement.

Although the conflict situation has shaped the psychology of the local people who are always suspicious of every new person who enters their village, I did not find it difficult to collect data in the field because I have often visited conflict areas in Ermera with friends from KSI when I was doing research in Lequisi and Sakoko in Ermera in 2006-2007.

My interviews were conducted using a tape recorder, books and stationery and sometimes just listening orally, and when I got home, I just wrote it down. I was not only conducted interviews with informants at home, but also at work or other places, such as when they came to attend other activities related to organizing this movement, attending training or other activities, either organized by UNAER, KSI, 'Rede ba Rai' and also the NGO Forum in Dili.

In conducting semi-structured interviews, I only prepared interview guidelines. This interview guide is not a rigid list of questions, but only as a guide that guides us in the discussion to better explore the information from the participants of this study.

The process that occurs between the researcher and the research participants, in this case, is more of a discussion, where the role of the researcher is more provoking with open-ended questions so that information from key informants interviewed can be extracted and then interpreted properly based on their perspectives.

In addition, I also collect data through secondary data copying. The secondary data in this study I obtained from the administration of UNAER, KSI, MPRA and also from Rede ba Rai and the Directorate of National Statistics of RDTL. In the process of collecting data, I also saw and observed documentation (such as photos of activities and videos) as a supporting factor for the data that has been collected by other methods.

5.5. Data analysis

Because qualitative research is exploratory, the researcher as the main instrument of research seeks to explore as much information as possible, so that the social phenomena being studied can be analysed in depth. Loraine Blaxter, Christina Hughes and Malcolm Tight (2006:65) explain that:

“Qualitative research, on the other hand, is concerned with collecting and analysing information in as many forms, chiefly non-numeric, as possible. It tends to focus on exploring, in as much detail as possible, smaller numbers of instances or examples which, are seen as being interesting or illuminating, and aims to achieve 'depth' rather than 'breadth'.”

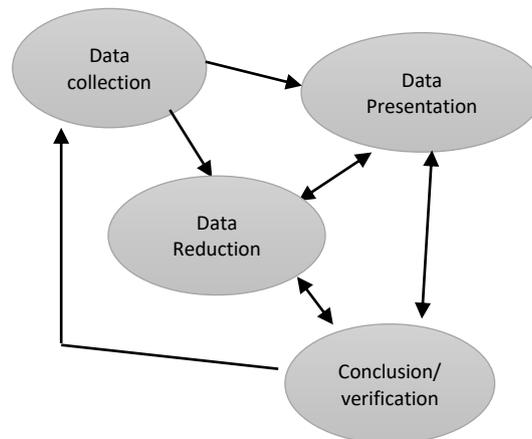
Data analysis in qualitative research is not a separate process after data is collected, but is integrated into the entire research process, starting from preparation, during and after the data collection process in the field.

The data collected were analysed descriptively. The interactive model data analysis technique proposed by Mathew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (1992) has been adopted to analyse the data in this study.

Miles & Huberman (1992) suggested four main things in the qualitative research process: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions or verification. It was explained that data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification as interrelated things, before, during, and after data collection in parallel form, to build general insight called “analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1992:19).

The interactive “model da” a analysis process is described as in the following diagram:

Figure 3:
Interactive Model of Data Analysis



Source: Miles, M.B & Huberman, M.A (1992: 20)

According to Miles and Huberman, the three types of analysis activities (data presentation, data reduction and verification) as well as data collection activities are interactive processes that are interconnected. The researcher must be prepared to move back and forth between the four types of activities during the research process.

After the data was collected, I processed it by categorizing it based on the emerging themes. In the data processing process, it is known that there are data that still need to be completed or verified. For that I have to return to the field to collect data that is still lacking and then processed again. This process is called data reduction. Thus, data analysis in this study is not a separate activity that can only be done after the data has been collected, but it is an integrated activity during the process of data collection, data processing and data reduction.

After data was collected, the results of the interviews were transcribed. Then the data is grouped based on the emerging themes. The themes that emerged from my data related to historical factors, culture, political opportunities, personal experience, strong support from community members and also from civil society organizations that contributed significantly to the processes of organizing the peasant movement carried out by UNAER.

Based on the data categorization that has been done, it is determined the important things that become the focus of the analysis whose concepts are built and developed based on field data which are also reflected based on the perspectives of the participants of this study.

From the data categorization that has been done there are three major themes that emerge. The three main themes are: first, the main causes (leading factors) for the emergence of the peasant movement. I formulated this theme based on the categorization of data related to the history of intervention by outside powers (in this case Portuguese colonialism and Indonesian occupation) with their repressive policies to marginalize the indigenous people which has led to the emergence of peasant resistance in hidden forms, whether coordinated based on traditional ideology (culturally based) as well as political ideology as happened in the organization of the clandestine movement to fight for the independence of Timor-Leste.

The second theme relates to the enabling factors for UNAER to develop an openly organizing strategy for this movement. Thus, this second theme relates to the supporting factors for UNAER. I formulated this theme based on the categorization of data related to UNAER's strategy in utilizing the collective memory of farmers about the history of oppression and exploitation during the Portuguese and Indonesian eras, the process of radicalization of farmers, transitional conditions and also legal dualism (positive and customary law) which is understood as the factors that give opportunity for UNAER to mobilize support from farmers so that the organization of an open movement can occur.

The third theme is related to the reinforcing factors of the peasant movement. I formulated this theme based on the categorization of data related to the role of civil society organizations, traditional leaders and also community participation in the movement. In this theme, I analyse how UNAER has developed a strategy for strengthening the movement through the mobilization of existing resources, both internal and external.

The analysis is presented in the form of a narrative, as stated by Bryman (2004) that narrative analysis is a qualitative data analysis approach that emphasises the stories that people employ to account for events. Bryman suggests that narrative research brings into the analysis the stories that people tell which may have been fragmented and de-contextualised in the coding process.

In qualitative research, the validity of the data is often questioned. For this reason, the researchers used triangulation to be able to check the validity of the data. Glesne (1999: 31) says that:

“Qualitative researchers depend on a variety of methods for gathering data. The use of multiple data-collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of data. This

practice of relying on multiple methods is commonly called triangulation, a term taken from surveying and navigation. The purpose for methods triangulation is not “the simple combination of different kinds of data, but the attempt to relate them so as to counteract the threats to validity identified in each” (Berg, 1995:5). Although multiple data-collection method is the most common form of triangulation in qualitative research, triangulation in order to increase confidence in research findings may also involve incorporation of multi kinds of data sources (i.e., not just teachers, but students and parents as well), multiple investigators, and multiple theoretical perspectives (see Denzin 1998).”

Thus, in the process of data analysis, the researcher also used the triangulation method to increase confidence in the findings of this study. According to Moleong (2000:178), triangulation is a technique of checking the validity of data that utilizes something outside the data for checking purposes or as a comparison against the data. The triangulation technique used in this research is the examination of data through other sources.

According to Moleong (ibid), triangulation using sources means comparing and checking back the degree of trustworthiness of information obtained through time and different tools from qualitative methods. This is achieved by road; (1) comparing the data from the observations with the data from the interviews; (2) comparing what people say in public with what they say in private; (3) comparing what people say about the research situation with what they say over time; (4) compare the results of the interview with the contents of a related document.

In this study, triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of interviews between one source and another and then confirming it with related documents.

Chapter 6:

Findings on colonial legacy and the emergence of the peasant movement in the form of hidden resistance

The previous chapters have described the theoretical perspective of the peasant movement, the growth and patterns of peasant resistance and the research method chosen to explore the Ermera peasant movement. The peasant movement is a form of social movement carried out by peasants who are driven by dissatisfaction that arises due to more structural causes rooted in historical, economic, political and cultural factors.

This chapter presents the research findings regarding the exploitative policies of the colonial period that led to the emergence of resistance from rural communities. I interviewed a number of peasants of the older generation who remembered well the Portuguese colonial period as well as younger generation Timorese who heard stories from their ancestors. Rural communities in Timor-Leste, live according to their cultural traditions and depend on a subsistence economy. I refer to them as indigenous communities because their indigenous beliefs came into conflict with that of the colonial administrations. The colonial period is defined as the period of Portuguese administration as well as the period of Indonesian military occupation in East Timor.

This chapter provides a framework and conceptualization of the early emergence of the peasant movement before the restoration of independence. I start by tracing the experiences of the peasants during the Portuguese colonial period and the Indonesian occupation which led to the discontent of the peasants against the occupying government at the time.

From their experience, my interviewees revealed exploitative policies such as: forced labour, head taxes, land grabbing, foreign domination and monopoly over sacred places belonging to indigenous communities have caused discontent from the community. These are the main factors (or leading factors) that encourage the emergence of the peasant movement.

This chapter attempts to articulate the impact of the exploitative and repressive colonial intervention that led to the emergence of the peasant movement in Ermera in the form of hidden resistance and the conditioning process for the emergence of an open social movement.

6.1. Forced labour and head taxes in Portuguese times and the response of the indigenous communities

The history of colonial exploitation can be traced to when coffee was introduced in East Timor as a commodity that could bring huge profits to the colonial state. After the sandalwood trade, the Portuguese found that coffee had a high selling value on the world market which could make a significant contribution to the colonial economy. Thus, the government made efforts to encourage coffee production, ranging from forced cultivation, which began during the reign of Governor Afonso de Castro (1859-1863), forced labour and taxes on the indigenous population, as well as the establishment of coffee plantations on confiscated people's lands, which widely occurred during the reigns of Celestino da Silva (1894-1908) and Filoméno da Câmara (1911-1917) to ensure coffee as the main source of the colonial economy.

I will argue that the implementation of these policies was carried out in a repressive manner causing the dissatisfaction of the indigenous community which led to the emergence of forms of resistance that occurred covertly at that time.

6.1.1. Forced labour and head tax under the Portuguese

In my interviews with informants from the older generation, many complained about the forced labour they had to do to meet the colonial demands imposed on them at that time:

We had to work hard to earn money to pay the head tax and at the same time we had to make sure that someone else replaced us in the fields so that our children could still have food to eat. Those who replaced us were our wives and old children (**DdR**)⁹.

A traditional elder, **AdS**¹⁰, said that based on his grandfather's story, the Timorese were doing forced labour to build a road connecting Dili with Fatubesi, Ermera during the reign of Governor Celestino da Silva. The forced labour was carried out under lashes by the foreman and in very poor conditions.

They worked very hard at that time, sometimes they felt hungry, but were forced to keep working and if they worked slowly, they were whipped. Supervision of the workers at that time was very strict and repressive. The workers only use makeshift tools for work, such as crowbars for digging soil and buffalo skins for transporting soil and sand. They were whipped using 'sicote', which is also made of cowhide which is cut into small pieces and woven (**AdS**).

⁹ **DdR** (75 years old) is one of the traditional elders from Maudiu, Ermera. Interview with **DdR** was conducted in Ermera, 13/7/2019).

¹⁰ **AdS** (74 years old) is a traditional elder from Poerema, Ermera and also one of the declarators of the founding of UNAER. Interview with **AdS** was conducted in Ermera, 15/6/2017.

According to **AdS**, apart from forced labour, all males aged 18-60 were required to work in order to pay head tax. Some young people who were old enough to start a family at that time were afraid to get married because they were worried that they would not be able to support their wives and children in the future. Most of their time was spent working to earn money in order to fulfil colonial obligations.

In carrying out mandatory work, the Portuguese at that time did not want to know about your condition, they did not want to know whether you were in good health or not, they did not want to know whether the availability of food stocks in your home was sufficient to meet the needs of your family or not. The most important thing for them was that the obligations they imposed on you had to be fulfilled. For them, you have to work, work and work (**AdS**).

Other informants from the younger generations also described stories from their parents who complained deeply about the forced labour policies and head taxes that burdened their lives during the Portuguese colonial period. Rural Timorese were required to work hard on existing plantations, some for Chinese traders or other wealthy people in their villages to be able to pay head tax according to **ASds**¹¹ and **AdC**¹². If they did not, they would lose their lands (JS)¹³.

According to a traditional elder from the hamlet of Vatuguili, Maubara-Lisa village (**Fds**)¹⁴, his father had started working to help his grandparents when his father was 8 years old, so that his grandparents could work to earn money to pay head taxes. Apart from doing mandatory work on state plantations, there are also people who work in Chinese shops and/or plantations, while women and their children are forced to replace their husbands to work in the fields and or herd the family livestock (**AdC** and **JS**).

“Most of the children at that time were forced to do domestic work helping their mothers and older sisters who were working in the fields. The pressures of life during the colonial period were very heavy. Therefore, violence against women and children at that time became very common in families.” (JS).

¹¹ **ASds** (52 years old) is the current Head of Ponilala Village and also one of the initiators of the founding of UNAER. Interview with **ASds** was conducted in Ermera, 15/2/2018.

¹² **AdC** (35 years old) is the coordinator of UNAER base in Kmalpun. Interview with **AdC** was conducted in Ermera, 13/7/2019).

¹³ **JS** (58 years old) is the current vice president of the MPRA-L (*Movimentu Popular ba Reforma Agraria, Liqueça*/People's Movement for Agrarian Reform in the Municipality of Liqueça). Interview with **JS** was conducted in Liqueça 4/7/2019.

¹⁴ **Fds** (60 years old) is one of the traditional elders from the hamlet of Vatuguili, who from the beginning has supported the peasant movement in Maubara which was coordinated in the MPRA. Interview with **Fds** was conducted in Liqueça, 5/7/2019.

For people who were very poor, sometimes they stole other people's livestock to sell clandestinely to the rich to meet their head tax demands, even though they were aware that if caught, they would be punished and after that their land will be confiscated (**JS**). The Timorese were treated like slaves on their own land (**BS**)¹⁵.

After plantations were opened on people's lands seized by the colonial government, people were mobilized from various locations to be forced to work on the plantations (**AdS**).

Several informants interviewed (**AdS**, **JAT**¹⁶, **ASds**, **AIGMs**¹⁷, **BS** and **JS**), complained that compulsory work and head taxes were implemented with various forms of violence, such as caning, forced labour and confiscation of livestock for those who disobeyed and were unable to pay the head tax. The colonial government tried to get economic benefits for its country by promoting trade-oriented agriculture and limiting people's subsistence agriculture whose production was only for consumption.

The introduction of the plantation system caused the rural population to be forcibly mobilized to work hard both to increase production for market needs and to pay head taxes.

According to Perry Anderson (in Hill, 2002:7), the head tax was used to force the peasants into the monetary sector. The changes resulting from the intervention of colonial policies have led to a transformation in the subsistence economy of the indigenous community, which in the past was based more on bartering into cash. These changes disrupted the relationship between the rural peasants and their subsistence culture. In fact, their subsistence culture relies more on forms of cooperation based on the spirit of mutual help, collectively and high social solidarity. The head tax policy forced them to do productive work for the colonial government and/or the capitalists (to be able to make money), where the social relationship between them in the work system was more a patron-client relationship based on the logic of exploitative capitalism.

Bernstein (2010) in his work entitled "Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change: Agrarian Change & Peasant Studies", describes the early history of capitalism that is strongly linked to the history of colonialism. Colonialism and capitalism have disrupted the lives of rural

¹⁵ **BS** (28 years old) is one of the current Vice Presidents of UNAER. Interview with **BS** was conducted in Ermera, 30/11/2019

¹⁶ **JAT** (50 years old) is one of the Vice Presidents of UNAER and also one of the initiators of the founding of UNAER. Interview with **JAT** was conducted in Lekisi, Ermera, 11/11/2019.

¹⁷ **AIGMs** (59 years old) is now the President of UNAER and also one of the initiators of the founding of UNAER. Interviews with **AIGMs** were conducted in Maudiu, Ermera, 15/6/2017.

communities and also agrarian changes that occurred as a result of the implementation of repressive and exploitative colonial policies against indigenous communities in order to gain profits to finance their country.

6.1.2. Colonial repression and rural Timorese communities' responses

Because they were depressed by the repressive situation that occurred at that time, they then secretly carried out acts of defiance in their own way so that they could survive (**MT**)¹⁸.

During the long period of colonial rule, a repressive approach was implemented to force rural communities to work hard to meet the demands of their own life as well as to fulfil the colonial demands imposed on them. At that time people worked to earn money not for basic needs but to pay head tax (**JAT**).

The colonialists justified all means, including using violence and weapons to force the indigenous community to do whatever they wanted (**LSB**)¹⁹. So, they did not dare to fight and were forced to just surrender to the will of the invaders (**JAT**). Every protest from the community members was always answered with violence, torture and forced labour (**BS** and **JS**). This made the peasants afraid to fight openly (**JAT, LSB, BS** and **ASdS**).

The repressive situation caused their discontent to be manifested in the form of hidden resistance (**AdS, JAT, ASdS, AIGMs, LSB, LS**²⁰, **BS, MT** and **JS**). The peasants carried out actions such as pretending to be sick to avoid compulsory labour (**AdS**); run away and or hide from officers so that they are not recorded when population registration is carried out (**JS**); stealing coffee in plantations (**JAT** and **MT**); stealing other people's goats or pigs to be sold secretly to rich people in the city to be able to pay head tax (**JS**); and also other actions that could be understood as hidden forms of resistance from the peasants against the exploitative and repressive colonial system at that time.

¹⁸ **MT** (50 years old) is a former Director of KSI who since 2001 has been assisting the peasants in Ermera through the Conflict Transformation program which contributed significantly to the empowerment of the peasants which then gave them a perspective on how to organize a social movement that rely on the collective strength of the peasants and also the development of networks to strengthen the social peasant movement. Interview with **MT** was conducted in Dili, 15/11/2019.

¹⁹ **LSB** (45 years old) is the current UNAER base coordinator in Lekesi. He is one of the young activists who together with other friends under the coordination of **JAT** have organized the peasants in Lekesi to occupy the Aipu plantation since 2001 until now to demand agrarian reform. Interview with **LSB** was conducted in Lekesi, Ermera, 11/11/2019

²⁰ **LS** (42 years old) is the coordinator of UNAER base in Gegemara. Interview with **LS** was conducted in Ermera, 24/9/2019).

During the Portuguese colonial period, no one dared to oppose the colonial government (**DdR**). Local kings who dared to oppose colonial policies would be arrested and exiled elsewhere (**AdS**). Meanwhile, the rural population, who at that time tried to avoid the colonial obligations imposed on them, would be severely punished, such as being caned, shaved, forced to work overtime or having their livestock and/or land confiscated and handed over to the rich people in their village who could provide money to pay their head tax (**AdS, ASdS, JAT, JS, AdC and BS**). That is why most of the villagers were not happy with the colonialists and capitalists (**ASdS**), but at that time no one dared to manifest their dissatisfaction in the form of open protests due to strong state repression (**MT, DdR, AdS, AIGMs, ASdS, JAT, and JS**).

Although colonial oppression had made the peasants afraid to protest openly, it did not mean that there was no resistance at that time. The peasants expressed their resistance in the form of closed movements or hidden patterns of resistance, which appeared in hidden actions and covert disobedience, such as pretending to be sick to avoid forced labour, lying, stealing and hiding from colonial officials (**JAT, JS, MT, DdR, AdS, ASdS, and AIGMs**).

The hidden actions of each individual peasants are collective response to the repression that has depressed their lives. Several informants (**AdS, JAT and JS**) explained that actions such as pretending to be sick to avoid forced labour, stealing and hiding from the colonial apparatus, were carried out by the peasants so that they could continue to work in the fields to support their families, rather than wasting time only to fulfil colonial obligations.

The closed movement or hidden resistance of the peasants in this context can be understood as a rational choice made by the peasants to adapt to the exploitative and repressive colonial system at that time.

The peasants felt that the exploitative colonial system had deprived them of their land and sources of income as well as their normal life opportunities. Therefore, actions like stealing and lying are actually rational choices for them to survive (**MT**).

When the heaviness of the family's demands, were compounded by imposed colonial obligations, peasants were forced to disobey or steal in order to survive (**AdS and JS**). In a very tight situation, the peasants will survive in their own way, including justifying any means to be able to meet their basic needs which cannot be obtained only through compulsory labour (**JAT**).

The peasants realized that in a repressive system, where the state actually appeared as an agent that facilitated the exploitation and oppression of the people, there was no longer any chance for the weak to survive in normal ways. Therefore, they take any action, including violating social norms in order to survive.

In Portuguese times they had to lie, steal or hide because they had no money to pay the head tax. Therefore, in every action at that time, they always did it very carefully (**JAT**).

Apart from being a form of resistance, these actions can also be understood as their attempt to survive in an exploitative and repressive system. Therefore, their actions were carried out secretly in order to avoid various risks that endanger themselves (**MT** and **JAT**).

Their actions were carried out in secret and were very careful so as not to be easily detected by the authorities. Therefore, these actions depended on the situation and conditions that could allow them to occur, for example stealing coffee when the officers were not guarding, or in the evening when everyone has returned to their homes (**JAT**).

The discontent of the communities towards the colonials was also manifested in the form of lying. Most of them when asked in public, they were always dishonest or pretend to be stupid. For example, many people at that time did not want to report to the colonial officers or did not let the public know about the birth of their baby. They do this with the intention of deceiving officials regarding the age of their child, which is closely related to the strategy to prevent their children from being targeted for paying head tax in the future. Because if the colonial rulers knew for sure the date of birth of their children, when they turned 18, they would be forced to pay head tax.

That's why when a mother holding her baby is suddenly asked: "How old is your baby?" the mother might say "I don't know for sure". She might say that her child was born in the last growing season or on a night when the moon was full, but she didn't know the exact date. Even though the mother actually knows her child's date of birth, she will pretend to be stupid and dishonest to others (**JAT**).

When colonial officers came to do population enrolments, some families always tried to hide their children from the colonial officers so that their children were not registered or they would not provide correct information about the ages of their children (**JS**).

Our ancestors did not go to school so they could not read and write. Therefore, when their child was born, they did not know the date of his birth, because apart from not having a calendar at home, they also could not read and write. They only know what day their child was born. In some places at, if their child was born on Monday, they were given the name "Mau Gunda" (meaning the child born on Monday), if born on Tuesday, they were given the name "Mau Tersa" (meaning the child born on Tuesday), if born on Thursday, given the name "Mau Kinta" (meaning the child born on Thursday), if born on Friday, given the name "Mau Sesta" (meaning the child born on Friday). But if we ask the date, month and year of their children's birth, then they just lie. If it was Portuguese officials who asked, they would lie that their children were very young, so that one day Portuguese officials would not force them to pay taxes and make them work on plantations. Therefore, even if the family members who were with them at that time knew of the lie, they would not report it to the Portuguese officials, because

they all understood each other's condition. They knew each other and would not let each other suffer because of their actions. So, it is a collective behaviour that happens covertly to be able to respond to repressive situations that make them very depressed (**JAT**).

At that time, people lived isolated only in their respective villages (**AdS**). Even though their lives were simple, they had high social solidarity (**JS**). Their social relationship was strongly tied to the culture and customs of their ancestral heritage (**ASdS**). They were not equipped with formal education (**AIGMs**). The colonial system made the indigenous peoples live in ignorance and obscurity (**JS**). Although in its development colonial education in the Portuguese period was also accessible to ordinary people, the majority of the indigenous population in the village still experienced difficulties in accessing colonial education (**AIGMs, JS and AdS**).

“At that time almost, everyone did not have money to buy books and school supplies for the children. After all, if all the children were sent to school, there would be no one to help their parents raise the livestock, or take care of the younger siblings at home. People used to have many children. Usually, the eldest son has to look after his younger siblings or help raise livestock so that the mother can work in the garden and the father can do the mandatory work on the plantation or earn extra money to pay the head tax.” (**AIGMs**).

Apart from the lack of money, the reluctance of the communities to send their children to school was influenced by the perception that colonial schools forced Timorese to abandon their customs, beliefs and cultural traditions (**JS and AdS**).

“Not only the common people, the kings of Timor in the early days of Portuguese colonialism did not want their children to be sent to colonial schools, for fear that their children would leave the original Timorese customs. They were worried that in colonial schools their children would be influenced by colonial doctrines and foreigners' perceptions of the Timorese nation and its culture which was considered backward and that their children could turn away from the culture, beliefs and customs of their ancestral heritage.” (**JS**).

The communities' suspicion of colonial education, which was also exacerbated by repressive systematic exploitation, did not allow the peasants to consolidate their hidden acts of disobedience into a collective force that could be manifested in the form of open, collective and massive resistance (**AIGMs, AdS, ASdS, JAT, MT and JS**). However, their disobedient behaviour at that time proved that collective resistance really existed even though it occurred in a hidden and disorganized form (**MT and AIGMs**).

The disobedience of rural communities to exploitative colonial policies was not only manifested in hidden actions, but also in the form of dress behaviour. During the Portuguese colonial period, the Timorese in the village preferred to wear tais²¹ rather than trousers.

²¹ *Tais* is the woven cloth of the Timorese people

“At that time, Malae would ask young people who wore trousers to pay taxes, because they thought that only people who had money could buy trousers. That's why young people at that time didn't want to wear trousers, so they wouldn't be forced by Malae to pay head tax.” (DdR).

It was a strategy from young people to avoid the colonial entanglements that burdened their lives (JAT). Actions like this were very common at certain times during the colonial period and these behaviours were an attempt by the villagers to avoid the head tax, but were unknown to the colonial government (DdR, AdS, JAT and JS). This was also a form of silent protest from them against the exploitative colonial policies (AdS).

The avoidance of the head tax policy was also carried out by hiding from colonial officials who would collect taxes or escaping to their families in other villages so that they could live freely and not be recorded as objects of head tax (JS and AdS).

“Even though there were neighbours who knew about the action, they did not report it to the officers. They even protect each other, because they have very strong clan relations based on customary marital relationship and they will not allow cultural relations between them to be disturbed by the colonial interests imposed on them” (JS).

In a depressed situation, the villagers are always resourceful (or always have a strategy) to avoid it. Therefore, the "deviant" behaviours that they did consciously and collectively, as stated by the informants above, were actually their weapons of resistance. The strength of state repression has forced them to find their own weapons of resistance from within themselves, which they then use as a collective force (or it can be understood as their common weapon of resistance) against all forms of exploitation and oppression they experience. Thus, collective behaviours that occur covertly in this context can be understood as a form of their resistance to colonial rulers or also as their strategy in responding to repressive situations that make them very depressed.

“These collective behaviours were more of a strategy that was most likely to be used by those who were already powerless but were still being oppressed.” (JS).

The real conditions of indigenous communities, as described above, allow the emergence of collective behaviour such as lying and pretending to be stupid, which they can use as weapons to fight all forms of outside intervention that threaten their survival.

“Actions such as lying and pretending to be stupid also benefited the indigenous communities, because the colonial authorities did not suspect them. Colonial officials who carried out the arrolamento da população (population registration) would just believe what the baby's parents said, because they knew that the baby's parents were uneducated, so it was natural that they could not record the birth date of their child. Although such thinking may be true, but the true essence of their actions is to oppose the head tax imposed on them.” (JS).

According to **JS**, some of the colonial officials who carried out population registration even used indicators of physical characteristics as a way to identify the tax objects they were targeting, but the indigenous communities were still able to avoid them.

“Some of the population registration officers at that time thought that youth aged 18 years and over could be seen from their physical characteristics such as the growth of a moustache and beard. When the village youths found out about this, most of them then used traditional medicines to remove their moustache and beard. For that when colonial officers came, they could lie that they were not old enough to pay taxes, which could be proven from their moustache and beard that had not grown.²² We never know about the traditional medicine they have used for it. Only they and their families know about it. Because if many people find out, the information will immediately spread widely and could put them in danger, if known by the colonial government.” (**JS**).

Although population registration continued to be carried out by the colonial government, acts of mass deception by the communities continued and many people at that time even managed to avoid head taxes, only in the manner described above.

The hidden actions as well as the disobedient behaviour of the communities as described above could function effectively because of the mutual trust built through social relations based on their culture: “social relations formed through marital exchange relations between clans (*Fetosan-Uma mane relationship*).” (**JAT, AIGMs, AdS, JS, ASdS and DdR**).

Based on the description above, it can be said that the intervention of colonial policies through forced labour and head taxes, which were imposed on the indigenous people, marked the hegemony of the state and the penetration of capitalism, which had disrupted the relationship between the peasants and their subsistence culture. Situations like this led to the discontent of the indigenous community against the colonial government and the capitalists. However, the implementation of these repressive policies, caused the peasants to manifest their discontent in the form of disguised disobedience and also hidden actions which were carefully carried out to avoid danger. Therefore, their actions, apart from being understood as a survival strategy in a repressive and exploitative system, were also a form of resistance, which also marked the beginning of the emergence of the peasant movement.

Although the hidden resistance of the peasants at that time was not organized, the existence of mutual trust and also secret cooperation between them to protect each other was a hidden form of coordination to ensure the continuity and functioning of their resistance patterns which were facilitated through social relations that firmly bound in a system of marital exchange based on their cultural traditions.

²²This information is the same as that stated by Januario Soares (in dos Santos, 2008: 110).

In this context, the peasant movement in the colonial period was a closed or hidden movement in contrast to the open and organized movement that happened after the independence of East Timor.

6.2. Expropriation of people's land and marginalization of the peasants during the periods of foreign occupation

The early history of the establishment of plantations in Ermera during the colonial period was marked by acts of confiscation and occupation of people's lands by the state and foreign investors in cooperation with the colonial military apparatus. This colonial policy was continued by the militaristic Indonesian occupation government to control people's lands for business purposes.

Foreign intervention with a coercive approach has disrupted the lifestyle of the indigenous communities, both from the economic and socio-cultural aspects. Repressive land acquisition for the benefit of plantations has created a cultural clash, which has led to the emergence of discontent by the communities. Later, the control of plantations by the military during the Indonesian occupation government, also repressively marginalized the indigenous peasants and contributed significantly to the emergence of peasant resistance.

This section describes foreign intervention through its coercive actions in promoting the economy, which is based on the plantation industry and its implications for the subsistence life of indigenous communities.

6.2.1. The land acquisition and coffee plantations in Portuguese times

“Tensions arose when Babo, who is a Portuguese, secretly went to the colonial government to obtain ownership rights to the land that actually belonged to our ancestor named Bersik to establish a plantation. Babo cooperated with the colonial military to force the indigenous population out of here. So, the Aifu plantation was built on our ancestral land which was previously a village of indigenous people which was controlled by foreigners for plantation purposes.” (LSB).

After discovering that Ermera was the most suitable area for coffee cultivation, Governor Celestino da Silva formed a partnership with the local rulers (*liurai*) where he was appointed and recognized as the younger brother of the traditional rulers of Ermera, which then allowed him to dominate and carry out systematic exploitation of the natives.

AdS explained that after it was discovered that the Ermera highlands (in the villages of Fatubolu, Maubu and Urahou) were suitable areas for coffee cultivation, Governor

Celestino da Silva immediately identified the clan (*uma lisan*) who was in power at that time in these areas.

“Celestino found that there were two traditional clans in power at that time: *Uma Lisan* Mau Koli and *Uma Lisan* Lel Koli. Then he approached the two indigenous royal clans and asked for a ritual based on the beliefs and culture of the local indigenous people (a fraternity agreement by drinking blood) and from there Celestino asked to be appointed as the younger brother of the two traditional clans. From there Celestino was recognized as an integral part (younger brother) of these two clans and later widely known in Ermera as the *Emboot Ber Koli*.” (AdS).

Armed with this customary recognition, da Silva then dominated Ermera with strong support from the local royal clan (**AdS, HdS, AIGMs and ASdS**). After successfully influencing the local rulers at the time, Celestino then built a road connecting Dili with Fatubesi, Ermera, relying on forced labour by the indigenous population (**AdS**).

In this way the colonial government took control of all of Ermera and issued its coercive policy of controlling people's lands to open plantations, such as the largest SAPT plantation in Fatubesi, as well as private plantations which were obtained by investors because of their good relationship with the Governor (**ASdS, AIGMs, DmN and LS**).

“When Celestino first came to Fatubolu and found that the local people did not want to give up their land for plantation purposes, he immediately mobilized soldiers from Mozambique to forcibly expel the people from there and arrested the king of Fatubolu and exiled him to Cailaco for 4 years. Two of the king's aides at that time were also arrested and exiled to Atabae and later killed in Hatbikare. After knowing this, the king of Maubu then fled to Maubara and was hidden by the king of Maubara.” (AdS).

AdS said that after successfully dominating the indigenous kingdoms, Governor Celestino da Silva mobilized indigenous people from various places, outside Ermera, to work forcibly on the SAPT plantation in Fatubesi, starting from planting *aisamtuku*²³, coffee, vanilla, rubber, cocoa and others, including cocaine.

HdS²⁴ explained that Celestino da Silva also prohibited indigenous people who were forcibly employed in his plantations to carry out cultural activities. According to **AdS** and **HdS**, the indigenous workers at that time only built huts to live and work there for years until they

²³ “*Aisamtuku*” is the name of the Timorese people for the *albizzia moluccans* tree” (Gunn, 2005:203). Domingos Lemos (former Head of the Ermera Plantation Service in 1976-1999) said that *albizzia* is the umbrella/protective tree for coffee, which the Timorese call *aisamatuku*. Lemos explained that in Tetum, the word “*ai*” means tree, then the word “*sama*” means **stepping** and “*tuku*” means **hit/beat**. According to him, it is very likely that *albizzia* seeds entered and their cultivation was carried out by indigenous farmers who at that time were full of oppression and violence they experienced from the colonialists, so they named this tree as *Aisamatuku* (Boavida, 2008: 80). According to **JAT**, the seeds of this tree were brought by the Portuguese to Ermera and they forced the natives at that time to cultivate it in fertile vacant lands and after this tree grew the natives were forcibly expelled from their lands to build plantations by employing the natives by force.

²⁴ Interview with **HdS** was conducted in Maudiu, Ermera, 15/6/2017.

had children and grandchildren there. They could not return to their place of origin because apart from being far away was not permitted by the colonial authorities. Therefore, communication with the family and also the relationship with the traditional house in their area of origin was also cut off. According to **DmN**²⁵, the information presented by **AdS** and **HdS** has become the general knowledge of the older people in Fatubesi, Ermera.

When coffee became the mainstay of the colonial economy, the government cooperated with foreign investors to exploit this country and oppress indigenous peoples (**AIGMs**). They entered Ermera through initial contact with traditional rulers, who after conquest were used as facilitators of colonial interests in the systematic exploitation of indigenous peoples and their natural resources (**ASdS, DmN, AIGMs, AdS, HdS, DdR, JAT** and **DTS**).

Some informants from this study (**AdS, HdS, DdR, JAT, ASdS, AIGMs, DmN** and **JS**), explained that the expropriation of people's land for plantation purposes did not only occur in Ermera, but also in other places such as in Maubara (Municipality of Liquiça). The opinions of the informants above are in line with the explanations of Abilio de Araujo²⁶, one of the founders of FRETILIN and the drafter of land reform in FRETILIN's 1975 manual and political program.

According to de Araujo (in dos Santos, 2008: 88), before the plantations were built, the people paid tribute to the colonialists in the form of gold, sandalwood and other valuables. However, when these valuables were depleted, the colonialists forced the people to open communal plantations to grow coffee in the western part of East Timor and coconut in the eastern part of East Timor. Since then, the colonial government annexed people's lands to open plantations.

The annexation of people's land by foreigners, according to de Araujo, occurred widely when the *deportados*²⁷ arrived (ibid: 55). By giving large lands to the *deportados* to open plantations, the colonial government intended to dilute the radicalism of the *deportados* to prevent them from inciting the local population to fight against the Portuguese colonialists (Aditjondro, 2000: 180).

²⁵ Interview with **DmN** was conducted in Maudiu, Ermera, 4/9/2019.

²⁶ An interview with Abilio de Araujo was conducted in Dili, on 27/2/2008, when I was doing research for my Master's thesis.

²⁷ *Deportados* are people deported by the Salazar government to the Portuguese colonies in Asia and Africa because of the political disobedience they carried out against the Salazar government at that time.

During the colonial period many foreigners owned land in Ermera because they had good relations with the repressive colonial government. Several informants from this study (**ASdS, JAT, AIGMs, LS, AdC** and **JS**) stated that the foreigners who controlled the lands of the indigenous people, mostly came from the deportees, colonial government employees, the colonial military members and Chinese traders. In addition, according to **DdR**, the mestiços (mixed blood descendants) also controlled the people's lands, because of their good relationship with the colonial government.

DdR explained about the annexation of land in Maudiu by a *malae*²⁸ who according to him, even though he was married to a Timorese woman, did not have the customary right to control the lands of the indigenous people.

“They are Portuguese. They do not give gold or silver to buy or to rent the land here. They just occupied it. Matias and Júlio are Portuguese. Matias has a son named Julio Madeira. Julio Madeira married Maria Recardina, a Timorese woman from the Riheu-Bibor clan. From this marriage he felt he had the customary right to control the land here. He should be aware that in the customary relationship here he has no rights because he is a foreigner.” (**DdR**)²⁹

Most of foreigners, controlled people's lands through their initial approach to traditional elders in order to be able to obtain a piece of land to be used as a location for coffee and albizzia nurseries (**ASdS, BS, JAT** and **LS**) or for livestock business (**LS**), but after that they occupied it extensively (**ASdS, BS, JAT, LSB** and **LS**). When the indigenous people protested against their action, they then cooperated with the colonial military to seize it only (**JAT, LSB** and **LS**).

ASdS and **BS** explained that the people's lands in Ponilala, during the colonial period, were occupied by a Portuguese to open a coffee plantation³⁰.

“The plantations in Ponilala, especially those in Sakoko (Ramelihi and Ponilalaria plantations) were opened by a Portuguese named Pedro Lobo. At that time Pedro Lobo came to ask our ancestors here for land to grow coffee, albizzia and cacao seedlings. After that he asked the indigenous people to help him to start the nursery process and also to opened a road around their ancestral lands which later became the boundaries of the plantation and also as a road for the horse foreman who was paid by Pedro Lobo to control his plantations.” (**BS**)³¹.

According to **ASdS**, the mechanism of control over people's land by foreigners in colonial times was always the same:

²⁸ *Malae* is Tetum which means foreigner.

²⁹ Interview with **DdR** was conducted in Ermera, 13/7/2019.

³⁰ The explanations from **ASdS** and **BS** are also the same as field findings from dos Santos's research in Lekesi and Sakoko in 2008 (dos Santos, 2008:83-86).

³¹ Interview with **BS** was conducted in Ermera, 28/9/2019.

“...approaching traditional elders who have strong influence in society and dominate them so that these foreigners can have access to people's lands and privatize them for private business purposes. These foreigners cooperated with the colonial government to exploit the indigenous people and silence them with military repression and also other policies that left the indigenous peoples completely powerless to rally a common force to fight back” (**ASdS**)³²

The occupation of people's lands was also made possible by the implementation of a head tax policy which had to be paid in cash (**BS, JS and AdC**).

“When the colonial government imposed a head tax to be paid in cash, the poor faced difficulties. Therefore, they came to borrow money from Pedro Lobo to fulfil their colonial demands at that time. Since the indigenous peoples were unable to repay the loan, Pedro Lobo eventually occupied their customary lands to establish plantations. Pedro Lobo's plantation then fell into the hands of the BNU Bank manager, because Pedro Lobo had applied for a loan from the BNU bank but because he was unable to repay it, the plantation was finally controlled by the BNU bank manager.” (**BS**).

BS said that based on stories from several traditional elders that Pedro Lobo was the first foreigner, who opened a plantation in Sakoko. Then the plantation fell into the hands of a BNU bank manager because Lobo was unable to repay his loan to the BNU bank to finance his trial in court. At that time, he was accused of having sent people from Ermera to support the Viqueque rebellion. Because of that, his plantations were confiscated by a BNU bank manager and occupied them until 1975. After the Indonesian invasion, the plantations were controlled by the Indonesian military.

The mechanism for controlling people's lands, as happened in Sakoko, is the same as what happened in Gegemara. According to **LS**, the large land in his village was taken from their ancestors by a Portuguese soldier named Lieutenant Chiqueira, during the colonial period for livestock business and later used to open a Hatugu plantation.

“At that time Lieutenant Ciqueira came to meet our grandfather who was the chefe de povoção Gegemara (head of the Gegemara hamlet), named Paulo to ask for a plot of land which he said would only be used for livestock. But then secretly he did *aforamento*³³ and then occupied our ancestral land more widely, apart from livestock business, it was also used to build plantations. During the Indonesian occupation, the heirs of foreign plantations here always cooperated with the Indonesian military to be able to continue to control these plantations.” (**LS**)³⁴

The explanation from **LS** was confirmed by **JBS**, a traditional elder from Gegemara hamlet. According to **JBS**, these lands were customary lands of several clans in Gegemara which were then occupied by Chiqueira.

“This land is customary land, the collective land of several clans here. Lieutenant Chiqueira just occupied it. He secretly went to the government to transfer the ownership status of our ancestral land as his private property. From there he expelled and forbade the indigenous people here to build houses

³² Interview with **ASdS** was conducted in Ermera, 1/3/2018.

³³ Applying for lease rights to the government. *Aforamento* is a 20-years leasehold that could be converted into freehold after 40 years (Fitzpatrick, 2002: 153).

³⁴ Interview with **LS** was conducted in Dili, 29/8/2019.

or to farm here. Because he was a military officer, the indigenous people were afraid and left their ancestral lands here to be controlled by him." (**JBS**)³⁵.

The control of people's lands with approaches like this, was not only carried out by the Portuguese, but also by some Chinese traders. **AdC**³⁶ explained that the plantations in Camalpun, Lihu Village, were built on their ancestral lands which were controlled by a Chinese trader during the colonial period and from the Portuguese colonial era to the Indonesian occupation era, the plantation owners always cooperated with the military apparatus to protect the plantations. Therefore, the indigenous peoples were afraid to reclaim their ownership rights to their ancestral lands.

The annexation of indigenous lands by force using a militaristic approach during the colonial period also occurred in the village of Lequisi. **JAT**³⁷, explained that the Aifu plantation was built on land belonging to their ancestor named Bersik which was forcibly occupied by a Portuguese citizen, named Babo, after Babo cooperated with the Portuguese colonial army to forcibly expel the indigenous people from their hometown. The explanation from JAT was also confirmed by **LSB**³⁸ and was the general opinion of several traditional elders in the village as well as the former Head of the Ermera Plantation Service during the Indonesian occupation, Domingos Lemos (dos Santos, 2008:83).

JAT and **LSB** explained that at first Babo, who is a Portuguese citizen, came to Bersik (a traditional elder of Lequisi at the time) to ask for a plot of land for a coffee and *aisamtuku* (albizzia) nursery. But after that Babo took control of the Bersik lands and also the lands of other indigenous people there by force with the help of the military apparatus to open plantations which are now known as the Aifu plantation.

According to **TdN**³⁹, Bersik was a very influential traditional elder and owned a large area of land at that time. Therefore, foreigners tried to approach him in order to have access to the vast indigenous lands to open plantations. **TdN** also mentioned that Babo was able to open a plantation in Aifu because he managed to take advantage of his good relationship with the colonial government at the time to ask the colonial army for help to seize Bersik lands and

³⁵ Interview with **JBS** (60 years old) was conducted in Gegemara, Ermera, 24/9/2019.

³⁶ Interview with **AdC** (35 years old) was conducted in Railaco, Ermera, 13/7/2019

³⁷ Interview with **JAT** was conducted in Lekisi, Ermera, 11/11/2019.

³⁸ Interview with **LSB** was conducted in Lekisi, Ermera, 11/11/2019.

³⁹ **TdN** is a traditional elder who since 2000 together with youth activist in Lekesi and Sakoko organized the peasants for the occupation of plantations in those villages to demand agrarian reform. Interview with **TdN** was conducted in Lekesi on 16/6/2017.

force the local residents in Lequisi to leave their hometown so that he could open a plantation there.

Domingos Lemos (in dos Santos, 2008:83) admits that the Aifu plantation was indeed built on Bersik land which was forcibly controlled during the colonial era to serve as a demonstration garden and Babo, according to Lemos, is a Portuguese citizen who married a Timorese woman.

At that time Babo approached Bersik to get land by convincing him and the local residents in Lequisi that *Aisamtuku* (Albizzia) was very good for fertilizing the soil, resisting erosion and also for water conservation. Therefore, when it is distributed free of charge, the community enthusiastically accepts it to be planted in their yards and takes care of it to a large extent. However, after the trees grew, Babo cooperated with the colonial military apparatus to force Bersik and the local population out of their lands, which they had planted albizzia on (**JAT**). At first Bersik and the indigenous people did not want to give up their land, but because they were forced by the military, they finally gave up their lands to Babo to open plantations.

“Not only people's houses were built here at that time, but also traditional houses and several sacred places (*fatin lulik*), such as '*be matan lulik*' (sacred springs) and other sites that we consider sacred. That's why our ancestors didn't want to leave this land, but because Babo showed the land titles he got from the government and because our ancestors were tortured and coerced by the military, they finally gave up the lands to the foreigners (**LSB**).

According to **JAT**, the Portuguese forced the indigenous people to leave their hometowns, because they said that "albizzia is a tree that, although very large, is very fragile". So, they asked the indigenous people to better move to another location that is more convenient. Otherwise, they say, during strong winds this tree can fall and its broken branches fall on people's houses. Despite this explanation, the local people refused to move from their hometowns because they realized that this was a trick by the colonialists to gain control of their lands.

“Finally, Babo asked the military for help to get the people out of here. At that time, the military members forcibly dismantled people's houses and nailed Bersik and other traditional elders in the forehead until they bled. Because the torture they experienced from the colonial army at that time was very heavy, finally Bersik and community leaders persuaded the residents to leave this location.” (**JAT**)

Colonial repression against traditional elders and indigenous community leaders during the colonial period aimed to terrorize the indigenous population into being afraid and only submitting and obeying the colonial government (dos Santos, 2008:83). Apart from being

a form of terror, the repressive approach can also be understood as a colonial strategy in an effort to extinguish the 'fire' of resistance from the indigenous people against exploitative colonial policies (**ASdS** and **JAT**).

6.2.2. The expropriation of people's land and its reclamation by UNAER

The results of consultation with the community on the land conducted by “Matadalan ba Rai” (2010: 86)⁴⁰ show that during the Indonesian occupation and the Portuguese colonial era there are many people who used power to accumulate land and resources. Rede ba Rai (2013:24)⁴¹ reports that during the colonial rule and the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste, thousands of certificates of ownership and use rights were issued. It is stated that the Portuguese government issued approximately 3,000 land titles, and the Indonesian regime issued roughly 47,000 titles and it is estimated that 10-30% of Indonesian certificates were issued corruptly (Fitzpatrick, 2002:104).

To support the expropriation of people's lands by foreigners for plantation purposes in May 1901, a new law on overseas land concessions was passed which inter alia stated that all land not proved to be based on Portuguese titles was held by the state (Gunn, 1999: 197). This law came into effect in Portuguese Timor in 1910. Pursuant to its provisions, the Portuguese administration developed the Carta de Lei, a map of traditional lands divided between those controlled by a *liurai* and those 'without master' (Soares, 1989:14). The latter were vested in the Portuguese state and could be the subject of issued land titles known as *alvara*. This process was undeniably a major resource of dispossession, as land 'without a master' included large land areas under the control of *liurai* deemed hostile to the Portuguese administration (Fitzpatrick, 2002: 146-147).

According to Indonesian government statistics, 2,843 *alvara* titles were issued and registered under the Portuguese administration (da Cruz, 1999: 44). Their breakdown per district is as follows: 1,503 in Dili, 308 in Ermera, 258 in Liquiça, 120 in Baucau, 112 in Aileu, 75 in Lautem, 71 in Bobonaro, 68 in Ainaro, 65 in Manatuto, 55 in Viqueque, 50 in Manufahi, 13 in Ambeno, and 12 in Covalima. Records of a further 133 titles were unclear as to their

⁴⁰ Matadalan ba Rai-Haburas Foundation -Editing: Meabh Cryan (2010). *Community voices on the Land: Result of Consultation by Matadalan ba Rai*. Timor-Leste: Matadalan ba Rai-Haburas Foundation, UNDP, Trocaire and OXFAM.

⁴¹ A research Report of Rede ba Rai -Editing: Meabh Cryan (2013). *Land Registration and Justice in Timor-Leste: Culture, power and justice*. Timor-Leste. Rede ba Rai

locations (Baisaku 1999:65). La'o Hamutuk Bulletin Vol.13, No. 1: July 2013 reported that most of the land titles issued during Portuguese colonial rule only benefited foreigners.

Therefore, after independence many of the rural communities began to reclaim their lands, as in Ermera. The communities found that most of their ancestral lands had been forcibly occupied during the colonial period to open plantations in various places, both state plantations and private plantations by relying on forced labour from the natives.

Based on the above data it is clear that, that more than half of all Portuguese titles were issued in Dili. Of the rest, the greatest concentration is in Ermera District, which reflects the coffee industry in that mountainous area. According to Fitzpatrick (2002:148), in Ermera, SAPT reportedly held plantations covering at least 10,000 hectares. While another source obtained from the “Direção Nacional de Café e Plantas Industriais” of RDTL in 2018, the SAPT plantation in Ermera covering an area of 12,000 hectares. In addition to SAPT, at least 6,000 more lands were granted to Portuguese planters in 1910 (Clarence-Smith, 1992; Gunn 1999). According to the President of UNAER (**AIGMs**) it is certain that the intended lands have been allocated to the Portuguese as well as Chinese traders to open private plantations, most of which are in Ermera and Liquiça Municipalities.

The area of coffee plantations in Ermera in 2008 was 29,225 hectares⁴². From this large plantation area, several plantation sites, according to **AIGMs**, have been reclaimed by the peasants under UNAER coordination, including the SAPT plantation area located in Fatubesi, to demand the government implement agrarian reform program. While others are still controlled by heirs and certain institutions. The plantations referred to by **AIGMs** are as listed in the following table:

Table 1:
Name and area of plantations in Ermera that have been identified by UNAER
(According to the President of UNAER (AIGMs), some of them have been reclaimed by the peasants under UNAER coordination)

| Number | Name of Plantation | Location of the plantation | Size of plantation area (in hectares) |
|--------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. | Apido | Mirtuto, Ermera | 5 hectares |
| 2. | Raitaran | Mirtuto, Ermera | 23 hectares |
| 3. | Samudo | Poetete, Ermera | 30 hectares |
| 4. | Humboe | Humboe, Ermera | 30 hectares |
| 5. | Ponilala Ria | Ponilala, Ermera | 50 hectares |
| 6. | Fatubessi | Fatubesi, Hatulia | 5 hectares |
| 7. | Manutasi | Manusa'e, Hatulia | 5 hectares |
| 8. | Graça Manusa'e | Manusa'e, Hatulia | 92 hectares |

⁴² Ministério da Agricultura e Pescas, Secretário de Estado Agricultura e Arboricultura, Direção Nacional Plantas Industriais, RDTL (2008).

| | | | |
|-----|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 9. | Nunsloit | Hatulia | 92 hectares |
| 10. | Nunrema | Haufu, Letefoho | 40 hectares |
| 11. | Dadesan | Poetete, Ermera | 400 hectares |
| 12. | Vila Maria | Leguimea, Ermera | 109 hectares |
| 13. | Humboe II | Leguimea, Humboe, Ermera | 450 hectares |
| 14. | Ramelihu | Sakoko, Ponilala | 300 hectares |
| 15. | Mau Nunu | Tokoluli, Railaco | 400 hectares |
| 16. | Orusa | Fatukeru, Railaco | Not yet identified |
| 17. | Maudiu | Fatukeru, Railaco | 39,99 hectares |
| 18. | Marua | Fatukeru, Railaco | 60 hectares |
| 19. | Kableu | Lihu, Railaco | 4 hectares |
| 20. | Fatubesi | Fatubolu, Hatulia B | 11.500 hectares |
| 21. | Aifu | Poetete, Ermera | 278 hectares |
| 22. | Gouio | Poetete, Ermera | 36 hectares |
| 23. | Hatugo | Poetete, Ermera | 36 hectares |
| 24. | Orhui/Kdidin | Poetete, Ermera | 400 hectares |
| 25. | Camalpun | Lihu, Railaco | 30 hectares |
| 26. | Talo | Hatulia A | Not yet identified by UNAER |

Source: UNAER's document obtained from the President of UNAER (AIGMs) at the UNAER Secretariat, Maudiu, Ermera, 15/6/2017.

According to the Head of the Coffee Promotion Department (**JuIS**)⁴³, which was also confirmed by National Director of the National Directorate of Coffee and Industrial Plants (**FS**)⁴⁴, until now the government has not recorded the ownership of private plantations in East Timor during the Portuguese and Indonesian periods, including private plantations in Ermera. However, the SAPT plantation covering an area of 12,000 hectares in Fatubesi, according to **FS**, is a state heritage plantation (*património de estado*) whose management rights are with the government based on Law No. 1/2003⁴⁵.

“The 12,000-hectare SAPT plantation is a state-owned plantation. The government will rehabilitate the plantation, which of course will involve the peasants in the process. Until now the government has not done much because it is still waiting for the new land law” (**FS**).

The **FS** view was opposed by the President of UNAER (**AIGMs**). According to **AIGMs**, plantations in Ermera, both SAPT plantations and other private plantations, have historically been built on people's lands that have been forcibly controlled by the colonial government. He said, after independence, the government should open a space for public debate regarding its ownership:

⁴³ **JuIS** (49 years old) is the Head of the Coffee Promotion Department of RDTL. Interview with **JuIS** was conducted in Dili, 2/3/2018.

⁴⁴ **FS** (55 years old) is the National Director of the National Directorate of Coffee and Industrial Plants of RDTL. Interview with **FS** was conducted in Dili, 2/3/2018.

⁴⁵ Law 1/2003 defines State Land and processes to deal with abandoned land. The law states that all land that belonged to the Portuguese State, the Indonesian State and all abandoned land now pertain to the State of Timor-Leste.

“Don't make laws without consulting the people first. Ownership claims on people's lands, don't just consider the formal legal aspect without paying attention to the historical and socio-cultural aspects. From UNAER's perspective, these plantations were built on people's lands and/or customary lands which were forcibly controlled by the Portuguese colonial government and foreigners to open plantations. During the Indonesian occupation, this forced control was continued by the Indonesian militaristic government and/or by its heirs who were supported by the Indonesian military. At that time, they cooperated with each other to exploit the indigenous peasants for their benefit. For this reason, the peasants, both as embodied in UNAER in Ermera and as embodied in the MPRA in Liquiça, carried out social movements to reclaim ownership rights to their ancestral lands.” (AIGMs).

The opinion of **AIGMs** is the general view of many of the informants from this study (**ASds, JAT, LSB⁴⁶, AdS, HdS, DmN, LS, AdC, DdR, LP** and **JS**). The results of consultations with communities related to land issues conducted by Matadalan ba Rai (2010) show that since the Portuguese era, throughout the Indonesian era and until today two types of concepts have existed about how to manage and distribute land in East Timor: the 'formal' system of issuing of titles and land certificates, and customary law systems.

UNAER's plantation reclamation is based on the early history of plantation establishment as well as the customary law system. In the cultural perspective of the indigenous people, land is a source of livelihood where the distribution of ownership rights is more collective in nature based on existing customary clans. However, the intervention of foreign powers has encouraged the privatization and control of customary lands by outsiders for the benefit of the plantation industry which relies on the exploitation of indigenous people.

Therefore, after independence many of the rural communities began to reclaim their lands, as is happening in Ermera. The community found that most of their ancestral lands had been forcibly occupied during the colonial period to open plantations in various places, both state plantations and private plantations by relying on forced labor from indigenous people.

According to Fitzpatrick (2002: ix), the complex history of the land has resulted in particular pieces of land being subject to claims that are diverse and competitive. Some land is held by occupiers or claimed by people who rely on tradition or customs; some claimants rely on titles issued during the Portuguese Colonial times; some claimants were issued effectively by the Indonesian authorities during the Indonesian occupation; and others again

⁴⁶ **LSB** (45 years old) is the current UNAER base coordinator in Lekesi. He is one of the young activists who together with other friends under the coordination of **JAT** have organized the peasants in Lekesi to occupy the Aipu plantation since 2001 until now to demand agrarian reform. Interview with **LSB** was conducted in Lekesi, Ermera, 11/11/2019

depend upon the fact of their occupation or on arrangements made with purported owners or with UNTAET after East Timor became an independent territory.

The pilot survey undertaken by Matadalan ba Rai showed that the majority of people in Timor-Leste got their land by way inheritance or from the ancestors. Only 7% received land through any other mechanism such as lease, sale, because of relocation or occupation (Matadalan ba Rai, 2010: 88).

The problems described above have prompted the emergence of the Ermera peasant movement organized by UNAER. By focussing on the historical aspects of plantations and ownership claims based on a cultural perspective, UNAER mobilizes available resources to organize a social movement demanding the implementation of an agrarian reform program in East Timor to resolve this colonial legacy of land problems.

According to UNAER's perspective, agrarian reform is not only the right policy to solve complicated land ownership problems but also as an anticipatory step to protect poor rural farmers from economic-based exploitation (**AIGMs**).

“In the days of our ancestors, there was no private ownership of large lands. Population growth as well as demand for land will continue to increase simultaneously. Therefore, it is necessary to have legal regulations to strictly limit personal control over large lands and also to ensure that everyone has equal access to sources of livelihood, so that all can enjoy their lives well in this independence. Agrarian reform is the right policy to be adopted by this country” (**ASdS**).

According to AB⁴⁷, the idea of agrarian reform from the peasant movement rested on the initial conception that had been described in FFRETILIN's political programs and manuals, but was interrupted during the Indonesian occupation. Now the peasants have risen to remind the state of the importance of this policy as a foundation of development and to overcome the problems of farmers arising from land problems inherited by the colonial administrations.

When the restoration of independence for East Timor was declared on May 20, 2002, the peasants responded by taking occupation actions against colonial plantations to demand agrarian reform. In this context, the peasant movement in Timor, both coordinated within UNAER and elsewhere, rejects the privatization of land as a source of human livelihoods (**ASdS**, **AIGMs** and **JS**).

⁴⁷ **AB** (52 years old) was one of the founders of KSI and is now a member of the KSI Board. Interview with **AB** was conducted in Dili, 12/11/2019.

The views of the peasants were also supported by the Director of KSI (**JenS**). According to **JenS**⁴⁸, if private ownership of collective property for the livelihood of the people continues to be promoted, the impact will be very detrimental to poor farmers who do not have capital, because investors will control the people's livelihoods and privatize them for their own interests. Then the poor peasants will continue to be objects of exploitation. Thus, the emergence of the Ermera peasant movement was not only to reclaim ownership rights to foreign plantations that had been established on their ancestral lands, but also to demand social justice.

6.2.3. Land acquisition and culture clash

Colonial intervention through coercive policies that allowed foreigners to establish industrial plantations on rural communities' lands, had disrupted the subsistence lifestyle of indigenous communities who are strongly bound to their cultural traditions.

Land acquisition was carried out by the colonial government based on the assumption that large fertile lands had been abandoned by the community. Therefore, the government took over to make it more productive (dos Santos, 2008: 85). This colonial assumption was rejected by the indigenous peasants who lived depending on the subsistence farming system, where the availability of land, management of its use and also access to ownership were more collective in nature based on their ancestral traditions and cultural systems.

According to several informants (**AdS, HdS, ASdS, JAT, LBS, DdR, LS, AdC, JBS** and **JS**), the Portuguese built their plantations on lands that were actually community lands or communal lands⁴⁹, which since the time of their ancestors had been used as gardens that are cultivated alternately by local residents. In these lands there are sites that are considered sacred according to local people's beliefs. Therefore, the indigenous people were angry and resisted.

⁴⁸ **JenS** (36 years old) is currently the Director of KSI and also a member of the Board of MOKATIL (*Movimentu Kamponezes Timor-Leste*/East Timor Peasant Movement).

⁴⁹ According to **ASdS** (which was also confirmed by other informants, such as **AdS, HdS** and **JS**), communal land is a large area of land that is not allowed to be controlled by anyone because the land is intended for all members of the community or clan members to be used as gardens which are processed in rotation by members of the community. The community is not allowed to claim private ownership of communal land, because it is a common property which means ownership is more collective and determined based on local culture and traditions.

The shifting cultivation system in Timor is known as the slash-and-burn pattern. This pattern makes soil fertility decrease and the soil quickly becomes barren and thin (Taylor, 1999; Shepherd, 2014). For this reason, farmers have their own way to ensure the fertility of their land through shifting cultivation (**ASds**, **AdS** and **HdS**). Sometimes farmers have to clear the forest to open new fields (**JS**), when the previously cultivated fields are already thin and must be restored before being used again.

Based on the opinion of the informants above, it can be said that the control of the people's lands by the colonials as well as the opposition from the indigenous people rested on different perspectives regarding the conception of land ownership and its production as well as the management of existing resources.

In the socio-cultural context of Timor, the means of production, natural and mineral resources for human life, such as land, springs, forests and rivers according to customary law are not allowed to be controlled and owned privately, let alone used excessively for personal interests, such as for capital accumulation.

In the traditional Timorese system, ownership of land is defined collectively according to the culture and traditions of the people based within their clan system. Meanwhile, the colonial rulers entered with a rational legal perspective to promote private ownership. This allowed foreigners to have access to private ownership of indigenous lands and occupied them for economic purposes⁵⁰.

“At that time the colonial government confiscated and controlled the lands here with the assumption that these large lands were abandoned and or considered not owned by anyone. In fact, this is the land of the customary clans here, most of which are the annual gardens or fields of farming families, which are deliberately left to wait for the fertile period to arrive so that they can be cultivated again to plant corn and tubers. Our customary law here strictly forbids anyone to control land, springs, rivers and sacred sites which are vital for the sustainability of community life.” (**ASds**).

During the Portuguese colonial period, traditional lands were classified as 'empty land' (Fitzpatrick, 2002: 147). This classification was made under Regulation on Land Occupation and Concessions for Overseas Provinces No. 43894 Of 1961, which was ultimately applied to Portuguese Timor by Diploma Legislativo No. 865 Of 1971 (Soares 1989: 23-24). This law created three categories of land: state, private and empty. Land held under traditional rights was not classified as private property land, but as 'class 2 empty land'. This meant that, the law, which required payment of compensation on expropriation, did not apply to any

⁵⁰ One of the Portuguese land titles is *Ocupação*. *Ocupação* is an occupation right based either on a lease agreement for less than five years, or, in some cases, usufructuary traditional right (Fitzpatrick, 2002: 153)

traditional lands at all. Instead, the only limit on granting Portuguese titles over such lands was a requirement that consideration be given to the social impact on the lives of its inhabitants (Soares, 1989: 31-32).

The classification of customary land as 'empty land' made land grabbing widespread, because it had given foreigners the right to occupy community lands which also were a source of livelihood for indigenous people.

The indigenous peasants whose lives depend on subsistence agriculture, production is prioritized for consumption purposes with typical subsistence management based on their own life experiences. However, the colonialists claimed the fields of the indigenous farmers as abandoned lands (empty land), so they were opposed. According to subsistence farmers, there are no abandoned lands. What exists is actually the fields of the peasants who were left alone to restore their fertility. Thus, it can be processed again in a sustainable manner based on their agricultural system which is shifting cultivation with a slash-and-burn pattern. This pattern requires extensive access to land in their village.

"The large lands are not abandoned land but are the fields of the indigenous peasants which are not allowed by customary law to be controlled for personal interests. It must be remembered that the ultimate goal of land occupation to develop plantations is not to fulfil the interests of the farmers, but to the private interests of the financiers. Farmers were forced to work in it to pay head taxes for the benefit of the colonial state, not for the benefit of the peasants. This is exploitation. Exploitation of natural resources as well as exploitation of indigenous peoples is clearly contrary to customary norms. That's why the indigenous peoples rebelled against colonialism." (**ASdS**).

Although the militaristic colonial approach made the resistance of the indigenous peasants not appear openly at that time, the various acts of defiance such as avoiding head taxes and compulsory labour on plantations for various contrived reasons, showed that the peasants were not satisfied with the colonial government and the rich people who have exploited them (**ASdS, AdS** and **JS**). Their discontent at that time could be understood as a pre-condition for the emergence of open resistance, when they found political opportunities to consolidate their power.

Political and economic interests between the rich and the colonial government caused systematic exploitation was carried out repressively (**ASdS**). When these foreigners had access to indigenous lands, they gradually applied for land titles to the colonial government.

According to **ASdS**, during the colonial period, the process of obtaining property rights to land was very complicated and expensive. Indigenous people at that time could not apply for ownership rights to their lands, because apart from being expensive, most of the lands in

rural areas at that time were customary lands/clan lands. So, none of the indigenous people at that time dared to claim private ownership of customary land which was collectively owned land.

“Although the feudal lords owned vast lands, due to regulations requiring indigenous peoples who owned large lands to plant part of their lands with commercial crops to ensure productivity, they were discouraged from applying for private property rights, as they did not have much capital to open plantation. It is the same with poor peasants who have no money to make their land more productive through plantations. Legalized restrictions and coercion like this have forced poor peasants to lose their land to plantations by foreigners with capital.” (ASdS).

Several informants from this study (**JAT, ASdS, AIGMs, LSB and BS**) said that land titling was a colonial strategy to legalize foreigners to occupy people's lands and then marginalize the indigenous people. This was also a colonial strategy to silence the peasants from protesting or claiming their lands which had been seized or forcibly controlled by the colonialists and capitalists. Therefore, until the end of Portuguese colonialism, the peasants had never carried out an open and massive resistance against the landlords, both feudal and foreign landlords.

Celestino da Silva's exploitative policies were continued by his successor, Governor Filomeno da Câmara. Lawson (1989) explains that under Filomeno da Câmara's dispensation, the traditional “Melanesian” idea of the right to enjoy the produce of other people's land was removed and replaced by a colonial definition of land as state property. From this it is clear that colonial intervention through the plantation industry has harmed the indigenous people of Timor. In addition to the policy of forced cultivation, taxes and land grabbing, the subsistence life of indigenous farmers who are rooted in their local culture is also disrupted, due to state policies that are only oriented to the fulfilment of colonial economic interests.

In this context, foreign domination of people's lands is not solely based on economic interests, but also contains an interest in expanding the influence of colonial control. According to JS, the repressive efforts of the colonial government to control people's lands to open plantations were also a strategy to destroy the subsistence agricultural culture of the indigenous community who had been strongly bound by local customs.

According to **MT**, the local beliefs of the indigenous people rest on the sacralization of natural resources that provide livelihoods for humans, such as land and water sources which apparently not only affects their socio-cultural life, but also the economic behaviour of the subsistence community.

“Indigenous peoples not only believe in the existence of sacred objects stored in their traditional houses, but also in sacred places, such as land, springs and large trees which turn out to be the location where they perform certain rituals to ask for rain during the dry season or to ward off a storm. These beliefs may conflict with religious doctrines, but this has become an ancestral tradition which they then use as a weapon for their current social movement.” (MT).

From the perspective of the peasants, the colonial intervention had disrupted their lives, both in terms of the economic and socio-cultural contexts in which all of them were closely interrelated. In this context, it can be said that colonial intervention also caused cultural clashes in society.

According to **ASdS**, land is the source of life for the peasants, therefore land should not be occupied and controlled only for personal business interests. He emphasized that customary law prohibits personal control over collective life resources, such as land, forests, rivers and springs. **ASdS** further explains that the understanding of the indigenous people that land is sacred (*lulik*), is based more on the assumption that land is a source of life on which there are also certain sites that are considered sacred according to local community beliefs. Therefore, large lands for indigenous people are fields for local communities, whose ownership is more collective in nature, meaning that all people from existing customary clans have the same right to cultivate it.

“By using traditional mechanisms (i.e., based on local culture and traditions), our ancestors defined collective ownership as well as management of vast lands, springs and other sources of livelihood that provide equal access to all members of the community here.” (ASdS).

Based on the descriptions above, it can be said that the emergence of dissatisfaction from the indigenous peasants towards the colonials in relation to the annexation of their ancestral lands is not only based on problems related to economic factors but also cultural factors. Their understanding of the concept of ownership as well as production management of land is defined by cultural norms.

DdR, a traditional elder from the Berhudu and Manu Moris clans, explained that in Maudiu, there are four traditional clans (traditional houses): Lugin Lala, Manu Moris, Riheu-Bibor and Din Tete. According to him, the descendants of the four traditional clans are culturally indigenous Maudiu people and also the owners of customary lands in the area.

“Only the traditional elders of these clans have customary authority to manage and also distribute the lands here to other members, because there are sacred sites in it, which only people from the clan concerned know the rituals and must be from those who lead the ritual ceremonies. But after the arrival of the Portuguese, foreigners moved to the villages to establish plantations in ways that were contrary to the principles of customary law. Their presence was sustained by repressive colonial laws. For that they at that time could easily have access to the lands of the indigenous people and from there they oppressed and exploited the natives for their personal interests, including keeping us from access to

sacred sites in the lands they had controlled (such as sacred spring), which is a source of livelihood for us” (DdR)

Several other informants (AdS, ASdS, and JS) share the same view as described by DdR above. Another traditional elder from the village of Poerema (AdS), emphasized that in the traditional system, land ownership as well as the management mechanism, is defined collectively according to cultural traditions based on the clan system. This kind of understanding is not only found in the Ermera community but also in the local community in Maubara (JS).

Colonial intervention through its coercive policies, which contradicted the customary norms of the indigenous community, was the main factor causing the emergence of indigenous resistance, because their lives depended heavily on land in relation to their economic and cultural systems (AIGMs, ASdS, AdS, JAT, MT and HdS).

Thus, it can be said that the discontent of the indigenous community against the colonialists was because the intervention of colonial policies had disrupted the collective access of the community to land ownership and their sources of livelihood, whose management of subsistence production was based on their local traditions. This has been disrupted by the promotion of private ownership based on the laws of the colonial government. This policy has encouraged foreign domination of community property which has led to the exploitation of the indigenous community and their wealth. Therefore, the discontent of the indigenous peasants emerged and then they fought back in their own way.

“Colonial rulers entered with a positive legal approach or a rational legal perspective. Based on this perspective they encourage private ownership. This approach also allows foreigners to have access to private ownership of customary lands which they have occupied unfairly for economic purposes. In fact, private ownership of people's land in the context of domination (control) for personal interests is contrary to the principles of customary law and the cultural values of indigenous peoples.” (MT).

Based on the views of the informants described above, it can be said that the emergence of this peasant movement was not only inspired from an economic perspective but also the loss of cultural heritage related to the concept of property rights and the management of shared land and resources. In reclaiming the property rights of peasants on their ancestral lands, the Ermera peasant movement is not only driven by the history of the people's lives, but also by their expectations of a better life in the future. This kind of understanding became the basic capital for UNAER in organizing the Ermera peasant movement openly after the independence of East Timor.

6.3. The control of plantations during the Indonesian occupation and the patterns of resistance of the peasants

The agrarian policy during the Indonesian occupation was a continuation of the previous colonial policies that had afflicted the peasants. The results of research conducted by several researchers in Indonesia (Arif, 2002; Anshori, 2003; Wignjosoebroto, 2002; Wahyudi, 2005 and Mustain, 2007) show that land policy in Indonesia during the authoritarian New Order regime favoured the interests of investors over the interests of the peasants and therefore triggers the resistance of the peasants.

Mustain (2007) in his study of the peasant movement in Kalibakar, Indonesia, found that the resistance of the peasants emerged to reject state policies related to land tenure issues which were exploitative to the peasants.

This section describes the control of foreign plantations by the military during the Indonesian occupation government and the pattern of resistance of the peasants at that time.

The political and economic dispossession of the Timorese people by the Indonesian occupation government, resulted in the consolidation of the peasants' opposition through the coordination with the clandestine movement organizations which emerged at that time.

6.3.1. Military control of plantations and peasants' discontent

During the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, no agrarian reform policies were issued to resolve the land issues inherited from the previous colonial era. The occupying government and the Indonesian military administration took over the colonial plantations for their own benefit. Therefore, the discontent of the peasants reappeared and in their own way they continued to fight the injustices they were experiencing.

Several informants said that during the Indonesian occupation, most of the colonial plantations were under the control of the Indonesian military (**JAT, AdS, ASdS, LSB, BS** and **AlGMs**) as well as the local government under the Ermera Plantation Service (**LP**). Therefore, the peasants at that time were afraid to reclaim their ancestral lands, which were initially seized during the Portuguese colonial period.

Aditjondro (2000: 182) describes that after the Indonesian invasion, a large number of plantation owners who supported the occupying government kept their plantations, while those abandoned by their owners fell into the hands of a small number of Timorese and

Indonesians who worked for the new rulers in Dili. The coffee business has been monopolized by 'PT. Denok Hernandes Indonesia' a company supported by the army since the beginning of the Indonesian occupation. This monopoly has reduced the income of coffee farmers, except for the old and new plantation owners (Aditjondro, *ibid*).

According to several informants, after the political turmoil in 1975, foreign plantation owners during the Portuguese colonial period fled to their country, but some of them handed over power of attorney to members of the Indonesian military to regain control of the plantations (**JAT**, **LSB** and **BS**). Meanwhile, the Chinese-owned plantations in Railako remained controlled by their owners with the support of the Indonesian military (**AdC**).

From 1976 to 1984 the Aifu plantation in Lequisi was abandoned by Babo and then controlled by the local community. But in 1985, a member of the Indonesian military named Tadoe came from Atambua, Indonesia, bringing the power of attorney he had obtained from Babo and based on that power of attorney he later expelled the peasants from the Aipu plantation (**JAT**).

"On 26 July 1976, Babo gave Tadoe a power of attorney to manage their plantation in Aifu, Lequesi. Armed with this power of attorney, Tadoe, who was then a member of the Indonesian military, came in 1985 to claim the plantations and expel the peasants from the plantations. Since then, the Aipu plantation has been under Tadoe's control. Then during the 1999 crisis, Tadoe fled to Atambua and handed over responsibility for managing the plantation to Germino, who was then the village head in Lekesi. Germino controlled the plantation until 2000. In the same year a conflict arose between Germino and the peasants in Lekesi, which forced him to leave the plantation to the peasants until now." (**JAT**).

The Ramelihu and Dadesan plantations located in the village of Ponilala, which had been occupied by the peasants since the beginning of the Indonesian occupation, were also seized and controlled by the Indonesian military from 1986 to 1997. Relying on plantation documents obtained by the Indonesian military from a village head named Joaquim, the Indonesian military dominated the plantations and subsequently restricted the access of the peasants to the plantations (**BS**).

Meanwhile, the Hatugu plantation in Gegemara, was controlled by someone who had received a power of attorney from the plantation owner during the colonial period. However, in its development he worked closely with the Indonesian military to dispel peasant protests that began in 1996 to claim ownership rights to the land (**LS**).

The repressive approach of the Indonesian military in handling cases related to the peasant movement in demanding their rights was widespread in Ermera. According to **LP**, the Lipelhei plantation in Indonesian times was under the control of the Ermera Plantation

Service, but in 1998 several youths broke into the plantation to steal coffee. Their actions were later discovered by the military apparatus and they were arrested, tortured and imprisoned without any legal process. After being released, they continued their action by organizing local farmers to occupy plantations in Lipelhei until now.

The strong military repression during the Indonesian occupation made the peasants in some areas not dare to make a movement to reclaim property rights to their ancestral lands that had been unfairly occupied during the colonial period for business purposes. The plantations controlled by Chinese traders in Railako village were never claimed by local indigenous farmers from colonial times until the end of the Indonesian occupation in 1999, because the plantation owners had worked closely with the military apparatus to defend their plantations.

According to **AdC**, during the long period of foreign rule, the expropriation of indigenous peoples' lands by outsiders were never brought to court by the indigenous people in Railako because they did not have access to legal documents from the government related to the ownership of their ancestral lands. Thus, foreign control of the people's lands just happened without open resistance from the peasants until after the restoration of independence.

According to **JAT**, the Indonesian military at that time dominated almost all aspects of people's lives, ranging from monopoly on the economy, politics, and the legal system. So, during the Indonesian occupation the peasants were still being oppressed and exploited. The peasants were forced to sell their coffee only to PT. Denok or to KUD (*Koperasi Unit Desa/Village Unit Cooperative*), which buy their coffee at very low prices (**ASds**).

"KUD means "*Koperasi Unit Desa*". This was an institution that had been created by the government to facilitate the business interests of several high-ranking Indonesian military officers who at that time worked with the government as well as Chinese traders to exploit the indigenous peasants. KUD was not a cooperative institution built by rural peasants. The rural peasants did not feel they belonged. This institution was full of corruption committed by its administrators, so at that time many people said that "KUD" as an abbreviation of "*Ketua Untung Dulu*" (the leader who benefits first), meaning that KUD only benefited the elite both at the lower and upper levels." (**AIGMs**).

KUD does not actually benefit peasant coffee producers, but is an institution established for the business interests of the political and economic elites, which is facilitated by the government with strong support from the military (**AIGMs** and **JAT**).

The occupation carried out by Indonesia, both politically and economically, has resulted in the control of most of the natural resources by Indonesian elite leaders

(Aditjondro, 2000:179) continuing, the inequality of land ownership as happened during the Portuguese colonial period. "After the Indonesian military succeeded in controlling Timor they then took over and monopolized state and private plantations in Ermera which were abandoned by their owners for private business purposes and made the majority of the local population suffer." (**ASdS**).

According to Fitzpatrick (2002), in the early years of Indonesia's occupation, much of the vacuum in land administration was taken up by the Indonesian military under the notorious SKEP 40 decree (*Surat Keputusan Panglima*) issued by the military commander in East Timor. This decree allowed the military to make temporary allocations of public and abandoned properties. It is a crucial element of Indonesian dispossession in East Timor. Under this decree, all abandoned and former Portuguese government land was brought under the control of the Indonesian army. Properties falling into the abandoned category included all land left vacant in the wholesale flight and displacement after Indonesia's invasion.

Since then, the Indonesian occupation government changed Portuguese land titling and continued to push for privatization through a number of land certification programs which also gave Indonesians the opportunity to have access to land ownership in Timor. According to Fitzpatrick (2002: 94) most of the land titles issued during the Indonesian occupation were allegedly tainted by corruption.

The control of colonial plantations by the military has made most of the peasants afraid to question the status of property rights on their ancestral lands. "The main obstacle for the struggle of the peasants in demanding their rights was the Indonesian military." (**AIGMs**).

After taking over colonial plantations, the Indonesian military monopolized the coffee trade in Timor in cooperation with Chinese traders, but the peasants did not dare to protest because their movements were always monitored by the military who had been stationed in every village (**AdS, DmN, JAT, ASdS** and **JS**).

Although military repression made the peasants not dare to protest openly, but they always tried in various ways to find alternative solutions, even though they realized it was dangerous.

"Some farmers at that time had tried to secretly sell directly to other buyers who wanted to buy their coffee at a reasonable price, but this option was high risk, because if discovered by the Indonesian military, the farmers would be punished and tortured. In each village there is a member of the Police (called Bimpolda) and a soldier (called Babinsa) who are tasked with monitoring the movements of the

villagers, which makes most of the peasants afraid to seek alternative solutions to their economic problems.” (JAT).

Thus, the complaints of rural communities regarding their economic problems during the Indonesian occupation were actually caused by the military and private monopolies which reduced the level of public trust in the occupation government.

“When Tadoe came to claim the Aifu plantation, several elders in this village explained to him that the plantation was built on our ancestral land which was seized by Babo. The farmers have shown evidence such as the existence of sacred springs and other sacred places, but Tadoe refused and relying solely on the power of attorney he brought, he forced the farmers to leave the plantation. Tadoe then took control of the plantation and because he was a member of the TNI (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia/Indonesian National Army*), the farmers were afraid to confront him” (JAT).

As was the case during the Portuguese colonial period, the control of plantations by the Indonesian military rested on rationalization based on legal instruments and the recognition of official documents. They completely ignored the historical and socio-cultural context behind the people's land use.

“Although the peasants had claimed that colonial plantations were built on customary lands seized by foreigners, the Indonesian army did not accept it. According to them, the claim of the peasants, which was based on their local culture and belief, was not valid evidence according to their law. For this reason, foreign occupation of indigenous lands continues and the peasants continue to be exploited. That's what made the peasants angry and then together with other elements of society they fought against the Indonesian occupation government under the organization of the national liberation movement by Fretilin from 1975-1999.” (JAT).

FRETILIN's national resistance, which was initiated in 1975, rested on concerns about injustice and exploitation which were deeply rooted in unequal social structures. The indigenous people rose to fight together against the Indonesian military. The resistance became widespread when rural peasants in various regions were also organized to actively support the struggle for independence through their involvement in the existing network of clandestine movements.

Several informants, especially the youth who organized the peasant movement in Ermera, began to be involved in clandestine networks against the Indonesian occupation because of the injustices they experienced.

“I started getting involved in the clandestine movement against Indonesia when I was in high school. At that time, I began to think that our ancestral lands that had been controlled by foreigners should be liberated. This can only happen if the foreign occupation of this country is to end. That's why we joined Fretilin to fight for the independence of this country, so that the people can be free.” (ASdS).

Apart from **ASdS**, there were also other UNAER figures, such as **AIGMs**, **JAT**, **LS** and **LP**, who at that time together with the youth in their respective villages were also actively organizing the peasants to be involved in the activities of the clandestine movement to fight

the Indonesian occupation. From the perspective of the peasants, fighting for independence also means fighting for the liberation of peasants from oppression, exploitation and foreign domination.

Based on this view, they protested in their own way, against the coercive efforts of the occupying government which continuously pushed for the privatization of their collective livelihoods as well as of their ancestral lands (**ASdS, JAT, MT and JenS**).

Several youth activists, such as JAT, LP and LS together with their other friends, were arrested and tortured by the military and sent to prison for their attempts to organize the peasants in their respective villages to occupy plantations. Despite being tortured by the Indonesian military, after being released, these youths continued to mobilize the peasants to openly occupy plantations to claim ownership rights to their ancestral lands seized during Portuguese colonial rule.

During the Indonesian occupation, the military's influence in the socio-economic and political life of East Timor was very large, imposing their political interests in their attempt to integrate East Timor into Indonesia. This political rationale made the military control and dominate the natural resources and wealth of the people in East Timor and silence the resistance from the people against their behaviour. This kind of coercion made the majority of the Timorese feel that the presence of the Indonesian occupying government would not break the chain of oppression and exploitation that had bound them during the hundreds of years of Portuguese colonial rule in Timor.

The people did not dare to demand their rights which have been taken away, because every demand for the rights of the people is always responded to with a repressive military response. The authoritarian regime of Suharto has been proven to have castrated the political potential of the people in East Timor.

In these repressive conditions and political confinement, the people then manifested their dissatisfaction by widely supporting the people's liberation movement through a network of clandestine movements that had been built throughout the region, both in East Timor and in several regions in Indonesia.

This clandestine movement became an important catalyst for the success of the independence movement on the guerrilla front as well as on the diplomatic front. The people's struggle for independence from Indonesia on these three fronts is also supported by

international solidarity, through pro-democracy organizations that also fight for changes in unfair social structures and systems.

The great support of the peasants in the struggle for East Timor's independence rests on the strong hope that after independence, the new state will implement a pro-peasant political policy, as stated in the FRETILIN's manual and political program in 1975. In this context, the participation of the UNAER and MPRA-L peasants in the struggle for independence, were also motivated by a strong desire to fight for social justice. Inspired by the idea of FRETILIN's 1975 national liberation, the independence of East Timor was also understood as a golden bridge to the people's liberation.

6.3.2. The pattern of peasant resistance during the Indonesian occupation

Portuguese colonialism laid the foundation of a system of exploitation of the peasants which was continued by the Indonesian military during the illegal Indonesian occupation of this country. Social movements in a closed form continued to occur at that time, which can also be seen from the existence of hidden actions that widely occurred through hidden coordination in the clandestine movement network system which was very strong against the presence of the Indonesian military and to fight for the independence of East Timor.

The struggle for the independence of East Timor was also understood by the peasants as a social movement to fight the oppression and exploitation that had been felt by the Timorese people throughout the Portuguese era and Indonesian occupation.

Many peasants were actively taking part in clandestine networks to support the struggle for independence. The peasant movement during the Indonesian occupation did not show itself openly, because the state through its military apparatus was very strong in suppressing the peasants and the movement that tried to oppose the annexation of East Timor. Therefore, the peasants could not build an open collective resistance.

Even though the peasants lived under military repression, in their own way they continued to carry out resistance in secret, either in the form that had happened before (such as stealing and lying), as well as in new patterns such as being a liaison and/or supplier of information and logistics to the fighters on the guerrilla front. Their activities were coordinated within the networks of clandestine organizations in their respective villages.

Some of the important actors behind the peasant movement in Ermera were young educated pro-independence activists who were active in organizing and mobilizing the peasants and also logistical support to the freedom fighters on the guerrilla front (**AIGMs, JAT, ASdS, LS, BS and JS**).

“All elements of the peasants were actively involved in supporting the independence movement, in their own ways. Some of them served as liaisons (*estafeta*) between Falintil in the forest and the clandestine network in the city. The mobilization of logistical support to Falintil fighters relied on donations collected by clandestine movement activists from local communities in each village (**AIGMs**).

Just like the hidden resistance that occurred previously during the colonial period, actions were carried out in secret so that the clandestine movement network would not be detected by the Indonesian authorities. “If our actions were suspected by the Indonesian army or if we knew that they were starting to spy on us, we had to hide, either fleeing to other areas far from our village or even running into the forest to join Falintil to fight through the guerrilla front (**JAT and JS**).

“When I was suspected by the security forces, I was forced to hide in the forest. When the security forces searched for me at my house, my wife lied to them that I had been missing from home for a long time and pretended to cry loudly in front of them saying that she suspected that her husband had been kidnapped by Indonesian soldiers. My wife had to lie like that to save me and my family.” (**JS**).

Actions such as hiding and lying were common strategies used by activists of the clandestine movement in their efforts to save themselves and their families as well as to keep clandestine networks from being exposed (**AIGMs, JAT and ASdS**).

In the clandestine movement, the role of the family is a key factor that greatly determines the safety of those suspected of being involved (**AIGMs, ASdS, JS and JAT**). The activists of the clandestine movement at that time were well aware of the heavy burden and suffering that would be faced by them and their families if the secret was revealed. Therefore, they should all support each other (**ASdS and JAT**).

“If our actions were detected by the Indonesian army, we would have to run and hide. We had to make sure first that documents or evidence of clandestine activities were not kept at home, because as long as we were in hiding, Indonesian soldiers would come to our house to look for evidence. They intimidated, terrorized, and threatened our family members to get information about our whereabouts, but our family members would not tell them.” (**JAT**).

The clandestine movement's network was maintained by the existence of a very strong mutual trust from fellow clandestine movement activists, firstly within the family and passed on to others (**JS and ASdS**).

“I had to involve my eldest son as a liaison (*estafeta*) between our clandestine network and the guerrillas in the forest, because I believed that my son would never betray me. Likewise, my wife and

aunt I also asked for help. Because our activities in the clandestine movement at that time were very dangerous for us and our family members. Therefore, we have to be very careful in our actions.” (JS)

In the clandestine movement, everyone who was actively involved at that time was required to understand their respective roles and to support each other. “Therefore, do not think that only men and leaders have a decisive role at that time. But women, children, close friends and also our own families also have an important role to play in ensuring the smooth running of our covert actions” (ASdS)

Widespread support from the community for the struggle through clandestine networks, became one of the determining factors for the success of the independence struggle. Logistics and information supplies for the guerrillas in the forests also came from the peasants in the villages and other community members in the cities.

Rural peasant activists mobilize support from the community in their respective villages through the existing network of clandestine movements (LS, AIGMs, JAT, ASdS and JS). They picked coffee from foreign plantations to sell and some of the proceeds were donated to support the struggle for independence (BS).

During the independence struggle, several rural youth activists served as liaisons between the guerrillas and existing clandestine networks. Some even have strategic positions in the structure of the clandestine network in their village. Therefore, they could make direct contact with the guerrillas, which allowed them to gain an ideological orientation.

In 1983 we found a liaison, who could link us to those on the guerrilla front line. We worked closely with our person in charge, a woman named Bui Kiak, who had also worked with the guerrillas for a long time. All forms of activities in the clandestine network at that time were well coordinated based on the orientation of the guerrillas. We learned a lot from them about the basic principles of the people's struggle that: mobilization of power must rely on people's support; that this struggle is an effort to liberate the people from all forms of exploitation; that this struggle is an effort to liberate the people from obscurantism and ignorance. Inspired by these principles, at that time we were very enthusiastic and no longer afraid to openly fight the Indonesian army. Me and some friends were imprisoned and while in prison, we continued to organize others to continue fighting for the independence of our nation. When Xanana was arrested, we were still in prison. At that time, we were on a hunger strike in prison demanding Xanana's release. We began to dare to protest openly in prison demanding a referendum for East Timor. We made banners and then rushed outside to put them up in front of the gates of Becora prison in Dili. Our public protest resulted in twenty-eight of us being transferred to the military prison in Balide, Dili. But we were not afraid at all anymore.” (JAT).

A well-known female veteran in the Municipality of Liquiça (MBK)⁵¹, who during the Indonesian occupation was actively involved in armed struggle on the guerrilla front said that

⁵¹ MBK is one of the declarators for the founding of the MPRA-L (Movimentu Popular ba Reforma Agraria, Liquiça/People's movement for agrarian reform, Liquiça). Interview with MBK was conducted in Bogoro, Liquiça, 15/9/2019.

while in the forest, they not only learned about guerrilla warfare strategies and tactics, but also attended political education given by their commanders.

“When we meet with members of the clandestine network that we have set up in various places, we share what we have learned with them to raise their political awareness so that they can support and actively participate in this struggle.” (MBK).

Several informants (JAT, ASdS, AIGMs, LP and LS) said that at first the farmers carried out their actions in secret because they were overshadowed by the feeling of fear of the state security apparatus assigned in each village to monitor the community. However, after the clandestine network was formed widely in various locations, the peasants were no longer afraid to carry out their actions openly because they felt that there was political support.

“In Indonesian times, coffee plantations in villages were controlled by Indonesian government agents, such as *Babinsa*, *Bimpolda* and village heads. They tortured residents who were caught stealing coffee from the plantations. At first the peasants were afraid to rebel, but after many youths joined the clandestine network demanding independence, the peasants were no longer afraid to openly demand the liberation of their ancestral lands. Those of us who were involved in the clandestine network at that time had the same principle that we must awaken the peasants to fight the Indonesian military so that we could regain our ancestral land. When I was in high school, I already thought that after independence, the peasants should fight for agrarian reform.” (ASdS).

The involvement of village youth in the clandestine movement made them aware of the importance of building unity and a broader collective struggle. This was an important moment that inspired the emergence of open resistance from the peasants who were coordinated secretly in the organization of the clandestine movement.

LP and LS said that at first, they secretly invited some of their other friends to steal coffee from existing foreign plantations. However, after the clandestine network was formed and Falintil posts were also established in their respective villages, they openly mobilized farmers to pick coffee within the plantations. Even though they were finally arrested for their actions, they were no longer afraid. Therefore, after being released they continued to organize local people to occupy the plantations.

The efforts of the village youths, supported by the freedom fighters, from both the guerrilla front and the clandestine front, raised the awareness of the peasants to participate in the movement. The consciousness of the peasants is an important factor that allows collective power to be consolidated so that open resistance can occur. In this context, hidden resistance can turn into open resistance if the existing resources, both from within the peasants themselves and from outside, can be consolidated into a collective force, which inspires the emergence of an open organization of a social movement.

The repressive situation has provided an opportunity for the peasants to consolidate their discontent through the existing clandestine network to become a collective force. In situations like this, hidden patterns of resistance that initially occur in the form of defiant behaviour and hidden actions taken individually can also emerge in a collective and open form.

During their involvement in the struggle for independence, the young activists experienced an ideological awakening that allowed them to mobilize existing resources and develop networks to mobilize the participation of the peasants in the movement. The ideological awakening of the activists and the emergence of collective action, which was coordinated covertly during the Indonesian occupation, are important things that underlie the UNAER peasant movement in Ermera which emerged openly and organized after East Timor's independence.

6.4. Reflective Conclusion

Based on the description above, it can be said that the Ermera peasant movement actually occurred in the period before the restoration of independence, in the form of a closed movement or hidden resistance, due to the repressive situation at that time.

During the Portuguese colonial period, state repression caused the weak peasants to manifest their discontent in the form of hidden actions and covert disobedience, which apart from being present as a form of resistance were also a survival strategy of the peasants who were already very weak but were still being oppressed.

Peasant resistance during the Portuguese colonial period occurred because the peasants felt that their subsistence life, both economically and culturally, had been disrupted by the presence of capitalistic colonial intervention which made them oppressed and exploited. The hidden resistances of the peasants at that time could function effectively because they were hiddenly consolidated through social relations based on customary clans which had been strongly bound by a system of marital exchange based on their cultural traditions.

Even though the militaristic colonial approach made the resistance of the indigenous peasants not appear open at that time, various forms of disobedience from them were a

precondition for the emergence of a coordinated hidden peasant resistance when they found political opportunities to consolidate themselves against the Indonesian occupation.

The Portuguese colonial approach was continued by the militaristic and repressive Indonesian occupation government, so the peasants continued to be oppressed. Their wealth was monopolized and they continued to be exploited for the business interests of the Indonesian military and foreign traders. Therefore, they continued to carry out resistance in the form of a closed movement that could be seen from their hidden actions which were also coordinated with the clandestine movement network demanding independence.

The militaristic and repressive government of the Indonesian occupation prevented the peasants from protesting openly against the control of colonial plantations and the monopoly of trade by the military at that time. Therefore, they manifested their dissatisfaction in the form of hidden actions, such as stealing coffee and actively participating in the clandestine movement, which allowed their collective consciousness to emerge. This was also a process by which young rural activists experienced an ideological awakening, which allowed them to secretly mobilize peasants who were dissatisfied with Indonesia at that time to openly protest, as happened to the peasants of Lipelhei and Gegemara in 1998. The support of the clandestine movement allowed the earlier 'hidden' response of the peasants to develop into an open response to Indonesian repression.

Through the existing network of clandestine movements, the leaders secretly drew on the discontent of the peasants into a collective force to express resistance openly. The consolidation of collective power was possible because the young activists had experienced an ideological awakening through their meetings with Falintil members and leaders of clandestine networks in their respective villages and elsewhere. Conditions like this made it possible for the peasants to protest openly, but still in a hidden organization, because state repression was still strong at that time.

In this context, it can be said that the involvement of the peasants in the clandestine movement was important as it acted as a conditioning process for the emergence of an open and organized peasant social movement in the period after the independence of East Timor.

Chapter 7: Findings on the enabling factors for the emergence of the Ermera peasant movement

The previous chapter described findings related to the historical aspects that led to the emergence of the peasant movement in the form of hidden resistance and/or closed movements as well as the conditioning of the emergence of collective action openly that began with its clandestine coordination.

This chapter presents the findings on the enabling factors for the transformation of the peasant movement from a hidden pattern of resistance and/or a closed movement to an open and organized movement.

In this study, what is meant by the open peasant movement is all forms of collective action of the peasants which are carried out openly to oppose certain state policies and/or to fight for the rights of the peasants in Ermera.

I interviewed a number of the actors behind organizing the Ermera peasant open movement. Most of them were previously actively involved in the clandestine movement against the illegal occupation of Indonesia. In this study, I refer to them as 'activists'⁵² because of their role as community organizers in mobilizing the participation of the peasants in the movement.

This chapter provides a framework and conceptualization of the emergence of an open peasant movement in Ermera. It has been driven by a process of change that provides empowerment opportunities for activists to be able to mobilize the peasants to take collective actions, coordinated as an open social movement.

This study found that the enabling factors for the emergence of an open and organized peasant movement were the process of radicalization of activists and the transitional circumstances. These two factors gave the peasants the opportunity to consolidate their previously hidden discontent.

⁵² What I mean by the activists in this research are: (1) people who were actively involved in the clandestine movement fighting for independence, through which they got an ideological awakening to continue to fight for the interests of the peasants after the independence of East Timor through organizing an open peasant social movement. Some of these people are peasants and some are NGO activists; (2) I also use the term 'activist' to refer to young people and/or farmers in Ermera who were trained by KSI as community organizers for the purpose of organizing peasant social movements.

This research shows that transitional circumstances as well as the ideological awakening of the activists are enabling factors for open collective action, which allows the activists to be able to develop organizing strategies to coordinate an open and organized peasant movement.

The socio-political changes that led to the process of radicalization of actors enabled the consolidation of the collective power of the peasants. The experience of the actors in coordinating collective actions, both secretly and openly, has inspired the emergence of a peasant movement in an open and organized manner.

7.1. Transitional circumstances and the emergence of collective action

The emergence of the open peasant movement was marked by collective actions that took advantage of the change that was taking place. The repressive conditions that previously made the discontent of the peasants always manifested individually and hidden was transformed such that the activists could consolidate these discontents into a collective force, and hidden individual action into social protest expressed openly through collective action.

Military repression and widespread human rights violations during the Indonesian occupation resulted in the discontent of the majority of East Timorese and the organization of a national independence movement. The peasants collectively expressed their resistance and/or opposition to the expropriation of their ancestral lands during Portuguese colonialism and again during the Indonesian occupation.

As shown in chapter six, in the Portuguese period when state repression was strong and the collective consciousness of the peasants had not yet been formed, the discontent of the peasants was manifested in the form of disobedient behaviour and hidden actions taken by individuals. However, when the process of change caused state repression to weaken, as happened in the political crisis in 1998-1999, previously marginalized groups consolidated themselves to build alliances to carry out collective resistance openly.

7.1.1. Political turmoil in 1975 and the reclaiming of plantations by the peasants

Colonialism and repressive militarism in the period of foreign occupation caused the oppression and exploitation of the peasants to happen without open resistance. The colonial system caused the people to live in obscurantism and ignorance (**JS**). When the Indonesian invasion occurred, the occupying government carried out a policy of indoctrination to influence the people and repressively forced the integration of East Timor into Indonesia (**AB**). The military monopolized all areas of life, making the lives of the peasants continue to be exploited at that time (**JAT**).

The repressive conditions prevented the collective consciousness of most of the peasants during Portuguese colonialism and the early period of the Indonesian invasion (**MT**, **AIGMs**, **ASdS** and **JAT**). However, when there is a change that allows for turmoil at the state level, the oppressed interpret it as an opportunity to build collective strength to be able to openly resist against exploitative and repressive state policies (dos Santos, 2008).

In relation to the Ermera peasant movement, the change from a hidden resistance or a closed movement to an open movement began when the peasants took action against private plantations in several areas to claim ownership rights over plantation lands which they considered belonged to their ancestors (**AB** and **MT**).

Several informants interviewed (**JAT**, **LSB**, **ASdS**, **BS**, **LP** and **LS**) stated that the open reclaiming of colonial plantations in Ermera by the peasants had actually occurred in the early period of Indonesian occupation in several plantation locations, such as in Aifu, Ponilala, Lipelhei and Gegemara. Local farmers at that time took action to occupy these plantations after the political turmoil in mid-1975 which caused the plantations to be abandoned because the owners had fled to their home countries.

Collective actions at that time were carried out spontaneously by several peasants living around the plantations, who were the descendants of the customary clans from the lands that the plantations had built. So, collective actions at that time were not well coordinated (**ASdS**, **JAT**, **LP** and **LS**).

“The initiative of the peasants to take action to reclaim Aipu plantations collectively and openly first appeared in the early period of the Indonesian occupation. The claiming of plantations by the peasants happened spontaneously, without coordination. After the plantation owners fled to Portugal, the peasants who were mostly descendants of the indigenous clans here spontaneously entered the plantations to pick coffee and at the same time reclaim their ancestral lands. However,

this situation did not last long because only a few years later (in 1985), a member of the Indonesian military named Tadoe, came with a power of attorney he obtained from the plantation owner during the colonial period to expel the peasants from this plantation.” (JAT).

The same action was taken by the peasants from the village of Ponilala. According to the village head of Ponilala (ASds), several plantations in his village had been reclaimed by the local community since the beginning of the Indonesian invasion until 1986. After that from 1987 to 1997, these plantations were controlled by the occupying government (ASds and BS).

According to AIGMs, the military's control and monopoly over colonial plantations was not only for economic interests but also for political interests.

“Indonesian military repression against the people was very strong, making the rural population feel afraid and just let the plantations be controlled by the military and the occupying government. The military confiscated these plantations for the purpose of enriching themselves as well as buying weapons for the purposes of war here. Therefore, the majority of the Timorese population at that time were dissatisfied with their presence and then resisted by supporting the struggle for independence.” (AIGMs).

In many areas, military repression had allowed foreign control of plantations to take place without any open protest by the peasants until 1997 (JAT, ASds, AIGMs, LP, LS and BS). Although the collective efforts of the peasants to reclaim property rights to their ancestral lands at the beginning of the Indonesian invasion were unsuccessful, these actions show that the discontent of the peasants, which during the Portuguese colonial period had been manifested in the form of hidden actions and covert disobedience, was beginning to manifest in the form of collective and open action.

7.1.2. Repressive conditions and consolidation of collective power

Although Indonesian military repression was very active in political domination and economic exploitation of East Timor, the peasants did not stop fighting for their rights. The clandestine movement networks that had formed in the villages succeeded in gaining peasant support for the struggle for independence, allowing the accumulated dissatisfaction of the peasants towards the Indonesian military to be consolidated into a collective force (AIGMs, LP, LS, JAT and MT).

"Most of the peasants by that time had started to complain about the repressive situation. Therefore, we started to mobilize them to support the East Timorese

independence struggle and through the existing clandestine networks, we were able to secretly organize a collective action for reclaiming plantations which began in 1997-1998." (LP).

The discontent of the peasants with the Indonesian military began to manifest in various forms of action such as the destruction of plantations and acts of violence carried out in secret, after the peasants joined the existing clandestine networks (AIGMs, JAT, ASdS, LP, LS and MT).

"In 1997, a plantation patrol officer was killed by unknown people in Fatubesi. The information that developed at that time was that farmers were starting to feel dissatisfied with the tightened control over plantations, which severely restricted local people's access to plantations. After the patrol officer was killed, the Ermera Military District Commander (*Komandan Distrik Militer/KODIM*) immediately took over control of the plantation by placing a military member named Yos Atarut as commander to oversee the plantation." (AIGMs).

The discontent of the peasants, which began to be widely expressed, prompted young activists, who had been recruited to become members of clandestine network organizations, to secretly mobilize the peasants for open collective action (LP, LS and MT).

"The repression of the Indonesian military had turned the accumulated discontent that had long been buried into a fire that ignited the enthusiasm of the peasants to express resistance openly. This condition allowed the formation of a large force to fight for common interests when they gained support through the networks of the clandestine movement organizations that existed." (MT).

According to several informants (ASdS, AIGMs JAT, MT and JS), the organizing of secret collective actions of the peasants during the Indonesian occupation was started by first tracing family relations through clan relations and also based on the principle of mutual trust. This method of organizing was inspired by the previous experience of the peasants when they carried out covert actions and collective disobedience against the policies of forced labour and head taxes during the Portuguese colonial period.

"Even though the Indonesian military continued to tighten control over the plantations, thefts of coffee, which were sometimes accompanied by clandestine destruction of the plantations, continued to occur. Some farmers knew about it, but they did not report their friends who were stealing coffee because they had strong family ties as well as traditional clan ties." (JAT)

The use of clan-based social relations by the peasants to protect each other had made hidden actions widespread and encouraged the emergence of open protests, after being

secretly mobilized by several youths who had joined the clandestine networks at that time **(LP, LS, JAT and MT)**.

Based on the explanations of the informants, it can be said that the resistance of the peasants in that period began to develop from hidden patterns of resistance carried out individually to open collective actions.

The informants admitted that the development of the resistance pattern of the peasants was driven by the repressive situation. Most of the peasants begin to realize that the individual actions of some youths, who secretly stole coffee in the plantations, were a manifestation of dissatisfaction and a form of protest. They began to sympathize with the actions of these youth **(MT, LP and LS)**.

“After I and several other friends were arrested by the military for being caught stealing coffee at the plantation, other farmers began to realize that what we were doing was a form of protest against the injustice that was happening. At first it was just me and a few friends stealing coffee and we were arrested for it. But after we were released, some other friends joined us and finally we succeeded in influencing other farmers to occupy the plantations widely, when we were actively involved in the clandestine network.” **(LP)**

The emergence of consciousness and understanding of the peasants regarding hidden actions as a form of resistance in a repressive situation allowed the discontent of the peasants to be consolidated into a collective force to express protest openly.

“The act of stealing coffee from the plantations was not reproached by other farmers, because we explained that we picked coffee in those plantations because the land belonged to our ancestors. After they heard our explanation, most of them actually sympathized and supported us. They saw us as young people who dared to go against the grain. Since then, most of the peasants began to realize that what we were doing was a struggle to demand justice and the rights and interests of the peasants, especially those whose ancestral lands were being occupied by foreigners.” **(LP)**.

The hidden actions of some youths turned out to have raised a collective consciousness that inspired other peasants to widely support and participate in protest actions because they felt they had the same interests. The emergence of the consciousness of the peasants can also be understood as an internal motivation, which allows collective power to be consolidated into a social movement.

7.1.3. Collective power mobilization

“Although we do not know for sure when our parents and ancestors were stabbed with nails in their foreheads, although we do not know for sure when their roofs were forcibly removed, when they were held at gunpoint and stabbed by invaders bayonet all over their bodies, hearts and souls, their sufferings linger until now and have turned into our weapons. Repressive foreign intervention is a historical fact that has now ignited the spirit of resistance that we have; awakening our collective power to unite to demand our right to freedom, our right to our ancestral lands and our sacred springs, our right to our shelter and source of livelihood and our right to our culture.” (TdN)⁵³

That is how **TdN**, a community leader who is also one of the initiators of the Ermera peasant movement described the repressive actions of the colonialists that had sparked the anger of the peasants which in its development allowed them to mobilize collective power to organize an open resistance movement.

An activist who organized collective action for the reclaiming of the Aifu plantation in Lequisi explained that:

“The Indonesian military at that time was very strong. Most of the peasants were very afraid of them. Therefore, some young people who were dissatisfied with the Indonesian occupation began to create conflict with the authorities. They began to realize that the colonial repression should not be ignored but must be resisted. For this reason, we started to create conflict situations, for example me and some friends started having problems with an Indonesian security officer. We stoned his house. Several other youths were also secretly making chaos everywhere. Because our actions were detected, some of us were wanted by the security forces and we had to hide. While we were in hiding, we found a way to join the freedom fighters in the forest through someone who had become a liaison (*estafeta*) between the guerrillas and the clandestine organizational networks here. From there we were able to mobilize a larger force because of the support of the guerrillas in the forest and also the clandestine organizational networks in the cities.” (JAT)

The repressive situation encouraged the awareness of the importance of building collective consciousness of the peasants more broadly. Hidden actions, such as stealing coffee, which were carried out individually did not have a significant impact on the process of building collective awareness (**LP**, **LS**, and **MT**), as most of the peasants had been successfully silenced by the strong repression of the Indonesian military at that time (**AdC** and **BS**). Therefore, they sought broad support, being actively involved in East Timor's struggle for

⁵³ Interview with **TdN** (75 years old) was conducted in Ermera, 16/6/2017. Some of his expressions are also found in Boavida, 2008: 99-100.

independence through the existing clandestine movement network, which enabled them to raise awareness among the peasants and mobilize collective power to express resistance openly (**LP, LS, JAT, ASdS, AIGMs, JS** and **MBK**).

At first, we were afraid, so we took the action of stealing coffee in the plantations in secret. However, after we joined the clandestine movement network in our area, we were no longer afraid to invite other friends to take the same actions, because we believed that after we were arrested by the Indonesian military, the rest of the peasants would know about our actions and they will realize that this continued exploitation and foreign domination must be fought together.” (**LP**)

The activists realized that the collective consciousness of the peasants had to be raised so that they could become actively involved in fighting for their collective interests. Therefore, several young activists who were arrested by the Indonesian military did not hesitate to explain publicly that their act of stealing coffee was carried out because coffee was planted on their ancestral lands which had been seized and controlled by the colonialists (**LP, LS, JAT** and **MT**).

The actions of these young activists are actually a strategy to seek support (**LS** and **LP**) and raise the collective consciousness of the peasants to unite in an open resistance to take back their ancestral rights (**ASdS, JAT** and **MT**).

The emergence of a collective consciousness that allows broad participation and support of the peasants, has prompted a change in the pattern of peasant resistance from hidden actions to open collective actions.

“We thought that we should do something to make the peasants aware of the importance of unity, cooperation and mutual support, so that we can fight together to pursue our common goals” (**ASdS**)

The participation of the peasants in the struggle for independence, which was also understood as an effort to liberate the people from all forms of exploitation and oppression, made them realize that their interests had actually been accumulated in the political agenda of the struggle for independence (**AB** and **MT**). This understanding encouraged the activists to covertly mobilize the active participation of the peasants in the movement, through open collective protest actions during the illegal Indonesian occupation (**MBK, JAT, AIGMs, LP, ASdS** and **LS**).

“We make the peasants aware that the struggle against exploitation and oppression is a national struggle which can be seen from the slogans of our struggle for independence: “*A luta continua*”; “*abaixo colonialismo*”; “*abaixo imperialismo*”;

“abaixo capitalismo”; “Libertar a pátria para libertar o povo”; “terra livre, povo livre, não, não, não ha exploração”. This is our strategy in making the peasants aware that the interests of the peasants have actually been integrated into the political agenda of the national liberation struggle, which must be supported by the peasants.” **(AIGMs)**.

The awakening of the consciousness of the peasants allowed the mobilization of collective power to be coordinated by the activists taking advantage of the support from the clandestine movement networks that had been built in each region.

“When most of the peasants began to realize that their ancestral lands could not be simply returned by the occupying government and investors unless they united to reclaim it, it was possible for us to organize clandestine plantation reclaiming actions and could be strengthened and expanded when we linking their actions to the interests of the existing clandestine movements **(LP)**.”

Most of those who mobilized the peasants to occupy plantations in Liperhei, Gegemara and also in other locations were young activists who were also members of clandestine networks in their respective villages. This is what makes them not afraid to influence other peasants and to mobilize collective actions **(JAT, ASdS, AIGMs, LP and LS)**.

Although they were well aware of the consequences of their involvement in clandestine activities that could endanger themselves and their families **(JAT, ASdS, LP and LS)**, this choice had to be made to awaken the peasants so that consolidation and mobilization of collective power could occur **(MT)**.

The process of raising the awareness of the peasants to be able to involve themselves in the national resistance was also a strategy for the activists in an effort to ensure the sustainability of the struggle because their actions at that time also received widespread support and advocacy.

“When we were arrested, we believed that we would be advocated, both by the International Red Cross and by the networks of the clandestine movement around the world, as well as by our families and members of our community here” **(JAT)**.

The involvement of young activists in the clandestine network also made their enthusiasm and courage grow because of the broad support, both from the guerrilla front and from the clandestine front **(AIGMs, ASdS, JAT, MT, MBK and MT)**.

A female veteran, who is an initiator of the peasant movement from Liquiça **(MBK)** said that:

“As long as we fought in the forest, our strength did not depend solely on the weapons we carried, but also on the support of the village youths who facilitated us with information and logistical support so that we could survive to ensure the continuity of the guerrilla struggle. For this reason, we indoctrinated them on the principles of struggle to encourage them so that they would not be afraid to face the Indonesian army. After these young activists had the courage and political maturity, we directed them to secretly agitate and mobilize the community to take certain actions to support the independence struggle, as directed by the commanders or leaders of the clandestine movement. Our relationship with these young activists is mutual need and mutual support. This is our strength and our strength is collective strength.” (**MBK**).

The relationship between the peasants and the freedom fighters allowed for the mobilization of collective actions for reclaiming of plantations in several locations. The coordinator of the UNAER base in Gegemara (**LS**) explained that he, together with the leaders of the clandestine movement network in his area, succeeded in mobilizing the peasants to reclaim the Hatugu plantation to claim ownership rights to their ancestral lands in 1998 because it was supported by the guerrillas who at that time founded the post in their village.

The same thing was done by **LP** and his friends in Lipelhei in 1997. Together with his friends who were all activists of the clandestine movement, they succeeded in reclaiming some parts of the plantation in Lipelhei. Then, with the support of the freedom fighters who had set up a post near their village, they could influence other peasants to carry out more extensive reclaiming of the colonial plantations.

The social changes that led to the Indonesian invasion of East Timor allowed people's dissatisfaction to accumulate and be manifested openly after the people's interests were integrated into the struggle agenda to liberate the people from all forms of oppression and exploitation. In Fretilin's 1975 manual and political program, it was formulated as a national liberation agenda (**AB, AIGMs, ASdS, JAT, TdN** and **MT**).

This collective understanding has been used as the main reason by the young activists to carry out the process of raising awareness among the peasants so that collective power can be consolidated and mobilized. This was the enabling factor for open collective actions, which in turn led to the emergence of the organizing of peasant social movements in Ermera.

Conditions as described above allow hidden actions to develop into organized collective actions into peasant movements. Thus, it can be said that during the repressive period of the Indonesian occupation, the dynamics of the peasant resistance had developed from a hidden pattern of resistance and/or a closed movement to an open resistance pattern

in the form of collective actions that were coordinated in secret with the support of the clandestine movement organizations.

7.1.4. Coordination of collective actions after the political turmoil in 1999

The 1999 referendum delivered a resounding victory for the pro-independence supporters and led to a UN managed transition to independence. Portuguese colonial plantation owners who had previously fled to their country returned to claim their plantations back. Their arrival was met by peasant oppositions, which first in Sakoko, Lequisi and Maudiu and then various areas in Ermera.

In 2000, some of the heirs to the colonial plantations⁵⁴ in Ponilala and Lequisi came from abroad with the intention of claiming their plantations because East Timor was on the cusp of becoming independent. However, when they arrived, they found their plantations occupied by the peasants. From there, tensions between the peasants and the heirs of the colonial plantations began to emerge. The peasants protested against claims of plantation inheritance by arguing that because East Timor had become independent, outsiders no longer had rights to the ancestral lands of the peasants (**ASdS** and **JAT**).

ASdS explained that the actions of reclaiming plantations in Sakoko began when the heirs of a colonial plantation in Sakoko set up a house within the plantation to claim the plantations they had abandoned since the political turmoil in 1975.

““Seeing his actions, I immediately coordinated several youths in Sakoko to dismantle the house and began to mobilize the peasants in our village to occupy the plantations, including the vacant lands here because we felt that this country was already independent and the colonialists had no more rights over the land and wealth in our country, let alone the lands of our ancestors.” (**ASdS**).

After this, other reclaiming actions were widespread. **ASdS** and several other youth friends worked together with KSI to establish a youth organization called KJHR (*Klibur Joventude Haburas Rai/Youth Organization for Reforestation*), which aims to carry out

⁵⁴ From the point of view of the peasants, these plantations were built on confiscated land, both by the colonial government and by Portuguese with the support of the military and colonial government. Many Portuguese integrated themselves into the local cultural system through marriages with indigenous women, which allows foreigners to have access to ownership of ancestral lands. The peasants rejected the claims of the plantation owners and/or their heirs and referred to them as foreign citizens even though based on the constitution, the heirs of the colonial plantations might also be citizens of East Timor.

reforestation and to raise awareness among the peasants for supported and strengthened the open reclaiming action of the peasants at that time (**ASdS** and **BS**).

Meanwhile in Lequisi, **JAT** and several other youths also mobilized the peasants to reclaim the Aipu plantation, because the heirs had returned from Portugal to claim ownership of the plantations their families had abandoned after the political turmoil in 1975. With support from KSI, **JAT** and his friends also founded a youth organization called ERPOLEQS (Ermera, Poetete, Lequisi).

“The real strategy behind the establishment of this organization was to make the peasants aware of being able to carry out plantation reclamation actions more broadly, because at first the peasants were still afraid to do it, because previous experience had shown that after farmers reclaimed their plantations, the Indonesian military took them back. Therefore, with the support of KSI, we established the ERPOLEQS so that we could easily mobilize the participation and support of the peasants” (**JAT**).

According to **ASdS**, **JAT** and **AIGMs**, the participation of the peasants in plantation reclamation actions is only possible if all of them feel they have the same interests and goals. Therefore, they tried to make the peasants aware that the reclaiming of colonial plantations that they were doing was for their benefit as well as for their children and grandchildren.

After the reclaiming of plantations by the Lequisi peasants became widespread, the village head of Lequisi, who was also the holder of the Aifu plantation power of attorney, tried to block the action of the peasants, but the peasants ignored it and continued their actions, because they realized that the village head was not on their side.

Meanwhile in Maudiu, Fatuquero, **AIGMs** and his friends in 2001 also began to mobilize the peasants to occupy rice fields belonging to a Portuguese citizen named Julio Madeira. According to **AIGMs** and **DdR**, there are four traditional clans in Maudiu: Biboro Metresi, Berhuda Luginlala, Goulolo and Manu Moris. From these customary clans, a woman from the Manu Moris clan married a man from the Dintete clan. From this marriage was born Maria Recardina, who later married Julio Madeira, a Portuguese citizen, who then had access to land ownership in Maudiu. According to **AIGMs**, which was also confirmed by a traditional elder from Maudiu named **DdR**, because Recardina is a woman, culturally she has no ownership rights over the lands there⁵⁵. Therefore, **AIGMs** organized the peasants in his

⁵⁵ In customary law in the patrilineal system which exist across these districts covered by this thesis a woman does not have inheritance rights. Matias Madeira, inherited the land from his parents, feels entitled to the land because his mother is Timorese so he has citizenship rights in the East Timor constitution.

village to reclaim the 39.99 hectares of rice fields belonging to Julio Madeira, which at that time was controlled by his son, Matias Madeira. According to **AIGMs**, so far there have been 75 families who have reclaimed the land to grow vegetables.

With the support of KSI, they also established a youth organization called HAKOMAFa (*Hakuak Komunidade Maudiu-Fatuquero*/Maudio-Fatuquero Community Association) to be able to organize support from the peasants for the land reclaiming action. The mobilization of the peasants by **AIGMs** and his friends was carried out because the plantation owner had filed a lawsuit with the district court regarding the occupation of his plantation by the peasants.

“In 2001 we started having problems with the heir of the land here named Matias Madeira. Matias Madeira is one of the sons of Julio Madeira and Recardina. We occupied the land and claimed ownership rights based on our customary law. In 2004 Matias Madeira sued the peasants in court for the occupation of their land. Even though the court's decision was in favour of Matias Madeira's claim, we have not handed over this land to him until now, because according to customary law, Matias Madeira is descended from the female side and also because his father is a Portuguese citizen. Therefore, the peasants have persisted to control this land until now. Matias Madeira and his family also did not dare to expel us from this land because we have strong support from the majority of the peasants here, just like what happened in Sakoko and Lekesi. This shows the strong support from the peasants as well as the network of CSOs, both local and national, for the reclaiming actions of the peasants, made the plantation owners in the colonial period no longer dare to face us.” (**AIGMs**).

Starting from the plantation reclaiming actions mobilized by several activists in Sakoko, Lequisi and Maudiu with broad support by KSI, they began to influence the peasants from other villages in Ermera, who have the same land problems as these three areas, to do the same. Finally, the peasants from the villages around the SAPT plantations, such as in Poerema, Fatubolu and Maubu as well as in other places also carried out reclaiming actions for colonial plantations in Ermera more broadly to demand the implementation of agrarian reform as described in FRETILIN manual and political program in 1975. The young activists mobilized the peasants to enter the plantations to pick coffee and at the same time claim ownership of the plantations.

The youths also held meetings, both with the peasants and with government officials at the local to national levels to find solutions to these problems. The peasants did not want to hand over the colonial plantations to their owners during the colonial period, because the peasants considered that these plantations had been built on lands taken from their ancestors

during the colonial period. They argued that the plantation lands were their ancestral lands, therefore they should be returned to them as their heirs because East Timor was now independent.

According to **MT**, which was also confirmed by **JenS**, in every action of reclaiming ownership rights to their ancestral lands, the peasants, both in Ermera and in Maubara, always base themselves on the perspective of customary law regarding inheritance rights based on the community's patrilineal marriage system. as well as sites that are considered sacred in existing land or plantations. Meanwhile, the heirs of the colonial plantations claim their ownership based on the existing formal law.

“They must have evidence in the form of documents related to plantations from their parents. But we also have other evidence in the form of sacred springs and also other sacred places, which, although not officially documented, are recognized by the clan community here as sacred places here.” (**AIGMs**).

Both sides have different claim bases: the peasants based themselves on customary law, while the heirs of land and/or plantations in the colonial period based themselves on the formal legal system. This situation, according to the peasants, should be a serious concern of the government in formulating policies related to agrarian issues of colonial heritage.

Several interviewees (**MT, AB, JenS, AdS, DdR, ASdS, DmN, JAT, AIGMs** and **JS**) said that the government should really pay attention to these two things so that horizontal conflicts do not have widespread implications. According to them, the state must ensure that customary law must also be reflected and/or considered in the justice system.

The absence of laws related to agrarian reform made the peasants continue to carry out their actions and then consolidated their power in the form of organizing peasant social movements.

“After various meetings between the government and the peasants were carried out without success, in the end the government seemed to 'just let' the peasants continue reclaiming the plantations, because they realized that the actions of the peasants had become so widespread that if the government responded repressively, social turmoil could disrupt the preparation process for the restoration of East Timor's independence” (**AIGMs**).

After the restoration of independence was declared on 20 May 2002, the first constitutional government of RDTL was formed by the FRETILIN Party which won the first general election by an absolute majority. The RDTL government at that time tried to solve the

problem, but because of the strong organization of the peasant movement, the government has not been able to solve the problem until now. According to **FS**, the government is still waiting for the Land Law which is currently being discussed in the National Parliament.

Various informants interviewed (**ASdS, JAT, AIGMs, AdS, DmN, LBS, BS, AdC, LP, LS** and **MT**) explained that in several meetings that have been held, government officials such as the Ermera District Administrator, Minister of Justice and Minister of Agriculture, always demanded that the peasants have to prove their claim that the lands belonged to their ancestors. The government criticised the actions of the peasants, supporting the claims of plantation owners who have legal evidence related to plantation ownership during the colonial period. However, the peasants stood their ground because they felt they had other evidence, such as sacred springs and other sacred locations within the plantations, which was strong evidence that the land was their customary land.

7.1.5. The intervention of KSI and organization of collective power

“Social movements are identified by Banks et al. (2015) as a type of civil society organisation that ‘gain strength from their grassroots membership’ making them capable of creating social change (dos Santos & Wigglesworth, 2021)

When Indonesia lost the referendum on independence in 1999, and departed with a wave of violence and destruction, a humanitarian crisis ensued (see introduction of thesis).

The 1999 crisis has attracted international attention through the intervention of donor agencies, which allowed the emergence of local NGOs in East Timor to partner with donor agencies to be able to distribute humanitarian aid to remote areas. Since then, NGOs have sprung up in East Timor from 14 NGOs in 1998 to 515 NGOs by 2002 (dos Santos & Wigglesworth, 2000).

KSI was one of the NGOs that was also established at that time. KSI was founded on 18 July 2000 by Timorese university students who had previously been actively involved in the independence struggle through the East Timor Student Solidarity Council (DSMTL). KSI is an NGO that focusses on supporting social movements and since its establishment, KSI has chosen to work directly with the peasants to promote transformational change from the bottom instead of being promoted from above. KSI's goal is to build cooperation with the peasants to transform people's lives in all aspects, promote the independence of the peasants, including access to collective land ownership, promote social and economic justice,

ecology and peace. The specific objectives of KSI include: to strengthen KSI's human resources as a social movement organization; to strengthen and expand the agrarian reform movement; and to strengthen popular education (Statute of KSI).

The formulation of the goals of this organization shows that the progressive character is very strong, which is strongly inspired by the values and basic principles of the national liberation of East Timor (**AB** and **MT**).

“The idea of establishing KSI was clearly inspired by the principles of national liberation or the liberation of the people which were initiated by the founders of this country in 1975. The idea of establishing an organization based on the principles of people's liberation has existed since we joined the struggle for independence through DSMPT before independence. However, because the priority of the struggle at that time was how to concentrate all forces first on expelling the Indonesian military from East Timor, so this idea only started to be realized after independence.” (**AB**).

The basic principles that encourage young urban activists to establish KSI are in fact synergized with the spirit and principles of the struggle of young rural activists who are mobilizing peasants in several areas in Ermera to reclaim foreign plantations demanding agrarian reform.

Therefore, it can be said that activists from the younger generation actually have the same concern about the situation of Timor after the referendum, which was won by the majority of Timorese who wanted independence. That concern is how to prepare for a new phase, where East Timor must develop itself as a country, no longer as a province of Indonesia (**MT, AB, NR** and **JenS**)

“The authoritarian New Order regime was overthrown by the great powers, the coalition of students and the people, who pushed for reforms in Indonesia. Meanwhile here in East Timor, international intervention through humanitarian support has allowed the democratization process to begin at the local level. This is what allows the interests of the peasants' struggle to be broadly consolidated with CSOs, such as KSI and other NGOs who have the same vision and mission on how to develop East Timor after the end of foreign rule.” (**NR**).

At a time when the younger generation of activists – both educated youth in urban areas who have direct access to donors and farmers in rural areas who have direct access to grassroots communities – share the same concerns and expectations about the future of East Timor, meet in community organizing and empowerment programs, power alliances are awakened. The alliance between these young activists is strongly bound by the existence of a

source of ideological inspiration that is both inspired by the basic principles of the 1975 national liberation struggle.

During preparations for the restoration of independence, democratic institutions began to be established. Political parties began to emerge. Elections were held to form a Constituent Assembly whose task was to write the constitution of the RDTL and also to form local leadership. At the same time, NGOs have also entered the villages with community empowerment programs that contribute very important in giving the community a perspective on ideal leadership, which they think can fight for their aspirations (**NR** and **MT**).

“At that time there were two important things that the peasants considered in choosing leadership in their communities: if they continued to maintain the traditional (feudal) leadership, they would only maintain the status quo and this would not contribute to the struggle of the peasants to demand agrarian reform. Therefore, the peasants preferred leaders from the younger generation who were energetic, progressive and had a historical background that was strongly connected with the history of the previous struggle for independence. This enabled the peasants to be encouraged to make transformative changes in their villages, and to influence political policies, both at the local and national level to reflect the interests of farmers. Later, in the first general election for community leadership, **ASdS** (the organizer of the plantation reclaiming action in Sakoko) ran as an independent candidate for the village head of Ponilala and won in the election, outperforming candidates from political parties. Meanwhile, **JAT** (the organizer of the plantation reclaiming action in Aifu) ran as the candidate for the head of the Lekesi hamlet also won in the election. In the village of Maubu, **DmN**, was the organizer of the peasants for reclaiming the SAPT plantation in Fatubesi, who also won as the village head of Maubu in the same election.” (**MT**).

The collaboration between the activists, facilitated through KSI's intervention, has made the raising of awareness of the peasants to be carried out effectively. This movement became strong, not only because of the participation of farmers and support from NGOs, but also because of the strong support from the local leadership, which at that time was dominated by young activists who were the initiators and organizers of the peasant movement (**MT** and **NR**).

The situation of change that drives the democratization process to the local level has encouraged youth activists, both from NGOs and from farming communities, who have received an ideological awakening to consolidate themselves through organizing social movements of the peasants as a common force to encourage transformative change.

I would argue that the open organization of the peasant movement in Ermera could only be well coordinated after KSI's intervention in Ermera. KSI entered Ermera for the first

time with a conflict resolution program to help raise awareness among the peasants, who at that time were in conflict with each other because their plantation reclaiming was not well organized (**MT, ASdS, JAT and AIGMs**).

After the peasants succeeded in reclaiming the plantations in Sakoko and Lequisi, a conflict arose between them regarding the claims to the land area occupied by each of them. Therefore, a community organizer, named Julio, contacted KSI to help facilitate the peasants. Julio was a teacher and one of the young activists behind the mobilization of the peasants for the reclaiming of plantations at that time. Through Julio, KSI was able to enter Lequisi, Sakoko, Maudiu and other areas in Ermera to facilitate the community through the Conflict Resolution program. Through organizing and empowering the community it gave birth to an organizing peasants social movement which is now being strengthened by a farmer syndicate called UNAER (**AB, MT and JenS**).

KSI's intervention in Ermera through community empowerment programs has awakened the peasants and empowered young activists to develop strategies to build collective strength in a coordinated manner through youth organizations in each village (MT). These youth organizations aim to raise the awareness of the peasants and also to coordinate the collective actions of the peasants and work to promote local leadership that is aligned with the interests of the peasants (**ASdS, JAT, AIGMs and MT**).

In 2001 the activists founded ERPOLEQS in Lekesi, KJHR in Sakoko and HAKOMAFa in Maudiu, Fatuquero. Since then, KSI has continued to support advocacy and empowerment of the peasant movement, which has made plantation reclaiming to demand agrarian reform widespread, not only in Ermera, but also in other places outside Ermera (**ASdS, JAT, AIGMs, JS, JenS, MT and AB**).

After a dispute over the area of land reclaimed by several of the peasants escalated into conflict, KSI held discussions in each community to identify who were the common enemies of the peasants and who were the real friends/partners of the peasants in the peasants' struggle. After that the peasants became aware that their common enemy was not really among them, but outside them and encouraged the peasants to unite to fight together (**MT, ASdS, JAT and AIGMs**).

The activists organized the peasants to not only occupy the plantations, but also participate in various forms of collective action such as demonstrations, press conferences,

meetings with government officials at the local and national levels to convey their demands (**ASdS, JAT and AIGMs**).

“Social tensions related to claiming land ownership between peasants and plantation heirs began to occur in 2000, followed by the mobilization of collective actions for widespread plantation reclamation in 2001. It was better coordinated after the presence of KSI supporting actors to raise the awareness of the peasants to support the struggle though the pursuit of common interests” (**ASdS**).

In a petition to the East Timor government, which was submitted by the traditional elders of 13 clans in Poetete in 2002, the traditional elders demanded that the government should defend the ‘small’ people who are still struggling to free their ancestral lands that were previously confiscated and occupied by foreigners.

In the petition, which also describes the history of the Aifu plantation, it is emphasized that the peasants cannot develop themselves and their future if the land and plantations which are their source of livelihood are controlled by outsiders for personal interests. Therefore, the traditional elders asked the government to immediately implement an agrarian reform program for the realization of social justice for the peasants (dos Santos, 2008).

KSI prepared community organizers through education and training programs which were oriented to understanding the values and basic principles of social movements. Farmers were also facilitated by KSI to participate in comparative studies and trainings both domestically and abroad to gain new knowledge and experience so that their perspectives could develop (**JenS and MT**). The process of education and empowerment for farmers and basic community organizers has a strong ideological basis to promote social justice, human rights and social equality.

In 2003-2005, the SIL, a national NGO founded by student activists, mostly RENETIL members, in collaboration with KSI organized an activist school known as ‘*Eskola ba Ukun Rasik An*’/EURA (school for liberation). The EURA was based on the idea that an independent East Timor needed to be built by first looking at the potential and strength of its people. Several young activists from rural areas have been recruited and most of the participants in this school were activists who were actively organizing farmer collective actions in Ermera to reclaim ownership rights to private plantations in Ermera.

The EURA organized by SIL and KSI aims to prepare facilitators or community organizers to encourage community organizing processes that rely on real people's liberation

efforts (**NR**). Historical experience shows that the people's organizing model during the foreign occupation was more elitist and did not promote basic democracy that encouraged active participation of the people in decision-making processes (**NR** and **MT**). Therefore, KSI builds cooperation with its partners from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to prepare young activists in rural areas to have the abilities and skills as community organizers for the benefit of community empowerment and democratic development at the local level to allow active participation of the community in the national development process (**MT** and **JenS**).

From 2001 to 2010, the collective actions of the peasants began to be coordinated openly by activists with full support from civil society organizations that share the same vision, mission and ideological inspiration. Therefore, the UNAER farmers' syndicate can be presented to develop a strategy for organizing social movements of the peasants openly.

On 10 February 2010, peasants from various parts of Ermera met in Maudiu, Fatuquero to discuss strategies to strengthen their collective actions into an open and consolidated peasant social movement through the declaration of the establishment of a farmers' syndicate called UNAER. The UNAER declarators were young activists who had previously organized collective actions in their respective villages, especially the founders of KJHR, ERPOLEQS, HAKOMAFa and several peasant organizations in several other villages.

Peasant youth organizations merged into UNAER to be able to develop strategies for organizing peasant social movements in an open and consolidated manner by continuing to maintain their alliances with CSOs more broadly to strengthen peasant social movements, both through community organizing and also developing networks for movement advocacy.

The resistance of the peasants during the Indonesian occupation, the coordination of collective actions was carried out covertly by utilizing support from clandestine organizations. In the following period, coordination of collective actions had begun to be carried out openly by utilizing external support such as from civil society organizations. The transformation from hidden collective action coordination to open collective action coordination was made possible by the political turmoil in 1999 that prompted political changes and a weakening of state repression due to the democratization process that was taking place before East Timor's independence.

The transitional circumstances that encourage the democratization process to the local level, allow the formation of an alliance of interests between the peasants and civil

society organizations, which can be consolidated into a major force in encouraging transformative change through the open organization of peasant social movements.

7.2. The processes of radicalization of activists and the organization of the peasant movement

There was widespread mobilization of farmers' collective action by activists, both before and after the 1999 crisis, taking advantage of the opportunities for change that existed to consolidate collective power.

Indonesia's illegal occupation of East Timor caused widespread Timorese resistance under the coordination of FRETILIN, which later developed in an organized manner through three fronts: the guerrilla front, the clandestine front and the diplomatic front. The work of these three fronts synergizes with each other to build strength that relies on the full support of the Timorese people.

FRETILIN mobilized popular support by conducting political education to awaken the people and to internalize the basic principles of the struggle for the liberation of the people (**MBK**). FRETILIN organized the people at each resistance base and then established CEFORPOL (*Centro de Formação Política*/ Center for Political Formation) which aimed to provide political education to the people about the real struggle for the liberation of the people (**AB, NR, MT AIGMs, and MBK**).

FRETILIN also organized other activities such as: eradication of illiteracy, planting crops, cultural activities and also a children's shelter (*creche*). All of these were carried out by young activists who had received 'political enlightenment' from the FRETILIN leaders. According to **MBK** and **AIGMs** this political enlightenment not only gave them a spirit but also a new perspective on the struggle for the liberation of the people. This turned out not only to question the exploitation system rooted in the colonial system but also the traditional feudalistic and paternalistic system (**NR** and **MT**).

"I was one of the organizers of the clandestine movement in NUREP (*Núcleo de resistência popular*) Litoli, Fatuquero. My father was a FALINTIL fighter. I learned about the concept of agrarian reform through FRETILIN's manuals and political programs when I attended political education in 1975, before the Indonesian invasion. At that time, I was in the fourth grade of elementary school and working as a teacher in the FRETILIN literacy program in Fatuquero village. After the Indonesian invasion, we fled to the forest and we received political education (*formação política*) from a female

FRETILIN leader named Camarada Genoveva in Railaco Leten, Aldeia Ran Nakali. After attending FRETILIN 's political education at that time, we were inspired to continue to make people in our village aware to participate in supporting the independence struggle with the hope that after independence the agrarian reform program could be implemented because it was written in the FRETILIN political manual as one of the most important programs. FRETILIN's political manual and programs are the main foundation of our struggle for independence" (**AIGMs**).

The FRETILIN political education was not only intended for male activists but also for women who also learned about the concept of emancipation which made them aware that exploitation did not only occur in the colonial system but also in the traditional system (**MBK, ASdS and AIGMs**).

"After that, we began to realize that the traditional system only strengthened the position of the feudal lord to continue to exploit the people based on cultural norms." (**MBK**).

The process of political awareness to the people was also carried out by several priests who also helped the clandestine movement network. **ASdS** explained that he began to get political enlightenment from Mario Belo in 1984 when Mario Belo served as a priest in Ermera.

"Previously I was active in the OPJT (Organização Popular da Juventude Timor/Timor Popular Youth Organization) because my brother, Carlos dos Santos at that time served as Deputy Chairman of the OPJT in Ponilala. Even though we surrendered on May 22, 1980, we still carried out clandestine resistance. We used the church to gain political enlightenment. In 1984, we received a political orientation from Father Mario Belo regarding a new model of popular resistance, in which resistance must be built in enemy-controlled areas. Information we obtained from Pastor Mario, we spread it to the community clandestinely to make them aware so that they can support the independence struggle in any way they can. That is the clandestine movement's strategy. Even though I was young, at that time I was trusted because I had previously received political awareness when I was active in the OPJT." (**ASdS**).

According to **AB, ASdS, and AIGMs**, the idea of agrarian reform is not a new idea, but has existed since 1975 and they have learned when they participated in the political education given by FRETILIN leaders. Therefore, when political turmoil occurred in 1975 between FRETILIN and UDT (*União Democrática Timorense/Democratic Union of Timorese*), the majority of the population in Ponilala village and several other villages, who lived close to

colonial plantations, preferred to support FRETILIN instead of UDT because most of the followers of UDT consisted of feudal landowners as well as plantation owners⁵⁶ (**ASdS**).

“The idea of agrarian reform from FRETILIN was clearly opposed by the leader of UDT in Ermera and its followers, because some of them were also landowners and plantation owners, who were afraid that if FRETILIN won their plantations would be confiscated and distributed to the people. During the colonial period, the capitalists and colonialists continued to exploit the people with legal instruments they created and imposed on the people.” (**ASdS**).

During our political education, we realized that in fact the systematic exploitation of the peasants was effective because of the mutually beneficial or mutually supportive relationship between the capitalists, the feudalists and the colonialists” (**AIGMs**)

Therefore, the struggle for the liberation of the people is not only about exploitation rooted in the capitalist colonial system, but also in the traditional feudalistic and paternalistic systems (**AIGMs, JAT, ASdS, MBK, AB** and **MT**).

The process of political awareness raising of the people in the forests by FRETILIN enabled the people to have a strong commitment to support the struggle for independence through their active participation in clandestine networks that had been established in the villages as well as in the cities.

The formation of clandestine networks in the villages was due to the widespread repression of the Indonesian military against the people so most people, both in the villages and in the cities, unhappy with the repressive occupation government. The clandestine organization network mobilized the active participation of the community in supporting the independence struggle (**ASdS, JAT, AIGMs, LS, LP** and **MBK**).

For youths who did not receive the FRETILIN political education, their involvement in clandestine networks allowed them to gain political enlightenment when they met face-to-face with resistance leaders who had previously attended political education as well as other FRETILIN political activities in the forest (**AB, MT, MBK, JAT, LS** and **LP**).

“We were enlightened when we met members of FALINTIL who at that time encouraged us to fight against the Indonesian military. They set up posts near our village and because of that we were able to gain political awareness that Portuguese and Indonesian control over this country is an occupation that must be resisted. The

⁵⁶ According to Aditjondro (2000: 180), the pattern of land ownership during the Portuguese colonial period was very unequal, so it is not surprising that the leaders of UDT -most of whom were descended from deportees as well as local kings - hated FRETILIN.

Indonesian military carried out repression to silence our resistance. Therefore, we must unite to be stronger and be able to fight against them together.” (LS).

Several informants interviewed (**ASdS, JAT, AIGMs, LP and LS**) said that their concern for socio-political issues began to emerge when they were in school and they witnessed how the Indonesian military oppressed poor farmers in their village. Poor farmers without coffee had to work on existing colonial plantations for very low wages (**ASdS**). Therefore, sometimes they stole coffee on the plantation but when they were caught by the officers, their baskets were confiscated and they were beaten and tortured (**JAT and ASdS**).

“I have also witnessed how a poor farmer was beaten by an officer when he was caught picking up coffee beans that had fallen on the ground on his way home from work. He was accused of stealing coffee even though he already showed evidence that the coffee in his basket was coffee beans that had fallen to the ground” (**ASdS**).

The repressive exploitation of the poor peasants had angered the younger generation and manifested their dissatisfaction with the Indonesian military through hidden actions. After they were connected to the clandestine movement network, a radicalization process took place which made them have the courage and enthusiasm to be able to consolidate the peasants into collective action

“Before we found a way to get in touch with FALINTIL to establish a network of clandestine movement organizations in our respective villages, most of the youth and peasants were still very afraid and reluctant to carry out hidden actions which they thought would endanger themselves and their families. However, after FALINTIL members set up a post here and some of them as well as the older clandestine movement leaders gave us political enlightenment, then we felt we were well equipped to argue with anyone against independence. From there we began to continue the process of raising awareness among the peasants from house to house to garner broad support for our struggle for independence.” (**LP**).

The process of the struggle for independence for East Timor reflects its strength in relying on the support of the people, for that agitation and propaganda about the barbarity of the Indonesian army can continue to be carried out by building cooperation with urban communities and also other international communities who have sympathized with the struggle of the people of East Timor at that time because of their concerns on human rights issues (**AB, MBK and JAT**).

“We felt that we were not fighting alone. We were well aware that this struggle was the struggle of the people from all fronts. The strategy of organizing the struggle, which was centred on the orientation of the Supreme Commander, had succeeded in

gathering broad support from the community, from villages, cities and overseas, through a diplomatic front which is supported by the work of clandestine networks. The role of the youth and students of Timor enabled it to spread its wings internationally. We realized that this struggle was still long, gathering broad support from our own people as well as the international community. This is the importance of the process of political awareness to the people during the struggle for independence” (MBK)

The repressive conditions had caused common interests to be consolidated into a major force through partnerships between the peasants, youth activists and the leaders of the freedom fighters.

“This kind of partnership enabled the young activists to consolidate the discontent of the peasants into a coordinated collective force through the support of the clandestine movement organizations to be able to express social protest openly.” (MT).

The process of political enlightenment during the struggle for independence has raised awareness and commitment of young activists to remain steadfast in defending the interests of the people.

“When several youths began to be actively involved in the clandestine network, both as liaison people (*estafeta*) and as local network leaders, we provided political education to them with the aim of giving them specific roles. By raising political awareness, they can work well and can guarantee confidentiality. Otherwise, the secret could be exposed and the impact could be very detrimental to the struggle. Political awareness of the youth was very important, because they would be an extension of us (the FALINTIL members) in mobilizing people's participation as well as logistical and informational support to sustain the struggle on the guerrilla front and on the diplomatic front. The political awareness process for the young activists gave them the ability to organize and mobilize broad support from the community for the struggle for independence.” (MBK).

Based on the experience and enthusiasm inspired during the struggle for independence, when the political crisis occurred in 1999, the activists mobilized the peasants to reclaim colonial plantations.

“The people's victory in the referendum made us very happy. The pro-independence activists who used to be with the peasants and mobilized the support of the peasants in the struggle for independence were now increasingly trusted by the community. This is what makes us excited to continue to influence them to carry out widespread plantation reclaiming, after foreign plantation owners returned and re-claimed their plantation ownership rights. We explained to the peasants that now we are free and foreigners have no more rights to our land and wealth.” (JAT).

The activists' understanding of the logical consequences of the socio-political changes at that time had prompted them to openly question colonial legacies that were the source of exploitation and social injustice. The awareness of these activists was further strengthened when KSI entered with its programs to make the peasants aware of the importance of establishing an organization in every village. The purpose of the establishment of these organizations was not only to carry out awareness processes for the peasants, but also to be able to coordinate the collective actions of the peasants (**MT** and **JenS**).

Since then, the activists have realized that strengthening the collective actions of the peasants must be carried out in a coordinated manner (**MT**). With the support of KSI they later established ERPOLEQS, KJHR and HAKOMAFa to begin coordinating the actions of the occupation of plantations in Lequisi, Sakoko, and Maudiu. In its development, these three organizations became pioneers to encourage the institutionalization of the farmers' movement in an open and coordinated manner in UNAER (**JAT, ASdS, AIGMs, MT, AB** and **JenS**).

The meeting of youth activists who mobilized the collective actions of the peasants in Ermera with activists from civil society organizations (such as KSI) happened because they were driven by the same spirit and principles of struggle. This momentum allows the collective empowerment process to occur through critical and participatory discussions on how to build an independent East Timor by relying on critical reflection on the history of the people's struggle.

“We reopened FRETILIN's 1975 manual and political programs to discuss them and to contextualize them within the development of post-independence East Timor. In the process of rereading and reflecting together on the history of the struggle for East Timor, we found that we had to learn from the peasants' experiences in mobilizing people's power while they were active in clandestine networks in the past. At the same time, we also discussed how processes of exploitation were carried out in the colonialism system, the capitalist system and the feudal system. This process allows all of us to understand well about how the system of exploitation occurs and how we must deal with it together (**NR**)

The process of contextualizing the principles of struggle that was carried out together made these young activists experience an ideological awakening, reflecting on their respective history and life experiences to jointly encourage transformative social change.

“We as NGO activists learn from the peasants about their life experiences in coordinating collective actions, both covertly and openly and their strategies to

survive in repressive conditions. We also use a participatory approach in each of our activities, which allows them to be actively involved directly in every process that allows them to be able to analyse their own situation. Through processes like this, we build a shared perspective and understanding of social movements that can drive social change and transformation.” (MT).

In 2003-2005 SIL, in collaboration with KSI, organized an activist school (EURA) for young activists to transform their ability to be able to respond to the ongoing change process (NR). The importance of the EURA as well as other trainings facilitated by KSI is to provide an ideological perspective to the peasant movement of relying on the power of the farmers themselves (dos Santos, A.B & Wigglesworth, 2021).

The real experiences of the activists are discussed and critically reflected in every education and training process, which allows them to have shared inspiration and perspectives on empowering and/or liberating community organizing, rather than creating community dependence on outside assistance or intervention (NR, ASdS and JAT).

Empowering community organizing is an organizational model that is directed at utilizing local potentials and capabilities to respond to community needs, as was done during the struggle for independence (NR, MT and JenS).

“In every community organizing process carried out by KSI, the personal experiences of young activists as community organizers are raised to be reflected and transformed into a collective force, which at that time was a basic need for the consolidation of social movements to be able to encourage transformative change.” (MT).

Education and training for the activists of the Ermera peasant movement are not only carried out by KSI and its partners at the local and national levels, but also at the international level.

The partnership between the peasants and KSI, which already has a wide network at national and international levels, has enabled several organizers of the Ermera peasant movement to participate in training and comparative studies as well as international meetings organized by the world peasant movement organization “La Via Campesina” (JenS).

Their participation in national and international events allows their knowledge, abilities and skills as well as their experience to be increased and strengthened. At the same time, they can take advantage of this momentum to nationalize and/or internationalize their local issues to gain widespread advocacy support for the benefit of strengthening the movement (MT, JenS, ASdS, JAT and AIGMs).

The empowering partnership process has inspired the activists to be able to organize a peasant movement with an ideological foundation and a strong perspective rooted in the movement's expectations, which are directed to drive transformative change. This can be seen from every action of the peasants who always shouted slogans, such as: "*Viva camponeses Timor-Leste*" (long live the Timor-Leste peasants)", "*Terra livre, povo livre* (free land, free people)", "*A luta continua*" (keep fighting).

At a national consolidation meeting of the peasants organized by KSI, in mid-2018 in Maubara, Municipality of Liquiça, the President of UNAER (**AIGMs**), in his remarks emphasized that the peasants were not afraid to die while fighting to defend their culture and rights as peasants. He emphasized that the peasant movement in many places was born to fight for social justice.

According to the first President of UNAER who is now the village head of Ponilala (**ASds**), the suffering of the peasants due to oppression, violence and exploitation, both during the Portuguese colonial period and the Indonesian occupation, was carried out by the state to fulfil its political and economic ambitions as well as the interests of investors.

"Therefore, *Ukun rasik'an* (independence) should be a momentum to end all forms of exploitation and oppression of the people. There should be no more oppression, militarism and exploitation of the peasants or the people. We used to fight for independence; struggle to free this nation from the shackles of colonialism; struggle to free the people of this country from oppression and exploitation. Fighting for independence also means reaffirming our culture as a nation with the same dignity as other nations in this world." (**ASds**).

The leaders of the peasant movement think that what they have done so far is an effort to raise awareness and political empowerment for the peasants to unite and participate actively in continuing the struggle to demand their economic and socio-cultural rights. The actions of reclaiming plantations before the restoration of independence were a manifestation of open protests against the deprivation of the rights of the peasants by people from outside Ermera, who were supported by the state during the foreign occupation (**ASds, JAT, AIGMs, AdS, BS, LSB, LP, and LS**).

Apart from being a form of protest, the peasant movement is also an effort to anticipate the continuation of exploitation against the peasants, if this new state does not reform colonial policies that are contrary to the principles of social justice (**JenS, MT and AB**).

As long as the young activists are involved in the processes of organizing and empowering the community, at the same time they provide each other with a strong perspective on how to build an independent East Timor by relying on the capabilities of its people and the utilization of available resources and opportunities.

The partnership between the youth activists of the peasants and the youth activists from the civil society organizations led to the widespread of collective action when the peasants began to realize that they had strong support, not only from the young activists in their village (who had previously organized them to get involved in the clandestine movement), but also from educated youth activists from urban areas (formerly pro-independence activists) who now have access to support from the international community through their NGOs.

The empowering partnership between the peasants and CSOs allows the concerns of the Ermera peasants to resonate at the national and even international levels, allowing the organization of the Ermera peasant movement to be empowered and strengthened.

When the needs of the movement are absorbed in KSI's organizing and empowering programs, the process of raising awareness of the peasants can occur, either through discussions, education and training as well as meetings facilitated by KSI at home and abroad (**MT, AB and JenS**).

There are several initiators and also staff from UNAER who have been sent abroad as a result of KSI's collaboration with its partners. They learn about the strategy of organizing a peasant movement which relies on the capabilities and internal resources of the peasants themselves as well as the mobilization of external support.

“TdN was sent to Brazil in 2002 to learn from MST's experience in organizing the Brazilian peasant movement. Then **ASdS, JAT, AIGMs, JS** and several other peasant movement organizers were also sent abroad, such as to the Philippines and Indonesia to learn together directly from the peasants of these countries about the experiences, the knowledge and skills they develop to meet their needs. At that time there was a process of sharing experiences, knowledge and skills among the peasants in an equal dialogue process. All of this could happen because it was facilitated by the existing CSOs networks, in which KSI also played an active role.” (**JenS**)

Approaches like this provide a space for critical collective reflection on the changes that were taking place and their implications for the lives of the peasants in local and global contexts. This ultimately made them support and participate more actively in the movement (**MT, ASdS, JAT and AIGMs**). Thus, the peasant movement was empowered in encouraging

and overseeing a process of change that truly liberates not marginalizes them (**NR, MT and JenS**).

The role of young activists with a comprehensive understanding was important for the newly independent state of East Timor (**MT**). Historical experience has shown how the contribution of youth activists, as an integral part in the struggle for independence, had a very positive impact in influencing the direction of change (**MT and NR**).

“When we met in every activity with young people who were very active in organizing collective actions of the peasants, including **ASdS, JAT, AIGMs** and others, they complained about the direction of change which they thought had deviated. They always say that: “In the past we fought with the slogan: 'free the land and liberate the people'. But why after our independence did the plantation owners in the colonial period come back again to claim their ownership and inheritance? They think this is very unfair. According to them, East Timor, which is now independent, should not be dictated by foreign interests.” (**MT**).

The peasants' anxiety about the direction of change had prompted the partnership between the peasants and KSI to find a strategy to build a broad alliance to raise local issues in the agenda of the common struggle.

This partnership has enabled the activists to integrate the interests of the peasants at the local level to be included in the agenda of the peasant struggle at the international level, which allows the advocacy of the Ermera peasant movement to be further strengthened through the networks of CSOs (**JenS and MT**).

Based on the description above, it can be said that the strengthening of the organization of the peasant movement in an open manner is also made possible by the process of radicalization of activists. The process of radicalization of the activists occurred during their involvement in the independence struggle as well as processes of empowerment that occurred due to the intervention of CSOs after the political and humanitarian crisis in 1999.

The experience of involvement in the independence struggle together with the leaders of the struggle, both from the guerrilla front and the clandestine front, has introduced youth activists to the ideology of people's liberation, which is then used as the main capital in the process of empowering and strengthening the open organization of the peasant movement.

The strengthening of the organization of the Ermera peasant movement was also possible because of KSI's intervention which encouraged the radicalization process and the

empowerment of activists more broadly by utilizing the existing advocacy networks of the movement, both at the national and international levels.

7.3. Reflective conclusion

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the transformation of the peasant movement from hidden resistance patterns and/or closed movements to open and organized movement patterns occurred due to transitional circumstances and the process of radicalization of activists.

Transitional social and political processes that lead to changes at the state level allowed long-hidden peasant discontent to be consolidated into a collective force. The process of radicalization of activists allowed them to experience an ideological awakening, enabling them to build collective consciousness of the peasants and express resistance to all forms of oppression and exploitation.

Two partnership models allowed the radicalization of activists to organize and strengthen the peasant movement. The first model is a partnership based on the interests of the national struggle, where the activists built partnerships with the freedom fighters. This partnership model allows the awakening of the consciousness of the peasants, which enables the activists to consolidate the discontent of the peasants that was previously manifested in the form of hidden actions into a collective power to express resistance openly.

The second model is a partnership that occurred in the period after the 1999 crisis in East Timor. The transitional circumstances that were taking place at that time had led the peasants to form partnerships with CSOs to promote the empowerment process, which allowed peasant resistance in the form of collective actions to be consolidated into an open and organized peasant social movement. For example, the intervention of KSI, encouraged the radicalization of peasant activists through education and a broader empowerment process so that the organization of peasant social movements could be strengthened.

Transitional circumstances that have weakened state repression and provided opportunities for the democratization process at the local level, allowed peasant activists to build alliances with external parties who have the same concern to strengthen the peasant movement as a force to be able to drive the process of transformative change. Therefore, it can be said that transitional circumstances and the process of radicalization of activists are

enabling factors for the transformation of the peasant movement from hidden resistance and/or closed movements to open and organized peasant social movements in Ermera.

Chapter 8: Findings on the strategy of organizing the Ermera peasant movement by UNAER

The previous chapter has presented research findings on the enabling factors for the transformation of the peasant movement from a hidden pattern of resistance and/or a closed movement to an open and organized movement. This chapter presents the empowerment and/or strengthening of the peasant movement through the organizing strategy carried out by UNAER.

Collective actions on plantation reclaiming marked the emergence of open resistance from the peasants which allowed UNAER to be able to develop strategies for peasant resistance in the form of an open and organized peasant social movement.

This chapter provides a conceptual framework for the strategy of organizing a peasant movement that relies more on mobilizing internal and external resources to empower and/or strengthen the peasant movement as well as support the development of the peasant movement coordinated by UNAER.

I start by exploring how the life experiences and abilities of the actors contributed significantly to formulating strategies for organizing the peasant movement, which was based on critical reflection on the capabilities and potential of the peasants.

Based on the experiences of the UNAER staff I interviewed regarding their approaches to the peasants, I found that UNAER had three main strategies in organizing the peasant movement in Ermera: (1) strategies to encourage the participation of the peasants through the mobilization of collective memory; (2) strategies in advocating and strengthening the movement through resource mobilisations; (3) strategies for empowering the movement through education and training as well as sustainable agriculture.

8.1. The formation of UNAER and its perspective on the peasant movement

The declaration of the founding of UNAER was made on 27 February 2010 in Ermera. UNAER is a farmers' union which was declared by several people representing several peasant organizations in Ermera which from 2000 to 2010 were active in organizing peasants in their

respective villages to reclaim plantations built during the colonial period to demand agrarian reform in Timor-Leste.

UNAER's view on agrarian reform is not limited to land reform but has a broader meaning, such as reform of the agrarian system that allows the peasants to be empowered and have the ability to decide their own future. The President of UNAER, **AIGMs**, explained that:

The agrarian reform that UNAER is fighting for is not just 'land reform'. Land reform is the entry point to encourage agrarian reform. Agrarian reform is a concept in which the peasants are empowered to not only have access rights to land for production, but also to be empowered to be actively involved in the decision-making process regarding their future and have the ability to respond to the process of change that has implications for the lives of the peasants from generation to generation. Therefore, the peasant social movement represented by UNAER is actually a movement to empower the peasants, both politically and economically. Only then will the peasants truly feel sovereign because apart from having access to land, production and markets, they also have the ability to influence the decision-making processes related to their own lives now and in the future. UNAER also encourages the formation of cooperatives in some of its base communities to promote fair trade. In terms of reclaiming plantations, UNAER does not encourage farmers to only reclaim, but also tries to empower them to reform the production system to enrich it with various varieties of production crops. Only then can the peasants, apart from having access to land for production, also have access to markets. That is the strategy of the movement which, according to UNAER's perspective, can empower the peasants (**AIGMs**).

By relying on this perspective, the activists declared themselves to be united to jointly fight for the rights and interests of the peasants in Ermera through the merger of the organizations they led at that time into a farmers' union called UNAER (*Uniaun Agrikultor Ermera/Ermera Farmers' Union*). The three peasant organizations that became the main initiators of the establishment of UNAER were KJHR, ERPOLEKS and HAKOMAFa. Several informants (**AIGMs**, **ASdS**, **JAT**, **AdS**, **DmN**, **BS**, **TPdC**⁵⁷, **DSC**⁵⁸, **JenS**, **AB** and **MT**) acknowledged that since the beginning until now KSI has played an active role in facilitating UNAER activities.

According to the Director of the East Timor NGO Forum, **DSC**, UNAER is the only farmers' union that organizes the peasant movement in East Timor, whose existence is also recognized by the state.

⁵⁷ **TPdC** (26 years old) is the Secretary of UNAER. The interview with him was conducted in Ermera on 9/11/2019

⁵⁸ **DSC** (37 years old) is the Director of the East Timor NGO Forum. The interview with him was conducted in Dili on 25/11/2019.

UNAER is the only farmers' union that organizes the peasant movement in East Timor. Since the beginning until now, UNAER has consistently fought for the rights of the people to have access to land. I know that there is no organization that financially supports this movement. Although KSI acts as the main facilitator, KSI only facilitates community initiatives represented in UNAER, KSI is not UNAER's donor agency. Therefore, UNAER received a Human Rights award from the President of the Democratic Republic of East Timor in 2018. This means that the state recognizes their existence and struggles so far (**DSC**).

In the UNAER Statute, it is stated that the aim of UNAER is to work with farmers to fight for the rights and dignity of farmers and to produce and promote fair trade, collectivism and social equality, which is sustainable from generation to generation. UNAER also has a vision “to create a just and sovereign farming community, which lives based on the spirit of collectivism, social equality, solidarity and sustainability from generation to generation (Revised UNAER Statutes at its second congress on 27 May 2013).

UNAER membership is defined based on households, which carry out plantation reclaiming and are members of UNAER's basic committees. Until 2019, there were as many as 24,384 households that were members of UNAER spread across its base committees. UNAER members hold a general meeting at the base committee level to elect their delegates to attend the UNAER congress which is held every 4 years. Although the delegates from the basic committees in the congress consist of several people with equal speaking rights, in the decision-making process in the congress each delegate only has one vote (**AIGMs** and **TPdC**).

UNAER holds a congress to elect the president and executive body of UNAER, revise the statutes and other strategic decisions. UNAER congresses are attended by delegates from UNAER base committees. UNAER already has 28 base committees spread across several regions in Ermera (**TPdC**).

The 28 base committees of UNAER can be seen in the table below.

Table 2:
Names of UNAER Base Committees

(Source: accessed from UNAER Secretariat in Maudiu, Ermera on 9/11/2019)

| Number | Names of Base Committees | Located in Suco (village) |
|--------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | Aihata-Tu | Suco Fatuquero, Railaco |
| 2. | Aitumua | Suco Fatubolu, Hatulia |
| 3. | Camalpun | Suco Lihu, Railaco |
| 4. | Coilate-Letelo | Suco Coilate-Letelo, Hatulia |
| 5. | Dadesan | Suco Poetete, Ermera |
| 6. | Fatubesi | Suco Fatubesi, Hatulia |
| 7. | Fatubolu | Suco Fatubolu, Hatulia |

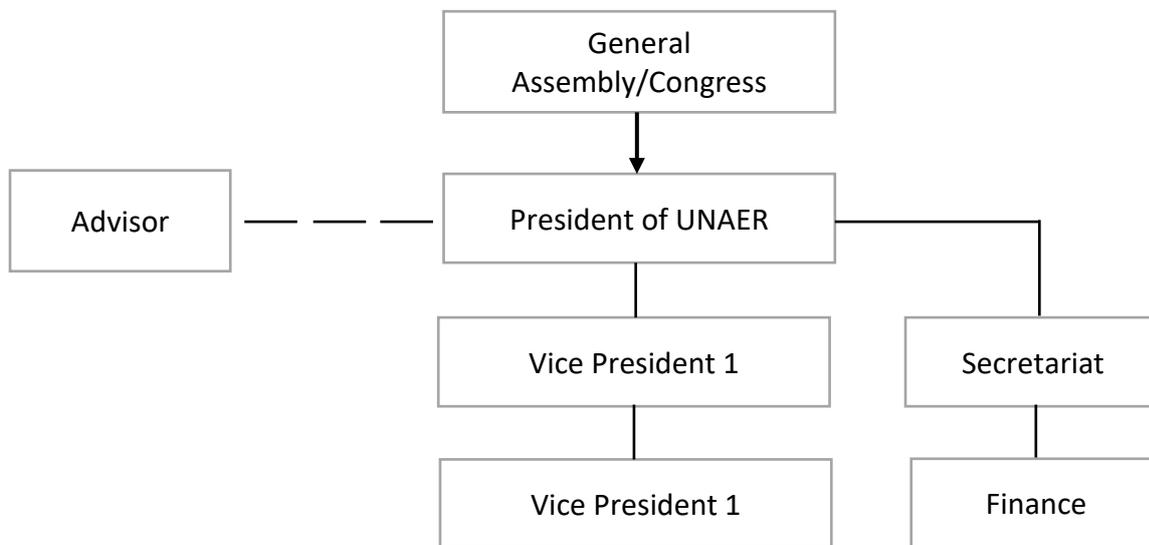
| | | |
|-----|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 8. | Gouio (UNAGOU) | Suco Poetete, Ermera |
| 9. | Guruma'e | Suco Haupu, Letefoho |
| 10. | Hatugu/Gegemara | Suco Poetete, Ermera |
| 11. | Lipelhei | Suco Leguimea, Ermera |
| 12. | Lequisi (ERPOLEQS) | Suco Poetete, Ermera |
| 13. | Manutasi | Suco Manusa'e, Hatulia |
| 14. | Manusa'e | Suco Manusa'e, Hatulia |
| 15. | Marua | Suco Fatuquero, Railaco |
| 16. | Mau-Nunu | Suco Matata, Railaco |
| 17. | Mau-Ubo | Suco Mau-Ubo, Hatulia |
| 18. | Maudiu (HAKOMAFa) | Suco Fatuquero, Railaco |
| 19. | Mertuto (UNAMER) | Suco Mertuto, Ermera |
| 20. | Nalmorema | Suco Riheu, Ermera |
| 21. | Poerema | Suco Fatubolu, Hatulia |
| 22. | Ponilala Ria | Suco Ponilala, Ermera |
| 23. | Ponilala (UKEN) | Suco Ponilala, Ermera |
| 24. | Riamori | Suco Haupu, Letefoho |
| 25. | Sakoko (KJHR) | Suco Ponilala, Ermera |
| 26. | Samudu | Suco Poetete, Ermera |
| 27. | Talo | Suco Manusa'e, Hatulia |
| 28. | Urahou | Suco Urahou, Hatulia |

According to **TPdC**, which was also confirmed by **AlGMS**, of the total 28 UNAER bases, 10 of them are bases where the peasants reclaimed the 12,000 ha SAPT plantation in Fatubesi⁵⁹. While the other bases are mostly private plantations built during the Portuguese colonial period.

Organizationally, UNAER activities are coordinated according to the following organizational chart:

⁵⁹ According to **TPdC**, the 10 UNAER bases currently reclaiming the SAPT plantation are: Aitumua; Coilate-Letelo; Fatubesi; Fatubolu; Manutasi; Manusa'e; Mau-Ubo; Poerema; Talo and Ura-Hou. The head of Maubu Village, **DmN**, acknowledged that the SAPT plantation was a state plantation, but they organized the peasants to reclaim the plantation, because historically these large plantations were built on their ancestral lands which were seized by the colonial government.

**Figure 4:
UNAER organizational chart**



(Source: accessed from UNAER Secretariat in Maudiu, Ermera on 9/11/2019)

UNAER also has several advisors (usually chosen from elders, community leaders or academics), whose job it is to only provide direction or advice to the President of UNAER when needed (**AIGMs**).

According to the secretary of UNAER, the main task of the executive body is the administration and coordination of UNAER's strategic activities in general (**TPdC**). Meanwhile, the initiatives of the peasants at the community level are always carried out in coordination with the UNAER base committees in each base. Current members of UNAER include 24,384 families from the district, with the total area planted with coffee of about 32,135 hectares with a total production of 4,020 tons in 2017 (**AIGMs**).

As a social movement UNAER has a political and economic focus. The political focus is through community organizing and network development to strengthen the movement. The socio-economic context ensures the economic improvement of UNAER member families (dos Santos & Wigglesworth, 2021). UNAER is now working to transform monoculture plantations into diversification in a system known as '*Kuda rai ho sistema integradu*' (integrated planting system). This transformation is carried out in stages, starting in 2017 with education and training followed by nurseries and demonstration gardens in several UNAER community bases (dos Santos & Martins, 2020).

From UNAER's perspective, their social movement aims to fight for the rights of the peasants and social justice in East Timor. According to the President of UNAER, the demands of the peasants regarding agrarian reform are closely related to the goals of the UNAER peasant social movement (**AIGMs**). The UNAER peasant movement also aims to anticipate the re-emergence of oppression and exploitation in any form against farmers. One of the causes of the social injustice of the peasants so far is rooted in the legacy of colonial policies. Therefore, UNAER exists to remind decision makers not to continue colonial policies that are not based on the principles of social justice (**ASdS, AIGMs and JenS**).

UNAER's strategy for organizing the peasant movement relies on mobilizing the strengths of its members and taking advantage of opportunities for support from civil society organizations that share the same vision and mission, both at national and international level (**AIGMs, JAT, ASdS and JenS**).

8.2. UNAER's strategies in organizing the peasant movement

“In its struggle, UNAER strengthened itself through two main strategies which I often refer to as: *“strategi dalam mempersiapkan kapal perang”* (strategy in preparing warships) and *“strategi dalam mempersiapkan kapal dagang”* (strategy in preparing merchant ships). The strategy of preparing warships is related to all efforts of UNAER in fighting for the rights and/or interests of members in particular and the peasants in general to be able to have access to land for production. Meanwhile, the strategy of preparing merchant ships is every effort from UNAER to empower its members to be able to have the ability or skills to take advantage of existing opportunities to produce in order to improve the lives of their families. Only then can UNAER be trusted by the peasants as their representation in this struggle.” (**AIGMs**).

The radicalization of activists allows them to present an open and organized peasant social movement through UNAER. By utilizing the support of civil society organizations as well as internal resources which are rooted in historical and cultural elements based on the local lifestyle of subsistence communities, UNAER develops organizing strategies which strengthen and empower the peasant social movements.

8.2.1. Encouraging the participation of the peasants through the mobilization of collective memory

According to **MT**, the peasant activists had understood the basic idea of people's liberation through their experiences in participating in the clandestine movement in the past. However, most of them did not fully understand the changing situation at that time and how to deal with it. The people's victory in the referendum made most activists fall into euphoria and made them unaware of the new problems related to the collective actions of the peasants that emerged.

The lack of understanding of new situations and strategies for responding causes them to become confused and conflict with each other. Finally, in 2001 KSI came to facilitate community discussions. The horizontal conflict between the peasants began in Lequisi when the peasants succeeded in reclaiming the Aifu plantation. These basic discussions led to the emergence of an awareness that agrarian-based conflicts in society in Ermera were actually structural conflicts, not horizontal ones. And this was rooted in the legacy of colonial history. Therefore, the basic discussions were directed to historical reflection, which turned out to be closely related to the experiences of the peasants themselves. This kind of process allows ideological awareness, which had existed previously in the peasants and activists, to be reflected back to be contextualized in the new situation of the peasant struggle at that time (**MT**).

The activists tried to overcome horizontal conflicts between the peasants through an empowerment process carried out with KSI to encourage a social movement that relied on the strengths of the farmers themselves (**ASdS, JAT, AIGMs, MT, AB and JenS**).

Furthermore, the basic discussions were directed at efforts to build ideological and critical awareness of the peasants to strengthen the movement. The activists identified '*lia nain*' (traditional elders) as well as elders or community leaders to tell stories about the foreigners took their ancestral lands to establish plantations. They also informed regarding agrarian reform that they had heard and/or learned about from Fretilin in 1975 or during the struggle for independence (**MT**).

This process allows the rise of collective awareness of the importance of collective resistance. When the peasants recalled how oppression and exploitation had happened to them, they must have been angry or emotional with the colonialists (**JAT**). When they recall their respective experiences when they participated in contributing to the national resistance during the Indonesian occupation, they must be proud. From there, their fighting spirit will rise again and that is our goal at that time (**ASdS**).

So, the experiences of the peasants were raised and contextualized as important instruments which were then used by community organizers to build collective awareness so that the peasants could effectively participate in the movement (**ASdS, AIGMs, JAT, MT, AB and JenS**).

The basic discussions were always directed at the empowerment process which gave the peasants an ideological perspective, which then made them realize that their struggle was closely related to structural problems. From there they begin to realize that their common enemy is the system; their common enemy comes from outside them, not within them. Therefore, they must unite and support each other so that this peasant movement can be strengthened. This kind of understanding then strongly inspires them to mobilize the active participation of the peasants in supporting the peasant movement which is coordinated through UNAER (**MT**).

The reclaiming of plantations by customary owners that were mobilized by the activists were a response to the social changes that were taking place. Although initially the mobilization of the peasants was carried out only based on the personal experience of each activist, after being empowered by KSI, the activists became aware of the importance of organizing the movement which was coordinated through UNAER. Therefore, the partnership between UNAER and KSI continues to be strengthened so that the interests of KSI and the interests of the peasants are reflected in the organization of UNAER's peasant social movement.

Finally, we succeeded in establishing a partnership with KSI which gave us enlightenment and awareness that our common enemy was the plantation owners in the colonial era, who are now returning to claim ownership of their plantations which were built on our ancestral lands. KSI reminded us (as the organizers of the peasants) to be very careful in responding to the change process at that time so that third parties did not take advantage of the collective action of the peasants for their personal interests. Therefore, together with KSI, we reflect back on the people's organizing strategies during the clandestine period to be contextualized with the situation we are currently facing. From there, we began to find our own strategy to awaken the peasants and encourage their participation in supporting the social movement we are organizing (**ASdS**).

Through UNAER, activists continue to be encouraged and empowered, both through education and training as well as comparative study programs facilitated by KSI, to be able to develop organizational strategies to encourage the active participation of the peasants in supporting the peasant movement (**AIGMs, JAT, ASdS, MT, AB, DmN, AdS and JenS**).

Since then, the peasants have begun to realize that their demands for social justice based on the ideology of people's liberation must be fought for together. This made them

want to actively participate in supporting and strengthening the organization of the movement carried out by UNAER.

“We want to make the peasants aware that reclaiming plantations is just an entry point to start a real social movement. Therefore, collective actions at that time could only be empowered into social movements if they wanted to be organized.” (MT).

KSI encourages the establishment of farmer youth organizations in every village to start mobilizing resources that can be used to support the struggle of the peasants.

“KSI supported us to establish KJHR, ERPOLEQS and HAKOMAFa. After that we developed a strategy to coordinate collective action more broadly, not only in Sakoko, Lequisi and Maudiu, but extending to other villages, including several villages where large SAPT plantations are located. From there we established UNAER so that this movement can be more consolidated. To be honest, the consolidation of the peasant movement was further strengthened by the presence of KSI through its empowerment programs for us and the peasants, which then enabled us to identify what could be used as weapons of our struggle. We discovered that actually we had a powerful weapon of struggle.” (ASdS).

Since then, the peasants are well aware that their common enemy is the landlords, whose claims rest on official documents issued during the colonial rule. The landlords' claims were supported by the government as well as the local leadership, which at that time was mostly dominated by rural feudal lords. Therefore, KSI encourages activists to look for alternative evidence to be able to counter the claims of the landlords. Finally, they found it in the historical aspects of plantations as well as in cultural contexts that were directly related to the context of the conflict (MT, AB, JAT and ASdS).

“As an NGO, KSI can only facilitate them to know who they are and who their opponents are. What are they fighting for and how to develop a good fighting strategy based on their respective experiences? KSI can only help them to understand the purpose of their struggle and how strategies can be developed to achieve common goals.” (MT).

KSI has succeeded in preparing activists to be able to develop an organizational strategy that relies on the experience and strengths of the farmers themselves. These processes are UNAER's main strategy in an effort to build awareness among the peasants to be able to participate in supporting the movement (MT and JenS).

Based on the description above, I argue that the mobilization of collective memory is a strategy of UNAER in encouraging the active participation of the peasants in supporting the movement. The active participation of the peasants allows this UNAER social movement to

be strengthened by finding their own weapons of resistance rooted in historical and cultural aspects as well as the contribution of each farmers' life experience.

8.2.2. Reinforcements of the movement through resource mobilization

In addition to strategies to encourage farmer participation through collective memory mobilization, UNAER has also developed strategies to strengthen farmers' movements. The findings of this study indicate that strengthening the movement has been carried out through internal and external resource mobilization strategies.

This research shows that the internal resources of the UNAER peasant movement are rooted in the historical experience of the community as well as sacred sites found on plantations which are closely related to the socio-cultural aspects of the farming community itself. Therefore, the mobilization of internal resources referred to in this study is a community organizing strategy carried out by UNAER in an effort to explore these internal resources to serve as evidence to strengthen their counter-claims. These internal resources are the internal strength of the Ermera peasant movement.

Meanwhile, the mobilization of external resources referred to in this study is UNAER's strategy in mobilizing civil society resources for strengthening and empowering the movement. Therefore, external resource mobilization is UNAER's strategy to strengthen and empower the farmer movement through the use of external support.

This research shows that these external resources are civil society organizations as well as other farmer syndicates, which have been supporting and/or having become main partners in UNAER's struggle, both at local, national and international levels. Their important role is closely related to advocacy efforts to strengthen and empower the Ermera peasant movement.

8.2.2.1. Community organizing for strengthening the movement through customary claims

After the activists succeeded in mobilizing the peasants to occupy the plantations, the next strategy was how to convince the peasants that the land they had reclaimed really belonged to their ancestors which had been seized by foreigners with the support of the repressive colonial rulers (**MT, ASdS and JAT**).

The activists searched for the history of the entry of foreigners into each village. This includes information on how these foreigners could have access to community ancestral lands to establish plantations (**MT** and **JAT**). They also identified the customary clans that owned the land before plantations were established on these customary lands (**MT, AB, AIGMs, JAT** and **ASdS**). Information like this is very important to be able to counter claims from plantation heirs who at that time had evidence in the form of plantation documents which were opposed by the peasants (**ASdS, JAT, AIGMs** and **MT**).

UNAER activists interviewed traditional elders and elders who had worked on these plantations during the colonial period. Based on this information, they identified the sacred sites contained within each plantation site and then traced the descendants of the customary clans, who were culturally the owners of the plantation land.

These strategies were discovered through the activists' critical reflection on the development of the problems they faced and how they should respond based on their own experiences (**MT**).

“Based on reflection on our respective experiences, we realized that we had to find our strengths from within each of us. We realized that during the struggle for independence, we were able to develop a clandestine resistance strategy because we succeeded in identifying the potential and strength of internal carrying capacity, which was rooted in cultural elements, such as utilizing the power of nature as well as broad support from the people, which was facilitated by the existence of social relations based on our respective customary clans.” (**ASdS**)

Reflections on the experiences of the peasants, which were also strengthened through the empowerment and enlightenment process by KSI, led the activists to interview traditional elders and elders who had worked on these plantations during the colonial period. Based on this information, they identified sacred sites within each plantation site and then traced the descendants of the customary clans who culturally owned the plantation land.

“The activists were encouraged to be able to find their own potentials and resources, which could be used as weapons of their resistance. From tracing the history and identifying the cultural evidence for the traditional ownership of these customary lands, we conclude that the strength of the peasant movement lies in the historical context and cultural elements associated with these colonial plantations. That is the strength and also the main weapon for the peasants in their struggle.” (**MT**).

The activists identify the potential and/or resources contained in the plantations they are reclaiming, both from the historical, economic and cultural aspects, which may be used as their counterclaim (**MT** and **AB**).

a. Strengthening the movement through the identification of sacred sites

A prominent feature of organizing the Ermera peasant movement is the use of local beliefs, which are inherent in the cultural elements of the peasants themselves, to be mobilized as the main force of the movement.

During the process of identifying or mobilizing internal resources, the activists discovered that there were sacred sites, such as sacred trees, sacred springs and also other sites which indicated that certain cultural activities or rituals had been carried out based on the beliefs of the local community. These sites are located within the plantations. These findings were then confirmed by traditional elders, who acknowledged that these locations were places that were considered sacred since the time of their ancestors until now (**MT**).

The following are some names of sacred sites around plantations in several areas. In the village of Ponilala, there is the Mauoso river and the boulder of Hatagula, both of which are considered sacred sites for the people of Sakoko and its surroundings.

The Mauoso River is a large river that connects Sakoko with several other areas in the municipalities of Ermera and Liquica. Over the years the Mauoso river has never experienced a drought, even during a long dry season. Therefore, the surrounding community can survive even in difficult conditions such as during the war in the past (**ASdS** and **BS**). According to local people's beliefs, Mauoso is a sacred river whose guardian is a giant eel named Tat Blaekas. There is a traditional elder named Lilan Mautomas who is believed by the local community to be the only person who has a special spiritual relationship with Tat Blaekas.

When entering the long dry season, local people perform certain rituals on the Mauoso river to ask Tatbae Blaekas for rain. The ritual at the sacred site must be led by Lilan Mautomas because only he can meet Tat Blaekas to ask for rain. People have to slaughter chicken or red? pork as offerings to be offered to Tat Blaekas so that their request is granted.

ASdS explained that according to the local community's belief, if there was a prolonged drought in their village, it would indicate Tatblae Blaekas' anger towards humans who no longer respect and protect the surrounding forest and natural resources. Vice versa if the rainy season is prolonged which results in erosion and crop failure. So, people believe that natural disasters occur because of greedy human behavior in destroying and overexploiting natural resources and not wanting to conserve them. Therefore, human greed

must be limited by using strict customary law regulations through the "Tara Bandu" ritual, which is held periodically with the aim of conserving nature and water (**ASdS, BS, JAT, AIGMs, DSC and MT**).

Tara Bandu is an instrument of customary law that is believed by the local community to be the most effective in efforts to limit or combat human greed because these activities are directly related to certain rituals according to the beliefs of the local community that make everyone obey and are afraid to violate it (**DSC, JenS and MT**).

Besides the Mauoso river there is also another sacred site called *Fatuk lulik* Hatagula (Hatugula sacred stone). Hatagula is a large rock located near the headwaters of the Mauoso river which is also considered sacred by the local community. Hatagula is believed to be the property of Tatblae Blaekas' wife, Dau Roma. Dau Roma is a young girl who was presented by the king of the Maubara kingdom to be married to Tatblae Blaekas with an agreement that the water from the Mauoso river can flow all the way to Maubara (**ASdS**). Mauoso and Hatagula are two sacred sites that are very important for the people of Ponilala village and its surroundings, because as a place where they can perform rituals to ask for rain and/or ward off disasters according to their local beliefs (dos Santos, 2008).

At several other plantation locations in the Ermera region, there are also several sacred springs in the plantation, such as the SAPT plantation in Maubu village and the Aifu and Hatugu plantations in Poetete village.

According to the Head of Maubu Village (**DmN**), there are two sacred springs located around the SAPT plantation in his village that have been supporting the villagers: sacred springs named: Aiglare and Er hoa.

Meanwhile, according to **JAT, LSB and MT**, in the Aifu plantation there are three locations of sacred springs: (1) Ergoa: the main spring that comes from the soil that supports almost the entire population in Poetete; (2) Dugar Pun-Erliman Dlon: a spring that comes from the roots of *aihun boot ne'ebe lulik* (a big tree that is considered sacred) (3) Aipu-Erliman Klaon: a sacred spring located in the middle of three large trees. According to JAT's confession, the three large trees surrounding the sacred springs were planted by their ancestors. The sacred springs are located in the middle of the Aifu coffee plantation in Lequesi. In addition to the sacred spring, there is also a large sacred stone called Hatkotarema, which is the place for the thanksgiving ceremony when the harvest arrives. Around the Hatugu plantation in

Gegemara village, there are also two sacred springs: a sacred spring named "Bi Dudu" which is also known as "Lo Dudu" and a sacred spring named Bi Dowe (**JBS** and **LS**).

In almost all plantation sites reclaimed by farmers in several UNAER base communities, there are various sacred sites which are also believed by the peasants to be the source of their livelihood. Some of the springs mentioned above, for example, are springs that have been supporting the community in several villages. Therefore, the springs which are the source of people's livelihoods must be controlled by the local community to be able to guarantee their lives. Do not let it be controlled by outside plantation owners for personal business interests, because the impact in the future will be very detrimental to the local community. If controlled by the owners of capital from outside, gradually the investors will privatize these sources of livelihood for the benefit of their industry and then the peasants will continue to be exploited by the owners of capital for the sake of capital accumulation (**ASdS**, **JAT** and **AIGMs**).

In addition to sacred sites in the form of large stones and large trees as well as springs, in each clan community, there is also another sacred site called Bogos. Bogos is a sacred place for traditional ritual ceremonies, in the form of a stone arrangement that surrounds a pole and/or a large tree. Bogos is a sacred site that shows the existence of a clan community (**AIGMs**).

b. Organizing claims to land ownership based on customary clans

Strengthening the movement through the mobilization of cultural-based internal resources is also carried out through organizing the verification of traditional ownership claims on disputed plantation lands.

With the help of traditional elders, UNAER activists in addition to identifying sacred sites, they also identify customary clans which are the cultural inheritance of plantation lands in UNAER base communities (**ASdS**, **JAT**, **AIGMs**, **BS**, **DdR**, **AdS**, **LS**, **LBS**, **AdC** and **MT**).

The following are names of customary clans who have reclaimed traditional ownership rights to plantations in several areas of Ermera.

In the village of Ponilala, the customary clans that carried out reclaiming of the plantations there were: "Lisaber" (original clan or oldest clan); "Tanit Lisaber"; "Ma'u-me"; "Mau-hatu"; "Kolaku"; "Mambuti"; "Mau-leu"; "Lelsae"; "Raeslala"; "Dukurai"; "Biboro";

"Bidato"; "Samoro"; "Maulebu"; "Aiom"; "Surtul"; "Silaigureta"; "Padmaumeta"; "Behali" and "Tauas" (**DTS, BS and ASdS**).

In Fatuquero, Maudiu, there are 5 customary clans that reclaim Maudiu's rice fields: "Biboro Metresi"; "Berhudu Luginlala"; "Gou Lolo"; "Manu Moris" and "Dintete" (**AIGMs and DdR**). Then in Gegemara village there are as many as 60 families, descendants of 9 traditional clans who are reclaiming the Hatugu plantation. The traditional clans: "Biamlai Mau Suma"; "Mom Bobo"; "Totoi Bi Balo"; "Dar Pú"; "Mam Bere"; "Rai Alas"; "Korel We Hale"; "Popur" and "Korel Leu Saga" (**LS and JBS**).

The Aifu plantation in Lequesi, Poete village was reclaimed by several peasant families who are descendants of 11 customary clans in the village, namely: "Padpusu Poetete Leobesi"; "Haehulu"; "Dimtete"; "Leonai"; "Lalím"; "Kolako Mauhatu"; "Berhato"; "Rae-Ubu"; "Nunte"; "Rae Pusa"; and "Lissaber" (**JAT and LSB**). Meanwhile, in Maubu village, there were 115 families who reclaimed the SAPT plantation there. These families are descended from the customary clans: "Mankati"; "Maubu Poe Metpu"; "Maubu Maen Muno"; "Maubu Pad Timor"; "Want Koli"; "Bui Kapu"; "Gumura Pad"; "Leblor"; "Want Meta"; "Daes Pili"; "Hatred"; "Nuntete" and "Rae Sente" (**DmN**).

In each UNAER-based community, organizing collective actions for reclaiming plantations is always preceded by the mobilization of internal resources, such as involving young people who are then prepared to become UNAER activists or farmer organizers. Their duties include tracing the history of the community through interviews with traditional elders, identifying sacred sites and customary clans as tangible evidence to strengthen the rationale for reclaiming the plantations (**AIGMs, ASdS and DmN**). The mobilization of internal resources rooted in the cultural history of the farming community, has enabled the peasants find their weapons of resistance are not only based on the historical aspects of external intervention but also the environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts that may be caused. These are the driving force for the reclaiming of plantations by the peasants (**ASdS, MT dan JenS**).

"Our weapons are within ourselves; exist in these plantations. All of this is directly related to our cultural identity as peasants and the history of plantations that we have traced. We found this all from the results of the identification that we have done so far, including the stories of our traditional elders and the elders in our respective villages. Our strength is our unity and the broad support from KSI and other civil society organizations. Our weapons are: sacred springs and sacred places (*bematan lulik no fatin lulik sira*) found in these plantations. Our weapons are the customary clans, which according to our customary law, are the owners of these customary lands.

All of this is strong evidence that these lands were indeed seized by foreigners during the colonial period.” (**ASdS**).

Based on the results of the identification of cultural elements related to the history and ownership of these plantation lands, UNAER activists mobilized support from the peasants to strengthen the Ermera peasant movement (**MT**).

UNAER's approach to the community is carried out through a process of making farmers aware that East Timor is now independent and the traditional rights of the peasants are guaranteed by the constitution. Therefore, the peasants should not be afraid to reclaim colonial plantations built on customary lands or the ancestral lands of the peasants (**AIGMs** and **ASdS**).

After the peasants had reclaimed⁶⁰ the colonial plantations, they would contact UNAER to be able to follow up. After that, UNAER sent its community organizers (UNAER referred to them as youth brigades) to work together with the peasants to find out and write down the history of the plantation, identify sacred sites inside and list the customary clans that belonged to it (**AIGMs**).

UNAER prepares young activists who are selected from the farming community themselves to be prepared as facilitators or community organizers through education and training. The education and training were carried out by UNAER in collaboration with KSI. Empowerment of activists has given them the ability to use a participatory approach to identify community potentials and resources that can be utilized to address the needs of their own communities. Processes like this make people aware that their problems must be answered based on their own strengths and/or abilities. Therefore, the farmers are not only directed to find out the root of the problem, but also the potential and resources from within the community itself that can be developed to answer their own problems (**AIGMs, JAT, ASdS, MT, JenS** and **NR**).

The information as described above, which is reinforced by stories from elders regarding the history of oppression and exploitation during foreign rule, is used as evidence

⁶⁰ UNAER uses the concept of “reclaiming” because they think that the lands belonged to their ancestors which were seized during the colonial period. Since East Timor is now independent, they must reclaim ownership rights to their ancestral lands (**AIGMs**). Meanwhile, from the government's perspective, farmers have occupied the plantations, because according to the applicable law, the colonial plantations are state owned and managed by the government based on the law (**FS**).

to strengthen the position of the peasants in advocating for their social movements, both at the local, national and international levels.

Based on the description above, I argue that UNAER's strategy of organizing the peasant movement also relies on UNAER's ability to explore internal resources, which are rooted in the life experiences of the peasants and their social and cultural history to be mobilized as a weapon of resistance in strengthening their social movements. In a context like this, it can be said that the internal strength of the UNAER peasant movement rests on the contextualization of the experience of the peasants themselves and also the use of historical aspects and socio-cultural elements as a strategy for strengthening the movement.

8.2.2.2. Mobilization of civil society resources to strengthen and empower the movement

The initiative to organize a peasant movement openly in Ermera actually started when the peasants from the villages of Sakoko and Lequesi started reclaiming their plantations in Sakoko and Aifu and were followed up by the Maudiu peasants who reclaimed their land in Maudiu, Fatuqueo.

The experiences of the Sakoko, Lekesi and Maudiu farmers were then disseminated by activists to various areas in Ermera and also outside Ermera to carry out widespread plantation reclaiming actions to demand the implementation of the agrarian reform program in East Timor. The collective actions of the Ermera peasants occurred widely because of the support from KSI, which at that time played an active role in the process of forming UNAER to coordinate open and organized peasant social movements.

Taking advantage of the support from KSI and its partners in the network of civil society organizations, such as HASTATIL, MOKATIL and Rede ba RAI, UNAER then strengthened its movement by working together with KSI to help facilitate farmer organizing in other places outside Ermera such as in the municipality of Liquiça, Covalima and other places (**JenS** and **BSS**)

UNAER realizes that the agrarian problem in East Timor is rooted in the colonial legacy that must be criticized together (**ASdS** and **AIGMs**). UNAER's demand for the implementation of the agrarian reform program is actually the demand of all Timorese farmers, however, because all the peasants are not fully aware of it, UNAER feels that it has a moral responsibility to work with KSI to make peasants in other places do the same. If all the peasants rise up, the

demands for the implementation of agrarian reform will become even stronger (**AIGMs, ASdS, JenS** and **MT**).

UNAER and KSI have succeeded in building strong networks from national to international levels. At the basic level, community organizers actively mobilize and organize farming communities to reclaim plantations in various regions. UNAER and KSI also collaborated with the church and the local government of the Ermera municipality to organize Tara Bandu⁶¹ activities throughout the Ermera region on 27 February 2012.

The main objective of this activity is to make the people of Ermera aware of the importance of living frugally so that they can invest in productive activities for the future of the Ermera generation. Tara Bandu which was previously only carried out at the village level has been elevated to the municipal level. This was done because KSI and UNAER felt that local wisdom needed to be strengthened and used as an important instrument in efforts to raise public awareness (**AIGMs, ASdS, DSC, MT** and **JenS**).

According to the Administrator of the Municipality of Ermera, **JM**⁶², Tara Bandu has had a positive impact on changing the lives of the people of Ermera. Tara Bandu, is now implemented at the Municipal level, which has greater impact than when only implemented at the village level. The positive impact will can be monitored more effective not only using customary law instruments but also involving local governments, churches and civil society organizations.

UNAER builds good partnerships with the government and civil society organizations, both at the national and local levels, to synergize the role of customary law with positive law in an effort to increase public awareness.

Tara Bandu is a Timorese cultural entity that is implemented to improve life together (**JM**). This new Tara Bandu model, has been running for 6 years and is very effective. Many

⁶¹ **DSC** explained that Tara Bandu is a cultural activity to announce customary law regulations that aim to conserve nature and the environment as well as people's livelihoods. According to **DSC, ASdS** and **AIGMs**, the Tara Bandu conducted in Ermera has a multidimensional character, which regulates the behavior of each individual in: (1) their social relationships with other individuals; (2) their relationship with other people's property rights, such as animals/pets; and (3) in their relationship to the environment and its natural resources. In a social context, for example: prohibiting any form of gambling, whether done at home, in markets and other public places. The barlaque (dowry in customary marriages) must be based on agreement and consensus between the families of both parties, but the male family must not give a dowry exceeding \$2,500. During the Tara Bandu period the people of Ermera were prohibited from holding large parties that only wasted money, including the prohibition of holding the traditional Kore Metan event (a traditional party for the release of mourning). Anyone who violates the traditional rules of Tara Bandu will be subject to severe sanctions.

⁶² **JM** (50 years old) is the Administrator of the Municipality of Ermera. The interview with **JM** was conducted in Ermera on 27/2/2018 in Ermera.

people are starting to realize the importance of sending their children to school, realizing the importance of saving to build a house and improve their standard of living. Many Ermera youths have completed their studies at the undergraduate level (**JM, AIGMs, ASdS, DSC and JenS**).

In this context, the UNAER movement actually also aims to reinforce or re-elevate good local cultural values to be used as instruments to encourage change and also to provide a spirit of living in togetherness as a nation that wants to develop with its potential.

So, even though Tara Bandu is a cultural instrument, it is also very effective to be used side by side with formal legal instruments to regulate the behaviour of people's social life. People in the previous period worked hard just to meet the dowry demands of barlaque traditional marriages. But now with Tara Bandu, people can also save for the future of their children, both girls and boys. Therefore, Tara Bandu also actually provides an opportunity for change in society because it has begun to open up opportunities for the promotion of social equality and justice (**JM**).

KSI and UNAER played an active role in encouraging the peasants to form farmers' unions, in other municipalities such as Liquiça, Covalima and other areas. Meanwhile at the national level, UNAER and KSI played an active role in advocacy for the movement through networks of civil society organizations such as HASATIL, MOKATIL and Rede ba Rai (**AIGMs, ASdS, MT and JenS**). UNAER, KSI and HASATIL in collaboration with other civil society organizations initiated the formation of MOKATIL as a peasant movement union at the national level to be able to represent the Timor-Leste peasant movement in international forums, including representing Timor-Leste's membership in the world peasant movement organization called La Via Campesina⁶³ (**AIGMs, ASdS, JS, MBK, MT, JenS, OPV⁶⁴ and DSC**).

La Vía Campesina is an international farmers organization founded in 1993 in Mons, Belgium, with 182 organisations in 81 countries, and describing itself as "an international

⁶³ La Vía Campesina carries out campaigns to defend farmer's right to seeds, to stop violence against women, for agrarian reform, and generally for the recognition of the rights of peasants (Borras Jr., Saturnino, M., 2008). The Vía Campesina is using three traditional weapons of the weak - organization, cooperation and community - to redefine rural development and to build an alternative model, one that is based on social justice, gender and ethnic equality, economic equity and environmental sustainability (Desmarais, A.A (2002). Since emerging in 1993, La Vía Campesina has become a powerful voice of opposition to the globalization of a modern, industrial and neoliberal model of rural development. By "building unity within diversity" La Vía Campesina pulls together rural movements to work for an alternative model of agriculture and community based on food sovereignty (Desmarais, A.A., 2008).

⁶⁴ **OPV** (50 years old) is the National Coordinator of Rede ba Rai. Interview with OPV was conducted on 14/11/2019 in Dili

movement which coordinates peasant organizations of small and middle-scale producers, agricultural workers, rural women, and indigenous communities from Asia, Africa, America, and Europe⁶⁵. La Via Campesina advocates for family-farm-based sustainable agriculture, and was the group that coined the term “food sovereignty”.⁶⁶ East Timor's membership in La Via Campesina is represented by MOKATIL (**AIGMs, ASdS, JAT, MT and JenS**).

UNAER integrates sustainable agricultural development programs in its movement organizing activities as a strategy in an effort to empower farmers that is directly related to the promotion of food sovereignty (**AIGMs** and **EIdA**⁶⁷).

According to **JenS**, the UNAER peasant movement actually has similar objectives and basic principles of struggle as KSI, MOKATIL and La Vía Campesina because these organizations have the same agenda of to fight against all forms of exploitation and promote peasants' rights (**JenS**).

The Ermera peasant movement became known internationally when La Vía Campesina for the South-East and East Asia Region held a meeting in 2004 in East Timor with HASATIL as the host. At the international meeting of La Vía Campesina at that time, participants consisting of peasants and organizers of the peasant movement from several countries visited Lequesi to discuss and share experiences among themselves (**MT, ASdS and JAT**).

Farmers from various regions in East Timor were also present., HASATIL staff showed a film about the struggle of a peasant hero named Chico Mendes and his friends in defending their sovereignty over the Amazon Forest in Brazil which was very inspiring and motivating the farmers (**JAT, ASdS and MT**).

Although UNAER was not established at that time, this activity inspired the formation of UNAER, to advocate for and strengthen the Ermera peasant movement to have an impact at the national level (**JAT, ASdS and MT**).

⁶⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Via_Campesina#cite_ref-1_2-0, Accessed on 27/4/2022.

⁶⁶ “Global Small-Scale Farmers' Movement Developing New Trade Regimes”, *Food First News & Views*, Volume 28, Number 97 Spring/Summer 2005, p.2. Accessed on 27/4/2022.

⁶⁷ **EIdA** (45 years old) is the Country Manager of APHEDA (Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad). APHEDA is a donor agency from Australia which is currently supporting the UNAER program in the development of sustainable agricultural systems through an integrated farming model approach (modelu Kudarai ho sistema integradu). The interview with **EIdA** was conducted on 22/11/2019 in Dili.

UNAER and KSI initiated the formation of MOKATIL to encourage a peasant movement that emerged from the initiative of the peasants themselves, not because it was introduced by NGOs (**MT** and **JenS**).

KSI and UNAER are also actively involved in a civil society Land Rights Network, Rede ba Rai. (**AIGMs** and **JenS**). Rede ba Rai formed in 2001 focussing on land and housing issues in East Timor, monitoring laws and policies produced by the government and the national parliament as well as conducting legal education and mobilizing affected communities (**OPV** and **JdS**⁶⁸).

Through Rede ba Rai, the interests of the peasants can be fought for, for example by influencing the process of discussing laws that are directly related to the lives of the peasants (**AIGMs**, **ASdS**, **JdS**, **OPV**, **DSC** and **JenS**). In 2012, members of the Rede ba Rai network succeeded in influencing the process of discussing the Land Law Package.

In La'o Hamutuk Bulletin, Vol.13, No. 1, July 2013⁶⁹ it was stated that:

This Land Law package includes three draft laws: the Special Regime for Determination of Ownership of Immovable Property (hereinafter Land Law), the Expropriation Law, and the Real Estate Fund Law. The Land Law defines who the owner is if more than one person claims ownership of the same property. The Expropriation Law defines how the State can take private or community land and use it for "public interest." The Real Estate Fund Law defines how indemnity and compensation will be paid in cases where the Land Law recognizes that more than one individual or group have rights to the same property. In that situation, people who lose their property rights have the right to compensation. The Real Estate Fund will be used to compensate individuals for land that the Government expropriates from private or community use. Of these three laws, only the Land Law was taken to public consultation. This consultation was conducted in 2009 by the Government through the Ministry of Justice, in 13 districts and 17 sub-districts. Unfortunately, many people in rural areas who depend heavily on their land for their livelihoods, such as farmers, poor and vulnerable people, didn't participate or share their views and do not understand the purposes of these laws."⁷⁰

Rede ba Rai was very active in criticizing the draft Law Package which was being discussed by the National Parliament at that time (**ASdS**, **AIGMs**, **JenS** and **OPV**). Rede ba Rai argued that the draft Law Package did not favour the interests of the peasants. The National Parliament ignored these concerns and still approved the laws to be sent to the President of the Republic to be promulgated. However, due to the persistence of the Rede ba Rai activists in opposing the package of laws, they finally succeeded in influencing President Horta to veto it on 20 March 2012 and returned it to the National Parliament to revise it (**AIGMs**, **ASdS** and **OPV**).

⁶⁸ **JdS** (42 years old) is UNAER's lawyer. Interview with JdS was conducted on 24/11/2019 in Dili.

⁶⁹ <https://www.laohamutuk.org/Bulletin/2013/Jul/bulletinv13n1en.html>

⁷⁰ See also in <https://www.laohamutuk.org/Bulletin/2010/Feb/bulletinv11n1-2.html#land>

President Ramos-Horta explained that he decided to veto the draft laws because they did not reflect the needs of or protect the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable and did not resolve unjust systems established in the past. His concerns reflected those that La'o Hamutuk and Rede ba Rai have expressed for many years (La'o Hamutuk Bulletin, Vol.13, No. 1, July 2013, page 1).

After the veto, the Rede ba Rai activists continued to actively work to provide inputs which were considered by the National Parliament (**ASds** and **AIGMs**). Finally in mid-2017, the new President of RDTL, Dr. Francisco Guterres Lu-Olo announced the new Land Law Package. According to several interviewees (**AIGMs**, **ASds**, **JS** and **JenS**), the new package of land laws is better than the previous one because it accommodates the interests of the peasants and ensures access of citizens, especially the small people and peasants, to land for production.

The new package of laws related to land include: Law Number 8/2017 dated 26 April: "*Expropriação por Utilidade Pública*" (Acquisition for Public Interest) and Law Number 13/2017 dated 5 June: "*Regime Especial para a Definição da Titularidade dos Bens Imóveis*" (Special Regime for the Definition of Ownership of Immovable Property). According to **Jds**, from the new package of laws, Law No. 13/2017 dated 5 June is very important for the peasants because this law aims to clarify the legal status of land ownership, applying different dimensions of private property rights regulated in the RDTL Constitution article 54 number 1.

On 27 June 2017, representatives of Timor-Leste's Peasant Movement (MOKATIL) consisting of UNAER, MPRA, MPRA-L and KSI, at the initiative of UNAER and KSI met with the President of RDTL at the Presidential Palace in Aitarak Iaran, Dili. The Presidential Media reported that during the meeting, peasant movement activists from these organizations expressed their appreciation and gratitude to the President of the Republic for the enactment of the land tenure legal regime and questioned him on how to put this law into practice.⁷¹

The President of UNAER, who also acted as spokesperson for MOKATIL (**AIGMs**) said that:

"We are very pleased with and grateful to the President of the Republic for having enacted the land law. We hope that this law will secure farmers their rightful entitlement to land and we suggest that the President follows the implementation process closely."

⁷¹ Media PR, 27 June 2017.

During the meeting, MOKATIL representatives also asked the President of the Republic to give a fresh impetus to the government's policy aimed at consolidating farmers' knowledge, increasing productivity and improving the quality of production. Those in attendance called on the Head of State to ascertain that, subsidies should be paid directly to the farmers with a view to developing agriculture as part of the policy on economic diversification (Media PR, 27 June 2017).

The President of the Republic responded that this law enables citizens to access land, but noted that it is important to take action against the abandonment of farmland and maximise land usage. He agreed with the establishment of traditional markets for the promotion of quality products and the increase of production in coordination with the relevant ministries, and gave his reassurance that he will follow the enforcement of the land tenure legal regime closely (Media PR, 27 June 2017).

In addition to utilizing external support for policy advocacy, through KSI several peasant activists, both from Ermera and from other places, have also been sent abroad for training and comparative studies (**JenS, AIGMs, ASdS, JAT** and **JS**). According to the Director of KSI, **JenS**, the importance of this program, in addition to increasing the experience, knowledge and skills of Timorese peasant movement, is also to introduce them to the international network of peasant movements to strengthen advocacy for the peasant movement in Timor.

Based on the description above, it can be said that the network development strategy carried out by UNAER, is clearly intended to nationalize and internationalize the UNAER peasant movement. In this contest, the network development strategy to make the peasants aware that UNAER's demands related to the implementation of agrarian reform in East Timor for the benefit of not only Ermera farmers but all farmers. Therefore, the Timorese peasants must rise up together to build a strong social movement to be able to fight for their interests (**AIGMs, ASdS, MT** and **JenS**).

The first President of UNAER, **ASdS**, emphasized that the peasant movement in East Timor received strong support, from La Vía Campesina. Several organizers of the East Timor peasant movement have even participated in international activities, as facilitated by KSI and its partners, such as to Brazil, Philippines and Indonesia (**ASdS, AIGMS, JAT, JS** and **JenS**).

The UNAER peasant movement became strong not only because of its organizing strategy at the farmer community level, but also because of the strong support from

other friends from outside for this movement, especially those from KSI, SIL, HASATIL, MOKATIL and Rede ba Rai. Their support has enabled UNAER to expand its influence on the peasants and also on the process of discussing several public policies that are directly related to the lives of the peasants. Even through these organizations, the international community also knows that in this country there is also a peasant movement, whose problems are mostly the same. These problems relate to agrarian issues from the exploitative colonial legacy of the peasants. Friends from these organizations have facilitated the UNAER farmer movement in terms of empowerment and also advocacy in an effort to strengthen the bargaining position of the UNAER farmer movement in the political context at local and national levels (**ASdS**).

The support of KSI and other partners has also enabled UNAER to be empowered so that it can encourage farmers at the community level to reclaim colonial plantations and then be able to organize farmer social movements in a coordinated manner through farmer syndicates starting from the municipal level to the national level (**AIGMs, ASdS and JenS**).

KSI considers that the experiences of mobilizing the collective memory of the peasants are an important instrument in efforts to build collective awareness of the important role of farmers in supporting and strengthening the movement (**MT, AB and JenS**).

The partnership experience between KSI and UNAER in Ermera was shared with KSI target groups in other areas, such as in Maubara and Bogoro in Liquiça, which then inspired farmers in these areas to start questioning their ancestral lands which were seized during the colonial period. By sharing the experiences of farmers like this, it is hoped that the awareness of the peasants on the importance of organizing to strengthen the wider social movement of farmers can occur (**JenS**).

JS explained that the MPRA had previously been facilitated by KSI partner Sahe Institute for Liberation (SIL), but was not continued by SIL. Therefore, he and several other clandestine activists in 2005-2006 invited **ASdS, AIGMS** and **JAT** from Ermera to share experiences on the strategy of organizing the movement in Ermera. The experience of organizing the movement by the Ermera peasant activists has inspired MPRA to be able to organize the farmers' movement in Maubara well.

Meanwhile in Bogoro, a female veteran named **MBK** also strongly supported the farmer reclaiming actions organized by Paulino (the current President of MPRA-L) and several other clandestine activists there. According to **JenS, JS** and **AIGMs**, the support from KSI and UNAER enabled peasant activists who were previously actively involved in organizing the clandestine movement during the independence struggle to establish a farmers' union of

Liquiça Municipality named MPRAL, which was declared on 7 December 2017, to coordinate peasant social movements in the region.

As an NGO with a social movement focus, KSI seeks a peasant social movement that emerges from below or from the initiative of the peasants themselves because it is driven by their own real conditions (**JenS** and **MT**).

The organization of the peasant movement, both in Ermera and in Liquiça and of course in other places, was mostly carried out by clandestine activists supported by several veterans. This shows that the peasants are well aware that there is still something unfinished in the process of their struggle, namely the real liberation of the people. That's why even though East Timor is now independent, clandestine activists are still struggling to realize true social justice." (**JenS**).

Based on the descriptions above, I argue that one of the efforts to strengthen the social movement of the Ermera peasants is through network development utilizing support from clandestine activists as well as NGOs and civil society networks.

UNAER mobilizes support from NGOs such as KSI and its civil society partners to develop networks that aim to strengthen and expand farmers' social movements.

8.2.3. Empowering the movement through education and training

*Go to the people,
Live with them.
Learn from them,
Love them,
Start with what they know,
Build with what they have,
But with the best leaders,
When the work is done,
The task accomplished,
The people will say,
We have done this ourselves.*

(Lao Tzu, in Benedito, A.S & Joaquina, E.A (2017: ii).

After the peasants were successfully made aware about the peasant movement, UNAER then developed a strategy to empower the Ermera peasant movement through education, training and sustainable agricultural development programs.

UNAER realizes that the farmers' movement must really be the right choice to address farmers' problems. Therefore, UNAER prepares young activists through education to become community organizers to ensure the sustainable benefits of this movement for farmers (**AIGMs**).

Based on this, the second UNAER congress in 2014 proposed that the new UNAER management explore the possibility of establishing an activist school to prepare young peasants as community organizers who have a liberation perspective to be able to support the work of organizing the movement. Finally on February 2, 2015 the "Institutu Ekonomia Fulidaedae/Slulu" (IEFS) was established due to the collaboration between UNAER, KSI and the Peace Center (**LoS**⁷² and **AIGMs**).

The person in charge of IEFS, **LoS**, explained that the ideas regarding the establishment of the IEFS, had been discussed in 2010, along with the establishment of UNAER. According to **LoS**, which was also confirmed by **ASdS**, **JAT** and **AIGMs**, the idea of establishing this school was inspired by EURA, an activist school that SIL had organized in collaboration with KSI in 2003-2005. Through IEFS, UNAER can educate, train, form and prepare leaders and basic organizers who play an important role in encouraging social change from the perspective of people's liberation (**LoS**, **MT** and **JenS**).

The basic philosophy is to prepare and then return resources to the community. This means that every young farmer who has been identified to attend education at IEFS after completing his studies must return to his own community to organize community in his village to encourage transformative change and to support the struggle of farmers through the UNAER peasant movement (**LoS**).

Several informants (**AIGMs**, **LoS**, **DE**⁷³, **MS**⁷⁴, **AdSL**⁷⁵, **IdRT**⁷⁶, **DdSS**⁷⁷, **BS**, **BUA**, **LP** and **TPdC**), explained that young female and male activists in Ermera were recruited from each village to be prepared as the backbone of UNAER. Their main role was to mobilize UNAER base committees and together organize farmers to be actively involved in supporting the farmers' movement. through activities such as carrying out plantation reclaiming and agricultural production Activities included encouraging the formation of cooperatives in each UNAER base community and promoting transformative community leadership.

An IEFS student, **BUA**, explained that the basic principles they learned at IEFS were: learning from experiences and new things that could be contextualized according to the principle of people's liberation and then implemented for the purpose of transformation.

⁷² **LoS** (28 years old) is in charge of IEFS. Interview with **LoS** was conducted on 22/8/2019 in Dili.

⁷³ **DE** (29 years old) is one of the facilitators at IEFS. Interview with **DE** was conducted on 15/02/2018 in Ermera.

⁷⁴ **MS** (34 years old) is a KSI finance officer. Interview with **MS** was conducted on 11/11/2019 in Dili.

⁷⁵ **AdSL** (28 years old) is an IEFS student. Interview with **AdSL** was conducted on 29/08/2019 in Ermera.

⁷⁶ **IdRT** (28 years old) is an IEFS student. Interview with **IdRT** was conducted on 29/08/2019 in Ermera.

⁷⁷ **DdSS** (29 years old) is an IEFS student. Interview with **DdSS** was conducted on 29/8/2019 in Ermera.

Despite facing various challenges, IEFS succeeded in preparing several young farmers who later became community organizers, facilitating the community to overcome their problems (**LoS, BS** and **BUA**).

BS, who is now one of the vice presidents of UNAER, is an IEFS student who managed to organize his community in Sakoko to canalize clean water to his village only with contributions from community members.

After this activity ended, the community members were very happy and then realized very well that when they work together and support each other, the difficulties they face can be overcome without outside help. Because outside help often has a hidden purpose and only creates dependency (**BS**).

The President of UNAER, **AIGMs** explained that in the previous UNAER leadership period, the movement's strategy was more focused on advocacy in a political context and this showed satisfactory results because UNAER and its partners such as KSI and Rede ba Rai, succeeded in influencing public policy, especially those related to land issues. Therefore, during the current leadership period, UNAER focuses more on the issue of empowering the movement through activist education and production in order to convince farmers regarding the benefits and importance of the UNAER movement for their sustainable lives (**AIGMs**).

Several young women who are also IEFS students (**DE, MS, AdSL, IdRT** and **DdSS**) explained that the education and training they received so far from UNAER had empowered them because women are also encouraged to actively participate in the decision-making process.

Women farmers are also encouraged to be actively involved in UNAER activities, such as attending meetings and training on integrated farming systems and cooperative development (**DdSS, AdSL** and **IdRT**). These activities also enable them to carry out productive activities outside of their domestic roles (**DdSS, MS** and **BSS**⁷⁸).

The approach to empowering young peasants through education is one of UNAER's strategies in encouraging community development based on the principles of social justice and social equality (**MT, AB, ASdS, AIGMs, JAT, BS** and **TPdC**). Education empowers them to mobilize the potential and local resources available in their village to develop their own community. Education in this context is directed at efforts to awaken and strengthen the community, not to dominate (**MT, AB, LoS** and **EIdA**).

⁷⁸ **BSS** (30 years old) is KSI's field staff. Interview with **BSS** was conducted on 10/06/2019 in Dili

UNAER has a strong focus on the development of young community leaders and offers a six-month intensive training course for farmers on leadership and sustainable farming based on the Via Campesino/Paolo Freire model of popular education, advocacy and community cooperatives. Young leaders are expected to spend a period of their training working within their own communities to pass on the skills they have learned to the rest of the community base⁷⁹.

Cooperation between community members in the past was more directed at supporting social activities related to cultural activities. But now UNAER is trying to encourage support for activities that are more productive in nature, such as building cooperatives and developing sustainable agriculture. These activities enable the peasants, both women and men, to be actively involved in every decision-making process regarding their future in an equal position without domination or discrimination (**MT, AB, LoS, AIGMs, ASdS and BS**).

An IEFS female student from UNAER Sakoko base, **DdSS**, who has been working with **BS** with **ASdS** support organizing the Sakoko peasants to develop a cooperative, explained that:

We came from our respective villages to receive education at IEFS about many things, especially about how to organize the peasants so that they are empowered to be able to develop themselves through productive activities for their future. Here we also got knowledge and empowerment as well as strengthening to be able to encourage women not only to lock themselves in the house with their domestic roles, but also to take advantage of existing empowerment opportunities through productive activities and also meetings held by both UNAER and KSI. Through these activities, it is hoped that female farmers will be awakened to have the courage to take a stand against the problems of inequality, domination and also domestication which are deeply rooted in the traditional system (**DdSS**).

Education and other empowerment programs from UNAER are directed at raising the awareness of the peasants through concrete actions, which are directly integrated with their daily activities. This is based on the principles of utilizing local resources and the real experience of the peasants to be able to answer the needs of the community while trying to criticize any social conditions that are considered to hinder the process of transformative change (**ASdS, AIGMs, LoS, MT and JenS**).

⁷⁹ Accessed from APHEDA's publication entitled *Sustainable Farming and Organising Farmer in Timor Leste, March 29, 2018*. <https://www.apheda.org.au/sustainable-farming-timor-leste/> accessed on 22 April 2022.

IESF was established as a liberation school for youth farmer activists from rural areas with the aim of preparing them as the backbone of UNAER in conducting community organizing at the grassroots level (**AB, MT, BSS, LoS, AIGMs** and **ASdS**).

Education not only gives young activists an ideological perspective but also social sensibility so that they can understand well the complexities of community problems and strategies to overcome them. Therefore, the main mission of IEFS apart from liberating farmers from ignorance, obscurantism and poverty, is also empowering the peasants to ensure the sustainability of the UNAER movement for the long term (**LoS, BS, BUA** and **AIGMs**).

UNAER must move forward and of course not only with a unique agenda of demands for agrarian reform, but also development issues that are relevant and directly related to the lives of the peasants. Therefore, UNAER must prepare its young generation to be able to continue this struggle. In this context, the contribution of the IEFS to the movement is very important (**LoS**).

The educational method of the IEFS is carried out integrated between classroom education and social services or field activities, which makes the students have knowledge and insight, and a clear perspective to organize communities for community empowerment (**LoS, AIGMs, ASdS, JenS, MT** and **AB**). KSI's main role is more in providing perspective to UNAER regarding education as a liberating instrument (**LoS, JenS** and **AB**).

IEFS is one of the instruments for liberation for farmers. UNAER believes that the liberation of farmers must also be done through education. For this reason, IEFS was established as a strategy to support the UNAER social movement. So, the education initiated by UNAER through the IEFS is an instrument of liberation, which not only serves to make people able to read and write, but to build their critical awareness of the situation and conditions of oppression they experience due to an exploitative system. The basic idea of this school was inspired by the EURA which was carried out by SIL in 2003-2005 in collaboration with KSI (**LoS**).

In the report on the general condition of the IEFS from 2014-2018, it is stated that:

The failure of liberal education lies in its inability to answer social problems in society. Most universities produce a large number of graduates each year but do not contribute significantly to solving social problems that occur at the grassroots level. All of this happened because the educational approach was not directly linked to sociocultural and socioeconomic realities in society. As an alternative to liberal education, the initiative to establish IEFS emerged to introduce an education with a popular approach (popular education). The aim is to form young people with qualifications as transformation agents who have social sensibility to be able to contribute to social transformation in their villages by utilizing local knowledge and

wisdom as well as opportunities and available resources. In the learning process at IEFS, students are not treated as objects but are subjects who actively participate in the process of discovering new things. There are some people who act as facilitators, not as teachers who teach. So UNAER seeks to strengthen its movement through empowering educational strategies to promote social transformation.⁸⁰

The process of education and empowerment for farmers and UNAER community organizers by KSI has a strong ideological basis promoting social justice, human rights and social equality, reinforcing the mission and vision of the social movement itself. The training of community facilitators enables KSI to mobilise participation as a central factor in the community development process. The Ermera Farmers' Union (UNAER) stands out as a rare effective example of an NGO promoting a socially transformative approach (dos Santos & Wigglesworth, 2021).

Timorese communities in rural areas have social capital rooted in collectivism and the spirit of cooperation as well as local wisdom that is directly related to their cultural elements. These sociocultural values are raised and contextualized to be used as an instrument in organizing a truly empowering community through the educational process. The community actually has certain potentials, but they do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to manage it (**MT**). Therefore, education plays an important role in empowering them to take advantage of available resources and opportunities to address their needs (**MT, ASdS, AIGMs, LoS and JenS**).

Interventions in the community by the government or NGOs have been more elitist in nature. So that history, experience and knowledge of the community as well as local wisdom has been ignored and are not used as an instrument to encourage community participation in development⁸¹.

A lecturer at the Department of Community Development of UNTL, **CP**⁸², assessed that the UNAER's strategy of organizing the peasant movement reflects the basic principles of community development which relies on a bottom-up approach in contrast to the top-down approach implemented by development agents from outside the community. UNAER's

⁸⁰ Relatório Narativa sobre Situaçaun Jeral IEFS nian periodu 2014-2018. Ermera, IEFS.

⁸¹ dos Santos, A.B. *"Impaktu husi intervensaun sira husi liur ba iha Dezenvolvimentu Komunitáriu"* (Impact of external interventions on community development). Paper presented at a seminar organized by the Community Development Department of UNTL on 9/7/2013 in Dili (unpublished).

⁸² **CP** (39 years old) is a lecturer in the Community Development Department of UNTL who once sent her students to do fieldwork in several UNAER-based communities in Ermera from May-August 2019. Interview with **CP** was conducted on 29/9/2019 in Dili.

approach to farming communities, according to **CP**, is really oriented towards community empowerment by encouraging active participation of community members in the community development process.

Inspired by the ideology of people's liberation and empowerment, which was initiated by Fretilin in 1975, UNAER and KSI activists criticized the narrative of top-down community development which is designed based on the political interests of donors not the interests of the community itself.

KSI has a relationship with its own donors, however KSI has a strategy in anticipating the negative impact of the external intervention in creating a mentality of community dependency (**CP, MT, AB, OPV, JenS, BSS, LoS** and **ASdS**). Therefore, in anticipation of the influence of donors on community development, KSI has ensured that UNAER communities do not have direct contact with donors. If there is a donor who wants to help, KSI minimizes their influence to ensure that development programs are truly realized according to community preferences (dos Santos & Wigglesworth, 2021).

Several informants interviewed (**LoS, BS, LS, AdC, TPdC, BUA, LP, DE, and AIGMs**) explained that IEFS students were very active in community organizing to identify plantation history, sacred sites in plantations and customary clans. The information and data they collect are used as the main reason for mobilizing farmers in each village to reclaim plantations. In some villages, IEFS students are the main drivers in organizing community members to rehabilitate plantations that have been reclaimed.

An IEFS student explained the experience of field activities aimed at community awareness, as follows:

We encourage farmers to carry out transformations in plantations, such as planting vegetables, building fish ponds and starting fruit nurseries to be planted in plantations. We were sent to the community and stayed there to work together with the community to carry out various activities with a participatory approach. Their experience and knowledge are appreciated and combined with the new knowledge we have gained from IEFS. For example, a gradual effort to diversify into plantations to ensure sustainable income for their families in the long term. We explained that existing local wisdom must be maintained, such as the habit of respecting and protecting existing sacred sites. Sacred springs, sacred big trees and also other sacred sites, must be respected because they mark our cultural entity as rural peasants. They must be protected for the purpose of conserving soil, water and the environment. The plantations during the colonial period only grew coffee. After being reclaimed, other fruit trees must also be planted, so that farmers' income does not only come from coffee, but from other sources as well. We carry out these activities based on an

integrated farming system in accordance with the principles of sustainable agriculture. With this approach, the peasants realized that in fact promoting diversification was more profitable for the peasants than continuing monoculture farming which only benefited the big investors. We do not teach them with words or scientific concepts that are heavy and difficult for them to understand. We show them through practical activities, which make them gradually become aware and then willing to change (**BUA**).

According to **AIGMs**, plantation reclaiming is not aimed at maintaining the old character of the monoculture farming system in the colonial period, but to be transformed in accordance with the principles of sustainable agriculture and fair trade. So, local wisdom that gives spirit must be maintained and empowered to support the movement (**AIGMs, ASdS, MT and AB**).

Several students also encouraged the formation of farmer cooperatives in several villages, such as in Sakoko and Maubu and Mertutu (**BS and TPdC**). The students are directed to be able to encourage farmers to plant and improve plantations that have been reclaimed in order to provide added value. Thus, farmers can have income to improve their lives. UNAER hopes that in the future farmer cooperatives will also be established at every base to promote fair trade as an alternative to free trade (**AIGMs, ASdS, TPdC, BS, AB and MT**).

UNAER awakens the peasants to understand this social movement as an instrument to encourage change that truly empowers the peasants politically, economically and socially as well. Therefore, the UNAER farmer social movement does not only concentrate on the advocacy aspect, but also on the education and production aspects which aim to empower the peasants to be able to improve their lives in a sustainable manner (**AIGMs**).

Therefore, there are three basic principles adopted in this peasant social movement: reclaiming, producing and resist (**ASdS and AIGMs**).

The life of a farmer depends only on the land he produces. Therefore, UNAER encourages every farmer to be able to own land for production. UNAER seeks to promote sustainable agriculture through a model we call the "*modelu Kudarai ho sistema integradu*" (a model of farming with an integrated system). We introduced this new system to UNAER farmers through trainings that enabled them not only to understand the technique, but also the basic principles behind it, which was a strong reason for UNAER to adopt it. Because this is closely related to the principle of struggle of the UNAER peasant movement (**AIGMs**).

Every farmer who is a member of UNAER is required to own land from plantation reclaimed land and is required to produce it so that they can have strong reasons to defend

it (**ASds**, **BUA**, **JAT** and **AIGMs**). The UNAER peasant movement was also inspired by peasant movements in other places, particularly from MST in Brazil which was founded on three principles that encourage the peasants to actively support the struggle of the peasants: “*ocupar, produzir e resistir*” (occupy, produce and resist) (**ASds**). Several activists who have studied at MST encourage this perspective and UNAER feels that Timorese farmers should be empowered to push for changes that bring prosperity to the peasants (**AIGMs** and **ASds**). Summarising, it can be said that UNAER's strategy of strengthening and empowering the peasant movement does not only come from the mobilization of internal and external resources but also through an educational process with a liberation perspective. Another strategy is through a production approach that is based on the principles of sustainable agriculture.

8.2.4. Empowering the movement through sustainable agriculture

In addition to the movement empowerment strategy through education and training approaches, UNAER's community organizing is also directed at efforts to empower farmers through production approaches based on the principles of sustainable agriculture.

UNAER encourages its members to not only reclaim plantations, but also to produce using an integrated farming pattern to transform the plantations from monoculture to plantations with diverse production to ensure the sustainability of farmer family incomes (**AIGMs**).

Farmers are trained to have skills and techniques regarding integrated farming by utilizing available land to grow various fruit crops with different harvest seasons in plantations that they have reclaimed as a source of income that can guarantee income for UNAER farming families.

Sustainable agriculture is integrated with educational activities and community organizing. The farmers were given training starting from the nursery and planting process, including the basic principles that prompted UNAER to adopt this program (**AIGMs**). The training is carried out using a participatory approach that allows farmers to directly practice it on demonstration plots at each UNAER base or in their own yards (**AIGMs** and **BUA**). Because this program has just been introduced, for the time being, farmers only use seeds

that are distributed by UNAER through IEFS students who are doing fieldwork activities in UNAER-based communities (**AIGMs, BUA, TPdC** and **EIdA**).

This program was implemented from 2017 to 2019, carrying out training and nursery activities in 10 UNAER base communities (**AIGMs, TPdC, BUA, BS** and **EIdA**). The varieties of fruit plants in the UNAER nursery locations include: rambutan, avocado, lime, lemon, tangerine, petai (*parkia speciosa*), dragon fruit, pineapple, pepper, longan and spruce (**AIGMs, AdC, BS, LS** and **BUA**).

According to **BUA**, the spruce tree is also cultivated by UNAER because it is the best tree to use as an umbrella for coffee plants. Spruce trees have strong immunity to diseases caused by climate change, which have implications for the health of coffee plants and fruit trees. In addition, spruce trees can also store water for a long time so that plants will continue to thrive. In contrast to *Aisamtuku* (Albizia tree) which is very fragile and susceptible to disease in case of extreme weather changes. Therefore, UNAER is trying to gradually replace the umbrella tree for coffee, from Albizia trees to spruce trees.

In addition to having good immunity, spruce trees can fertilize and improve the quality of coffee and fruit crops. The spruce tree is also a very strong tree and its branches do not break easily even in strong winds. Spruce trees are very good for soil and water conservation. Coffee buyers prefer to buy coffee under the umbrella of the spruce tree because the coffee beans are large and of higher quality, than the one under the umbrella of *Aisamtuku*. Another advantage is that the spruce is very straight and the old branches are very good for building houses. Therefore, UNAER began to encourage farmers to replace *Aisamtuku* with spruce trees on reclaimed plantations (**BUA**).

According to several informants (**BUA, DSC, LoS, AIGMs, ASdS, OPV, MT** and **AB**), UNAER's strategies and approaches are a model for organizing the farmer movement to encourage transformative change that relies on mobilizing internal carrying capacity. As well as using a local cultural perspective which is contextualized according to a global perspective.

The history of the community and the experiences of the peasants as well as local wisdom and local knowledge are raised and contextualized to support social movements in fighting for the interests of the peasants in local and global contexts. Therefore, the basic principles of UNAER's struggle also reflects global concerns such as environmental issues and climate change and social inequality, that other social movements in the world are fighting for (**AB, JenS** and **AIGMs**).

The promotion of sustainable agriculture through an integrated farming model approach will continue to be extended to every UNAER base community. The varieties of fruits that are currently being cultivated have different harvest seasons to maximise the family income of the peasants (**AIGMs** and **BUA**). The economic empowerment of farmers through the sustainable agriculture program is supported by APHEDA, a donor NGO from Australia (**AIGMs** and **EldA**).

APHEDA's Country Manager for East Timor, **EldA**, explained that APHEDA is working for stronger unions and social movements by working in partnership with several countries, including East Timor. According to her, APHEDA's partnership with UNAER was built on the same basic principle: strengthening UNAER as a farmers' union to be able to seek farmer empowerment at the local level.

As a social movement, UNAER's activities in advocacy, institutional strengthening and activist empowerment, have been supported by KSI and civil society networks Rede ba Rai and MOKATIL. Support from APHEDA to UNAER is specifically focused on the nursery process and training for the development of sustainable agricultural systems (**AIGMs**, **BUA**, **TPdC**, **BS** and **EldA**).

According to the National Coordinator from Rede ba Rai, **OPV**, a change in UNAER's social movement is evident:

In my opinion, UNAER's social movement has now changed from a peasant movement to a civil society movement. The civil society movement is a social movement which, although it emerged from the reality and the initiative of the peasants themselves, in its development, its existence was strengthened and empowered not only by relying on the potential of internal resources or strong support from the peasants, but also because of the intervention of NGOs or civil society organizations that have the same basic principles as UNAER in fighting for social justice (**OPV**).

According to **EldA**, APHEDA's support to UNAER has strengthened UNAER's work in sustainable agricultural development, through nursery activities, spring conservation and demonstration gardens in several UNAER base communities, such as in Maudiu, Camalpun, Poetete, Sakoko and Gegemara/Hatugu.

APHEDA's support to UNAER began in July 2017. For the first year, APHEDA supported UNAER activities with a funding of US \$ 11,000.00. Then continued for the next two years (2018 and 2019), with a fund of US \$ 10,000.00 per year. APHEDA support will run for three years and after that it will be evaluated again. This support is intended to strengthen UNAER so that its program really has a positive impact on changing the lives of its members. UNAER should not only carry out a social movement for

plantation reclaiming, but it must also be produced and managed properly through farmer cooperatives. Thus, it can bring sustainable income for the life of the farmers' family in order to free the farmer from the mentality of dependence. So APHEDA's support aims to strengthen UNAER and to liberate the peasants, not to create UNAER's dependence on donors. Therefore, we emphasize to UNAER that our support has a time limit and UNAER must ensure that there is progress in terms of farmers' independence (**EIdA**).

Because this program only started in 2017, it is hoped that in the next few years farmers will be able to enjoy their production (**AIGMs, BUA and EIdA**). As a new idea, UNAER's challenge now is how to convince the peasants that this option is a possible alternative for improving their lives (**AIGMs**). IEFS students are prepared as brigades, which in carrying out their community organizing activities always promote sustainable agriculture and the development of farmer cooperatives as an alternative to the exploitative agriculture and trade systems (**AIGMs, LoS, MT and JenS**).

From the beginning KSI hoped that UNAER should really strengthen itself by relying on the strength rooted in the support of farmers or their members, so that UNAER could be free from the influence of outside interests (MT). However, because membership fees have not been running well, UNAER must look for other alternatives to ensure that its programs and activities can be implemented properly. Therefore, UNAER contacted APHEDA to support UNAER's sustainable agriculture program (**AIGMs**).

According to several informants (**JenS, MT, ASdS, DSC and OPV**) by getting direct support from donor agencies, it is feared that in the future UNAER could change from a farmers' syndicate to a farmer-based NGO. If in its development UNAER activities only rely on donor support, gradually UNAER's role as a farmer movement will be reduced to an organization providing services to farmers in a patron-client relationship with donor agencies.

Responding to this, the President of UNAER, **AIGMs**, emphasized that UNAER is a farmer syndicate established to fight for the interests of farmers by relying on the strength of farmers as well as support from external partners who share the same basic principles and concerns. He honestly admits that as a farmers' syndicate, there are internal problems that must be resolved through the UNAER congress. However, this internal problem should not be used as an excuse to hinder UNAER in its efforts to take advantage of existing opportunities to support the success of UNAER's programs and activities.

The most important thing is that the implementation of programs and activities does not conflict with the basic principles of the UNAER struggle and the strategic policies

decided by the congress. As long as we are on the right track, we will keep going, because I think this program is very good in encouraging farmers' independence. So, when I approached APHEDA and found that they were interested in supporting the program, I gladly welcomed APHEDA's support. I can guarantee that UNAER will not be affected by the intervention of external political interests, because all UNAER policies and programs must be decided through congress. As the leader of UNAER, I am ready to be responsible for policies and also the implementation of UNAER programs in the upcoming congress (**AIGMs**).

According to **Elda**, APHEDA supports UNAER because apart from being a union -based organization, UNAER also has its own statutes and is legally registered as an NGO based on the legal regulations in force in this country.

The concerns of some activists regarding the emergence of a mentality of community dependence on external assistance, began to be felt in 1999 when the humanitarian crisis emerged at that time. This major crisis resulted in international interventions to bring aid to East Timor, which disregarded the internal capacities of the community (See: dos Santos, A. B⁸³; dos Santos, A.B & Wigglesworth, A (2020)⁸⁴).

Assistance or support promoted by external intervention since 1999 has used a top-down approach where indicators of development success are measured by economic and materialistic achievements rather than welfare indicators in understanding the real context of community empowerment (MT and JenS). The approach of development agents from outside to the community so far has relied on money as the main instrument in encouraging community participation in development rather than mobilizing collective potential and strength from within the community itself (**MT, CP and BSS**).

History shows that community organizing to support the East Timorese independence struggle was more deeply rooted in social relations based on social and cultural networks and this should be encouraged and maintained by UNAER (MT). Therefore, if UNAER has started direct contact with donors, it is feared that in the future it could create a mentality of dependence and limit the collective spirit to develop the potential of the community to overcome their own problems (**MT, BSS and JenS**).

⁸³ dos Santos, A.B. "*Impaktu husi intervensaun sira husi liur ba iha Dezenvolvimentu Komunitáriu*" (*Impact of external interventions on community development*). Paper presented at a seminar organized by the Community Development Department of UNTL on 9/7/2013 in Dili.

⁸⁴ dos Santos, A.B & Wigglesworth, A (2020), 'Promoting community empowerment from the bottom up - the case study of KSI in Ermera', Paper presented at the Timor-Leste Studies Association Portugal conference *Timor-Leste: A Ilha e o Mundo* on-line 7-11 September 2020.

Responding to these concerns, **EldA** emphasized that APHEDA's intervention would be channelled through UNAER to strengthen the UNAER farmer movement, and avoid making the base communities dependent on donor assistance.

In **EldA's** opinion, KSI should reflect on its approach to UNAER, which according to her is now starting to change. Initially KSI really worked to facilitate the community empowerment process, including encouraging and strengthening the farmer movement through various programs, such as community discussions, training and education as well as comparative studies between farmers both at home and abroad, using popular and participatory approaches, which is really oriented towards growing community awareness. KSI at that time also had a strong perspective on the principle of empowering social movements, which could be seen from its support for the UNAER to grow and develop as a strong farmers' union to coordinate the Ermera peasant movement. However, when KSI started recruiting UNAER activists to work as field staff who were tasked with developing a network to strengthen movement advocacy, it affected the mentality of some farmer activists, with changed roles of those who were to become farmer activists, becoming like activists of the NGO (**EldA** and **OPV**).

The partnership between APHEDA and UNAER is focused on developing the capacity of farming communities to develop socially and financially. The partnership builds on a critical reflection on the reality that although the Municipality of Ermera is the largest coffee growing area of East Timor but is also considered to be one of the poorest municipalities due to the lack of an alternate income during the non-coffee harvest seasons⁸⁵.

By promoting an integrated farming model to UNAER's members they can have other sources of income besides coffee (**AIGMs**). If farmers only rely on coffee for their income, they can only enjoy it for three months, that is, when the harvest season arrives, after that they will suffer again (**AIGMs, BUA, TPdC, MT, JenS and EldA**).

In the Ermera community, there is a growing opinion that every year Ermera people are rich for 3 months and poor for 9 months. This is because the people's income only comes from one source, namely coffee. There is no alternative source of income that can support the family's life except coffee. That's why UNAER is collaborating with APHEDA to be able to help farmers increase their income in a dynamic, diversified and sustainable way (**AIGMs**).

⁸⁵ Accessed from APHEDA's publication entitled *Sustainable Farming and Organising Farmer in Timor Leste*, March 29, 2018. <https://www.apheda.org.au/sustainable-farming-timor-leste/> accessed on 22 April 2022.

Using a participatory approach inspired by Paulo Freire's popular education model, UNAER prepares young leaders from among farmers through education and training and then returns them to their respective communities to share the new knowledge and skills they have learned through the practice with the farming community in the demonstration gardens and/or the farmers' own yards (**LoS, EldA, BUA** and **AIGMs**).

UNAER cooperates with APHEDA to awaken the peasants by offering alternative choices that are more rational and enable farmers to be truly empowered. In addition to mobilizing internal strengths and resources, UNAER must also mobilize external resources to strengthen and empower UNAER as an instrument for a real farmer liberation movement (**AIGMs** and **BUA**).

8.3. Reflective conclusion

The emergence of an open and well-organized peasant movement in Ermera cannot be separated from the role of UNAER. As a farmers' union that coordinates the peasant movement there, UNAER has come up with good strategies for empowering farmers and strengthening the existence of the movement as an instrument of the peasants in fighting for their political and economic rights.

This study found that there are three important strategies that can be formulated related to the movement organizing strategy that has been developed by UNAER.

These strategies are:

1. Mobilization of collective memory. The mobilization of collective memory is UNAER's strategy to encourage the participation of the peasants in supporting the peasant movement.
2. Mobilization of internal and external resources. The mobilization of internal resources in relation to advocacy and strengthening the movement can be seen from UNAER's strategy in utilizing resources that are closely related to the material basis of their claims, which are rooted in the cultural aspects of the farming community. Meanwhile, external resource mobilization can be seen from UNAER's strategy in utilizing external support, in this case from KSI as well as other civil society organizations, to strengthen the Ermera peasant movement through network development.

3. Empowerment of the movement. UNAER is also developing a strategy for empowering the movement firstly through education, training and secondly through sustainable agriculture. The movement empowerment strategy is carried out to ensure the sustainability of the movement's existence and also its benefits for the peasants.

In developing the strategy of organizing the movement, UNAER relies on the strength of the peasants which is reflected deeply in the inspiring experiences of the farmers. The experiences of the farmers are brought up and contextualized to encourage participation and also to strengthen the peasant movement through the mobilization of other internal resources rooted in the cultural aspects as well as the historical context of the disputed objects.

The strategy of internal resource mobilization has made UNAER find its own weapons of resistance which are within themselves and are rooted in aspects of their history and culture. By relying on claims based on culture, UNAER made counter claims against the claims of the landlords during the colonial period. By relying on the strength and weapons of resistance found from these internal resources, UNAER utilizes external resources (in this case the support of KSI and other civil society organizations) to advocate and strengthen the peasant movement through a network development strategy.

UNAER has presented a peasant movement openly through organizing a movement that truly reflects the strengths of the peasants themselves and also external support. UNAER succeeded in developing a strategy to identify the distinctive weapons of resistance from within the farmers themselves. The weapon of resistance is their experience as well as their history and cultural system as peasants.

The strengthening of the movement and empowerment of the peasants carried out by UNAER relies on support from civil society organizations and donors who share the same basic principles and concerns. The UNAER peasant social movement can be recognised as a civil society movement that fights for the interests of the peasants.

Chapter 9:

Analytical discussion of the development of the Ermera peasant social movement

9.1. Sociological perspective of this study

In the previous chapter I presented research findings on UNAER's strategy in organizing the Ermera peasant movement. This chapter presents the analysis of the research findings drawing on theoretical references that are relevant to the history and development of the Ermera peasant movement and its organizing strategy by UNAER.

Based on the research findings presented in chapters 6 and 7, it can be said that the emergence of the Ermera peasant social movement was driven by a conflictual social situation in which colonialism and foreign military occupation was exploitative and repressive. This situation has caused the Timorese peasants to have their livelihoods and cultural practices threatened and this has mobilised them to fight against colonialism and foreign military occupation.

Distinctive patterns of resistance developed according to the process of social change and the level of repression. In situations where state repression is increasing, peasant protests take the form of hidden resistance (Chapters 6 and 7). However, when the ideology of liberation from FRETILIN gave them strength, the peasant resistance emerged openly in the form of collective actions. Inspired by FRETILIN's ideology, movement activists took advantage of opportunities for change and other supports to consolidate collective action that made an open and organized peasant social movement possible (chapter 8).

In this context, the resistance or social movement of the Ermera peasants can be understood as a form of protest or resistance carried out by subsistence farmers, who are classified as lower-class who work on plantations (Wolf 1969; Paige 1975) and/or as poor peasants (Scott 1976; 1985). They fought and/or organized social movements against the upper-class (in this case the colonial plantation owners) to demand the state to implement agrarian reform to resolve the colonial legacy that was exploitative to the peasants.

Activists, both from among the peasants and from the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) established UNAER to coordinate the movement. At the same time, UNAER strengthened their bargaining position through network development and support from CSOs. The CSOs

activists are actively involved in movement activities because they are driven by the same concerns, which are based on the feeling that they have the same moral and social obligation to do so. Therefore, they (CSOs activists) continue to strengthen the existence of UNAER politically through cooperation and mutual support in their partnership relationship with the peasants that continues to be expanded to be able to present social movements as an important instrument in encouraging social change.

Social change, according to Jessop (1972), can involve a “re-organization of established institutions” (reform movements) or may “contribute to a breakdown in the peaceful co-existence of social order” (revolutionary movements). Social movement as instrument in encouraging change are categorized into several types. David Aberle (1966) distinguishes four types of movement: (1) transformative movements; (2) reformative movements; (3) redemptive movements, and (4) alternative movements. Of these categories, Giddens (1993), assesses that “transformative and reformative movements are both concerned primarily with securing change in society,” while “other two types are each mainly aimed at changing the habits or outlook of individuals.” (Giddens, 1993:643).

Transformative movements aim at far-reaching change in the society or societies of which they are a part. ...Examples are revolutionary movements or some radical religious movements. **Reformative movements** have more limited objectives, aspiring to alter only some aspects of the existing social order. They concern themselves with specific kinds of inequality or injustice. ...**Redemptive movements** seek rescue people from ways of life seen as corrupting. Many religious movements belong in this category, in so far as they concentrate on personal salvation... Finally, there are somewhat clumsily titled **alternative movements**, which aim at securing partial change in individuals. They do not seek to achieve a complete alteration in people’s habits, but are concerned with changing certain specific traits. An illustration is Alcoholics Anonymous. (Giddens, 1993: 643).

Referring to the classification of movements by Aberle (1966) above, the Ermera peasant social movement can be categorized as a reformative movement because it does not aim to fight for radical and widespread change, but rather an effort to encourage changes that promote social justice and equality.

The emergence of transformative and reformative movements indicates the existence of social inequality that makes certain groups or classes in society excluded. As a result, social movements emerge from marginalized groups, which can be understood as their form of protest against groups that oppress and/or exploit them. Based on this understanding, from a sociological perspective, this research can be analysed using a conflict theory approach.

Conflict theory emphatically rejects the idea that society tends to a basic consensus or harmony in which the structure of society works for the good of everyone. Conflict theorists are of the view that conflict - the conflicting interests and concerns of various individuals and groups - is the main determinant in the organization of social life. In other words, the basic structure of society is largely determined by the efforts made by various individuals and groups to obtain limited resources that will fulfill their various needs and desires. Because these resources are always limited to a certain extent, conflicts to get them always occur (Sanderson, 2003).

From this perspective, the structure of society is a field of continuous struggle among various competing groups, strata, and social layers (Singh, 2010). Conflicts and struggles have given rise to domination and subordination. The dominant group always uses its power (both political and economic power) to determine the structure of society so that it only benefits their own group (Sanderson, 2003). For this reason, unjust structures will last forever because the interests of the strong and powerful always win over. The peasants as subordinated group in structure are always defeated. (Soetomo, 1987).

Based on this understanding, the Ermera peasant social movement is a form of protest, which in the view of Tilly (1978; 1981), has similarities with the concept of collective action. Collective action is defined by Tilly as people acting together in pursuit of their common interests. Collective action results from changing combinations of interests, organization, mobilization and opportunity. Social movements, in Tilly's view, tend to develop as means of mobilizing group resources either when people have no institutionalized means of making their voices heard, or where their needs are directly repressed by the state authorities. (Giddens, 2003:630). Tilly (1981:17) recognizes the similarity of the concepts of collective action (contentious gatherings) and protest. In this context, social movements can also be understood as protest movements. Protest movements, according to Tilly, are organized in many ways, varying from spontaneous formation of crowds to tightly disciplined revolutionary groups. (Giddens, 1993: 629). Collective action, according to Tilly (1981:17) a concept denned as "all occasions on which sets of people commit pooled resources, including their own efforts, to common ends."

According to Lofland (2017):

"In many of the Tilly (1981: 39, 49) empirical inquiries, the notion of collective action is pared down to the idea of "contentious gatherings" which are "occasions on which

people assembled ... and made visible claims on other people via declarations, attacks, petitions, symbolic displays, or other means" or "an occasion which a number of people gather in a publicly accessible place and visibly make claims which would, if realized, bear on the interests of some other person(s)." (Lofland, 2017:7).

The protest movement in Tilly's definition is more of an open collective action. Lofland (2017:2) describes the dimensions of protest as:

"(1) dissent or objection; (2) that is relatively extreme in the context; (3) strongly felt; (4) directed to some person or institution with power over one; (5) in a solemn and formal fashion; (6) that is done publicly; (7) and is based on a sense of injustice."

If we refer to the understanding of the peasant social movement as a form of protest, I argue that protests do not always occur in the form of open collective actions. In chapters 2 and 3, I describe the conceptualization of farmers and peasant movement, which emerged with dynamic patterns and strategies to adapt to the changing process. In chapter 4, I analyse the patterns of resistance and identity construction in the peasant movement and I strengthen my argument that protest does not always have to be collective and open, by pointing out two models of the peasant movement: the covert movement and the open movement, by reviewing Scott's theory of hidden resistance and the theory of collective action from Tilly and discuss it in the context of the Ermera peasant movement.

People who are marginalized in an exploitative and repressive structure, as experienced by the Ermera peasants during the foreign occupation, cannot express their protest openly, unless they deal with it through disguised disobedience and/or hidden actions as explained by Scott (1976; 1985) in his theory of hidden resistance or the Moral Economy of the peasants. The open resistance or protest of the Ermera peasants, which is related to the protest dimension of Lofland (2017:2), can only occur when transitional conditions make them ideologically strengthened. This condition allows the consolidation of power to carry out collective resistance openly. After independence, collective interests were embodied in the peasant organization, which allowed for open and coordinated social protest under UNAER.

Tarrow (1998) states that "when institutional access opens, rifts appear within elites, allies become available, and state capacity for repression declines, challengers find opportunities to advance their claims" (1998:71). Political changes have provided opportunities for actors to be able to organize movements openly. The organization of the

movement could occur because of the support and active participation of the peasants as well as external encouragement in the form of support from civil society organizations. This situation is in line with the view of McAdam et al. (2001) that when the process of social change occurs, conflict usually increases, especially when there are external resources and opportunities that can be used to support the movement.

The peasant movement that emerged with a pattern of open resistance in the form of collective actions was a genuine resistance, which among other things were (a) more organized, systematic and cooperative, (b) principled or selfless, (c) had revolutionary consequences, and (d) contain ideas or goals that negate the basis of domination (Scott, 1993: 305).

Based on the description above, it can be said that collective actions that are present in an organized manner are closely related to the developing political situation. According to Della Porta and Mario Diani (2006: 14), collective movements constitute an extension of the conventional forms of political action; the actors engage in this act in a rational way, following their interests; organizations and movement “entrepreneurs” have an essential role in the mobilization of collective resources on which action is founded. Movements are therefore part of the normal political process. (Della Porta et al., 2006: 14).

9.2. The conduciveness of the Ermera peasant movement

This research shows that the intervention of external power has given rise to social inequality which has disrupted the lives of local people. Thus, the peasant movement emerged from the contradictions and structural conflicts of the colonial legacy, which, although rooted in agrarian problems, had direct implications for the future of the social, economic and cultural life of the peasants. Therefore, peasant resistance continued to occur and was even more open, widespread and organized after Timor-Leste's independence.

The change in the pattern of resistance from what was originally a covert movement to an open movement marked the development of the Ermera peasant movement from a survival strategy to a real resistance in the form of a widely coordinated social movement. This development occurs because of external conduciveness, such as social and political change that provides opportunities, as well as the availability of resources that can be mobilized to support the movement.

The process of change allows the movement to experience ideological internalization. The movement's peasant activists were then born from the empowerment processes that occurred because of the support of clandestine movement organizations and CSOs. As a result, they mobilized and organized the peasants to be able to fight openly with those who exploit and oppress them.

In their struggle, those activists build internal strength through mobilizing local resources and strengthen the existence of the movement through building partnerships with other organizations (such as with networks of clandestine organizations in the pre-independence period and/or with NGOs and other social movement networks at local to international levels in the post-independence period).

These processes allow the movement to function as an instrument for channelling aspirations and at the same time as an instrument for empowering local communities, so that local communities no longer feel isolated in the development process. In the function and role of the peasant movement, which in its development, made the movement gain internal strength through broad participation and support from the peasants. The peasants felt empowered to question multidimensional aspects, directly related to their lives, such as political, cultural, environmental, social justice and equality issues as well as economic production.

Based on the description above, I argue that the Ermera peasant movement can exist openly and organized under the coordination of UNAER because of certain conduciveness: socio-cultural conduciveness, rooted in the peasant community itself, as well as political conduciveness due to a situation of change which provide opportunity.

Skocpol (1991) and Wolf (1969) argue that the determining factor that allows the occurrence of peasant rebellions lies in the relationship between the peasants and the sphere of power that surrounds them or is determined by the structural conduciveness (Smelser, 1963) that allows it to exist and develop.

Field findings, which have been described in Chapter 6, show that during the colonial period the local people carried out hidden actions and patterns of behaviour in defiance of exploitative colonial policies. Covert actions at that time could function effectively because they were facilitated by the social relations of the peasants in their customary clans. This shows that the resistance of the peasants can occur because of the social conduciveness in their customary clan system. When the political turmoil occurred in 1975, it caused a change

in structure, which allowed the peasants to build a collective power using the support of the network of clandestine movement organizations. The resistance of the peasants during this period was then able to develop and function effectively because of the political conduciveness. In this phase, social relations in the movement are built based on the interests of political ideology. This caused the movement to undergo ideological internalization, which provided an important foundation for the emergence of the Ermera peasant social movement coordinated by UNAER, as described in Chapters 7 and 8.

The social and political conditions as well as the processes of change that have taken place have empowered the peasant movement and found its identity rooted in the historical and cultural context of the peasants. Therefore, after independence, movement activists could develop strategies for organizing and strengthening the movement (or framing processes & mobilizing structures, according to McAdam et al., 2001) which relied on mobilizing local resources based on local culture and beliefs and also raising external support through partnerships with CSOs, which have the same historical background, experience and ideological inspiration to fight for the collective interests and rights of the peasants.

This research shows that in a situation where the state is very strongly supported by a repressive system, the marginalized peasants cannot fight openly. Open resistance occurred when the peasants succeeded in consolidating their discontent as a collective force, taking advantage of opportunities for social change that allowed them to mobilize existing internal and external resources to support the movement. Therefore, the emergence of the Ermera peasant movement, both in the form of hidden and open resistance, was made possible by certain conducive conditions.

Wolf (1969:290) says that: “a rebellion cannot start from a situation of complete impotence; the powerless are easy victims”. For this reason, according to Skocpol (1991), if farmers intend to fight, they must have internal influence, namely the ability to take organized collective action against those who extort them.

The views of Skocpol (1991) and Wolf (1969) above show that the determining factor that allows the occurrence of peasant resistance lies in the relationship between the peasants and the sphere of power that surrounds them. For this reason, strategies and conditioning are needed so that peasant resistance can be presented in an open and organized manner.

Skocpol (1991) further explains that the internal influence that farmers have can be explained by structural and situational conditions that affect: (1) the level and type of

solidarity of the farming community; (2) the level of autonomy of the peasants over the day-to-day supervision and control of the landlords and their accomplices, and (3) the relaxation of forced labour sanctions from the state (Skocpol, 1991 quoted from Mustain, 2007:41).

Referring to the view of Skocpol (1991), the internal influence in the context of the Ermera peasant movement, which is related to peasant solidarity, can be seen from the experiences of oppression and exploitation experienced by the peasants during the colonial period and foreign military occupation, which has formed solidarity between them.

Colonialism, according to Scott, has led to social changes that have implications for the economy of the subsistence farmers. "Economic change under colonialism steadily reduced the scope of subsistence safety-values." (Scott (1976: 62). In his research on the life of subsistence farming communities in Southeast Asia, Scott (1976) shows how the structural changes that occurred in the colonial era have enabled the elite and the state to further violate the economic morale of the peasants and become more exploitative.

Colonial intervention in the lives of the Ermera peasants, through its exploitative and repressive policies, was considered to have disrupted the guarantee of sustainability of their subsistence life which was rooted in their local culture. This condition, apart from causing the peasants to live systematically exploited in a repressive colonial structure, has also created a cultural clash (Chapter 6). This situation is conducive to the formation of peasant solidarity through the construction of their resistance identity (see Chapter 4), which is based on their local culture and beliefs. The construction of this identity, in its development, was used as a weapon of resistance by the Ermera peasants in dealing with all forms of external influences that were considered to be disturbing and/or threatening their lives.

Through the use of social relations, both those based on socio-cultural relations (customary clans) and socio-political relations (in ideological organisations), social solidarity is formed and empowered to support or strengthen the peasant movement (Chapters 6 and 7).

Meanwhile, internal influences related to other structural and situational conditions that affect the level of peasants' autonomy and the relaxation of sanctions from the state can be seen from the transitional circumstances, both in 1975 and 1999. These changes have opened up opportunities for empowerment of peasant movement activists to be able to consolidate the discontent of the peasants into a collective force (Chapter 7).

The empowerment of peasant activists occurred when they were involved in a network of clandestine movement organizations in the struggle for independence, which allowed them to experience an ideological revival, to be able to encourage the peasants to carry out open collective resistance (Chapter 7). The situation of change is conducive to the formation of peasant solidarity through the construction of a collective identity that develops after being defined in relation to the interests of the political ideology of national liberation. As a result, the collective critical consciousness of the peasants can grow and develop so that individual actions in the covert movement can be consolidated into collective actions.

According to Fauzi (2005), social movements of farmers in the Third World can exist openly and massively because they are made possible by social and political changes. He points out some examples of the emergence of popular movements that are open, collective and broadly organized, such as: MST in Brazil; EZLN in Mexico and also LPM in South Africa. Meanwhile in Southeast Asia, such as: AOP in Thailand; UNORKA in the Philippines, AMAN in Indonesia and many other social movement organizations that are widely spread in various places (Chapters 3 and 4).

This study also shows that the emergence of the Ermera peasant social movement cannot be separated from structural conduciveness (Smelser, 1963) or social and political changes as suggested by Fauzi (2005). The strengthening of the Ermera peasant social movement does not only come from the mobilization of support from civil society organizations (mobilization of external resources), but also from the community organizing strategy carried out by UNAER, which relies on the construction of the local socio-cultural identity of the Ermera peasants to be used as a weapon of their resistance. Therefore, the Ermera peasant social movement can also be understood as a local movement, which according to Vilaça (1993), are linked to a territory where they unleash their struggles. Therefore, space is a preponderant element in the construction of its identity. (Vilaça, 1993: 69-70).

9.3. The hidden patterns of resistance of the Ermera peasants: a covert movement

The Ermera peasant social movement that emerged openly and organized under the coordination of UNAER developed from the historical experience of peasant resistance that had occurred previously during the colonial period and foreign military occupation of the country. During long periods of repressive foreign occupation, the peasantry tended to manifest its resistance in the form of hidden actions as well as defiant behaviour, as described in Chapter 6.

State repression that encourages industrialization and rural capitalization means the peasants live in oppression and are only used as objects of exploitation to fulfil the interests of the rich and the state. Therefore, they carry out their protest actions in secret which can be analysed using Scott's Moral Economics theory, as described in Chapters 2 and 4.

During the long period of colonial rule, a repressive approach was implemented to force local people to work hard to be able to meet the demands of their own life as well as the colonial demands that were imposed on them at that time, such as head taxes and compulsory labour on plantations. This situation is faced by the Ermera peasants by carrying out hidden actions and also certain patterns of behaviour, which can be understood as a collective response to the repression and exploitation that suppress their lives.

Their actions, such as pretending to be sick to avoid forced labour, stealing and hiding from colonial officials, were carried out so that they could continue to work in the fields to support their families, rather than wasting time on fulfilling colonial obligations. The closed movement or hidden resistance of the peasants in this context can be understood as a rational choice made by the peasants to survive in the exploitative and repressive colonial system at that time (Chapter 6).

Scott (1985:29) describes the everyday forms of peasant resistance, such as “foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth” as the poor peasants’ weapons in covert struggles against the patrons who exploit them

Scott studies of peasant resistance in several areas in Indonesia (1976; 1985), which are also referred to by other researchers, such as Siahaan (1986) and Mustain (2000), show that weak farmers, who live exploited in a repressive system, always manifest their discontent in the form of hidden resistance and disobedience. The results of this study (as described in

Chapters 6 and 7) also show the same thing. The farmers took actions such as stealing coffee, lying, hiding and pretending to be sick to avoid forced labour and various other forms of disobedience to avoid the head tax imposed on them, as a manifestation of protest or a form of resistance. These actions were carried out in secret because they lived in a repressive social situation, which did not allow them to fight openly.

According to Scott (1985) in hidden resistance, the actions of the peasants were carried out individually and uncoordinated and with the principle of "putting safety first and avoiding risk". These forms of protest were also understood as survival strategies of the poor peasants in their very depressed situation. The hidden resistance does not appear in the form of large-scale and massive rebellion and/or open direct confrontation between the peasants and the elites, but rather in the form of covert disobedience behaviours manifested by the peasants. The characteristics of this resistance pattern, according to Scott: "...require little or no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual self-help; and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms. (Scott, 1985: 29).

This research shows that the actions of the poor peasants in repressive situations do not only occur in the form of hidden and uncoordinated individual actions, but also in the form of covert disobedient behaviours that occur collectively (Chapters 6 and 7). These actions, such as: stealing coffee in plantations; lying about the birth dates of their babies so that their children will not be taxed in the future; hiding or escaping to another village to avoid compulsory labour and head taxes; pretending to be sick to avoid mandatory work on plantations; and pretending to be stupid in front of tax collectors and other patterns of behaviours as displayed through fashion.

These actions were manifested as a form of their disguised protest against colonial policies which were very detrimental to them but they could not fight it openly because of the strength of colonial repression. Therefore, their actions were carried out secretly and very carefully so as not to be discovered by the authorities. If any of the fellow peasants know about the actions of their friends, they do not report it to the officers. Instead, they protect and secure each other's actions, because they are afraid that their collective disobedience will be exposed.

The acts of mutual protection shown by the Ermera peasants were not only driven by fear of state officials or their patrons, but because they did not want their customary clan-

based social relations to be damaged by the influence of foreign interests on them (Chapter 6). In this context, according to Scott, hidden resistance occurs in the form of hidden/covered coordination. Thus, hidden resistance, even though it occurs in the form of individual actions, is understood as a collective reaction of the poor peasants or in Landsberger's (1974: 17) definition a collective reaction of peasants with low social status, against the state and the rich who exploit them.

The collective response of the Ermera peasants to this repressive foreign domination occurred in a hidden coordination through social networks based on their local culture. In this context, it can be said that the Ermera peasants have constructed their social identity based on local entities rooted in their culture, to serve as an instrument of resistance against repressive foreign domination. They work together and protect each other from their hidden acts of resistance, such as stealing coffee and lying.

From an elite perspective, actions such as stealing and lying by the peasants were deviant behaviours or violations of generally accepted social norms. However, from the perspective of the peasants, this is a weapon of their struggle in repressive conditions. This is their form of resistance to the exploitation and repression they experience from the elites.

They construct their own social ethics to ensure the effective functioning of their hidden patterns of resistance, through covert coordination utilizing social networks based on their customary institutions. From the perspective of Scott's theory of "The Moral Economy of the Peasant", this can be referred to as subsistence ethics.

Subsistence ethics is the moral economic foundation of the peasant in facing external attacks, as well as weather that makes them helpless to face it except through a "subsistence ethic" (Scott, 1976; 1981), namely ethics to survive living in minimal conditions. Subsistence ethics is thus a rule of "right and wrong", which guides farmers and rural communities in regulating and managing their resources of life (mostly agrarian) to meet their needs in the community. The "ethics of subsistence" is the most important point of James C. Scott's theory of "The Moral Economy of the Peasant" (1976; 1981). He describes how this "subsistence ethics" underlies all the behaviour of the peasants in their social relations in the countryside, including their defiance of innovations that come from the rulers (the state and their patrons). Subsistence ethics is the moral economy of peasants: "their notion of economic justice and their working definition of exploitation - their view of which claims on their product were tolerated and which intolerable" (Scott, 1976:3).

In chapter 4, Scott's views on "village" and "patron-client bonds" have been described, in his study of "The Moral Economy of the Peasant", which according to him are the two main institutions that play a role in ensuring the fulfilment of the needs of community members. Scott (1993: 120) argues that peasant communities are guided religiously by their guardian deities and ritual life, as well as politically determined by their own customary law and power structures. The strength and uniqueness of this political tradition, according to Scott (1993) varies according to the ecological, social, economic and historical nature of the society itself. Thus, the village has its own characteristics based on local identity which is tied to the land and strong traditional values. The village will provide guarantees for minimum subsistence needs to all its residents as far as the sources of life that the village has allow it to do so. For this reason, the operational function of the village is to ensure a 'minimum income', by maximizing safety and minimizing the risks of its residents.

For farming families who live in economically minimal conditions, the guarantee of their survival depends very much on the strategy of utilizing the village and the patron-client bond to fulfil their basic needs. The strategy is to avoid risk (risk averse) and prioritize safety (safety first).

Scott (1976: 13) says that:

"The distinctive economic behaviour of the subsistence-oriented peasant family results from the fact that, unlike a capitalist enterprise, it is a unit of consumption as well as a unit of production. The family begins with a more or less irreducible subsistence consumer demand, based on its size, which it must meet in order to continue as a unit...The cost of failure for those near the subsistence margin is such that safety and reliability take precedence over long-run profit."

On this basis, the resistance of the peasants according to Scott (1981) is more risk-averse (not willing to take risks / reluctant to risk or avoid the danger line) on the principle of safety first. The principle of "safety-first" is what lies behind the many technical, social and moral arrangements in a pre-capitalist agrarian order.

The resistance of the peasants with these principles is also understood as a survival strategy, not an open resistance with direct confrontation aimed at changing the system, but rather an attempt by the peasant to survive in the system. Nevertheless, the hidden patterns of resistance from the peasants to the context of the closed movement of the Ermera peasants, the principles of such resistance have inspired the emergence of the consolidation

of collective power, which was coordinated in secret by utilizing the clandestine movement organization network during the independence struggle.

The hidden actions of the Ermera peasants during the foreign military occupation, such as stealing coffee, hiding from the authorities, destroying plantations and other actions, were inspired by their disobedient behaviours in the previous colonial period. When the peasants joined the clandestine movement organizations, these hidden actions could then be consolidated as a collective force by utilizing a network of clandestine organizations. This situation allows hidden resistance to be transformed into collective actions, which at that time were coordinated in secret. This situation of change is a process of conditioning the emergence of an open and organized peasant social movement organization.

Therefore, I argue that the hidden peasant resistance proposed by Scott (1976; 1985) did not always occur in an uncoordinated manner. In the context of the Ermera peasant movement, the hidden resistance of the peasants was actually coordinated in a social network based on customary clan relations (coordination of covert movements by utilizing cultural-based social networks). It was also organized in social networks based on political interests, as happened in the struggle for independence by utilizing clandestine organizations (coordination of covert movements by utilizing ideology-based social networks).

9.4. The emergence of the open peasant movement and its organizing strategies

In addition to the hidden resistance or covert movement, the Ermera peasant resistance was also understood as an open and organized peasant social movement. The initial process of the emergence of open resistance can be seen from the collective actions that took place, both those that were coordinated secretly in the pre-independence period as well as those that were coordinated openly during the independence period.

During the Portuguese colonial period, the peasants constructed a collective identity from their resistance by relying on social capital related to their customary law. During the Indonesian military occupation, the construction of collective identity developed, not only related to their cultural-based networks, but also utilizing clandestine organizational networks or also related to political interest-based networks for national liberation (political ideology-based relationships).

The construction of a collective identity that continued to develop during the Indonesian military occupation allowed activists to be empowered and experienced an ideological awakening to be able to consolidate the discontent of the peasants into a collective strength to be able to express their social protests openly in the form of collective actions. When repression escalates, hidden resistance patterns become their rational choice. But when changes occur that allow the consolidation of collective power through the mobilization of resources and other support, the peasants will manifest their resistance openly. The situation of change has led to a change from the pattern of hidden resistance to open resistance, both coordinated covertly as happened during the struggle for independence and openly as happened in the aftermath.

Transitional circumstances in 1999 that led to the restoration of independence in 2002, have enabled the peasants to build broader partnerships with civil society organizations that allowed them to develop strategies for organizing social movements in an open and coordinated manner through UNAER.

When farmer activists experience a process of empowerment, both politically and in relation to organizational capacity building and leadership, it is possible for them to continue to strengthen partnerships with civil society organizations that share the same perspectives, concerns, and expectations about the future of their country's independence. This situation prompted a widespread consolidation of collective power, which in its development allowed this movement to be empowered and have political legitimacy to be able to exist openly and be organized as a peasant social movement through UNAER coordination.

Transitional circumstances in 1999 not only reduced state repression and control at the local level, but also led to the process of rural democratization which had implications for opening up space for the presence of civil society organizations to be able to partner with the peasants in encouraging peasant social movements as social control over the nation development process.

Empowering partnerships between peasant activists and civil society organizations enable them to explore the potentials of social movements from within the peasants, such as the experiences of the peasants as well as the history of the community rooted in local customs and beliefs (local resources) and then construct it as the collective identity of their movement. This identity was then promoted and continued to be strengthened as the main weapon of the Ermera peasants in fighting for their rights.

Thus, the Ermera peasant social movement can be present openly and well coordinated by UNAER also because of the support and strengthening of civil society organizations. The support and strengthening of the movement are not only intended for the benefit of advocacy of the movement through network development and strengthening of UNAER as a movement organization, but also for the benefit of empowering the Ermera peasants through education, training and sustainable agricultural development programs.

Based on the description above, the emergence of the resistance of the Ermera peasants as an open movement can be traced from the collective actions that took place. Those that were consolidated covertly used clandestine organizational networks in the pre-independence period (as described in chapter 7). Those that were coordinated openly after independence under UNAER relied on support from civil society organizations (as described in chapter 8).

The emergence of peasant social movements due to social and political conduciveness as described above can be explained by using the political opportunities approach proposed by Sydney Tarrow (1998). Tarrow (in McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 2004: 41-44) generally suggests two approaches that can be used to identify political opportunities that trigger the emergence of social movements: proximate opportunity structure; and state centred opportunity structure (as described in chapter 2).

The proximate opportunity structure approach emphasizes the signs/signals received from policies in the community environment or from changes that occur in community resources and capacities. In particular, this approach is divided into two types, namely: (1) policy specific opportunities which view that, political opportunities for the birth of a social movement can arise because of a government policy that conflicts (is not in accordance) with the aspirations of society, or is not implemented by the government properly. Political opportunities can also arise as a result of the decreasing legitimacy of the government, or even because the legitimacy of the state is not recognized by the community. (2) Group-specific opportunities. This type looks at the structure of opportunities that are focused on changes that occur or are experienced by certain groups, either their goals or their existence in society. These changes can also trigger collective action. The causes of these changes can be caused by various factors, such as politics, economy, ideology, culture, war, and so on. This study shows that the early history of the emergence of the resistance of the Ermera peasants was driven by the systematic exploitation experienced by the subsistence peasants

due to colonial intervention and the penetration of capitalism that led to forced rural transformation. This has caused the disruption of the socio-cultural system and the subsistence economy of the local community which has been supporting their lives for so long. This condition continued during the Indonesian military occupation from 1975-1999, which repressively monopolized socio-political and economic life, transforming local peasants into objects of exploitation to meet the needs of the state and the rich.

Conclusion

This thesis focuses on analysing the history and the development of the peasant movement in the Ermera municipality. The research was conducted based on a case study of the Ermera Farmers' Union (UNAER). The objective of the study is to explore the determinant factors that contributed to the emergence and development of the peasant movement and how UNAER developed organizational strategies to strengthen and empower the peasant social movement.

The emergence of an open and organized Ermera peasant social movement is rooted in the historical legacy of colonialism and foreign military occupation that was exploitative and repressive.

Colonial legacies can be traced from the establishment of plantations and colonial policies related to land issues. The Portuguese colonial policies of forced labour, imposition of head taxes, and the establishment of plantations on the people's confiscated land, caused the emergence of hidden actions and disobedience from the indigenous people. This was followed by the repressive military domination during the Indonesian occupation, leading to the deprivation of the people's political and economic rights. As a result, the covert Ermera peasant movement emerged before independence.

During the struggle for independence, FRETILIN promised the implementation of agrarian reform the top of the people's liberation agenda and gained broad support from the peasants through their involvement in clandestine network organizations. After Timor-Leste became independent, the government did not fulfil their promise. Therefore, the peasants were worried that the state would continue the legacy of exploitative colonial policies. The peasant protests continued and later developed into the organization of an open social movement under the coordination of UNAER.

By using the constructivism paradigm and qualitative methodological approach, the analysis is presented in the form of a narrative that emphasizes people's stories to explain events (Bryman, 2014).

Several informants expressed the hopes and concerns that prompted them to openly organize peasant social movements. These include experiences, which led to their ideological

awakening, and inspired them to organize and strengthen this movement based on the perspective of FRETILIN's national liberation ideology.

I have considered their experiences and stories from a shared understanding of social movements as an instrument in fighting for the protection of people's rights and the empowerment of the peasants.

I have drawn on several studies which explore the historical contexts of the social movements of farmers that emerged due to subsistence conditions, such as in the studies of Scott (1976; 1985), Paige (1978), Wolf (1969), Landsberger (1974), among others (Chapters 2, 3 and 4). In this study, I try to explore and understand the peasant social movement from the rural situation and the real condition of the peasants. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8, I have demonstrated how historical, economic and cultural factors are considered to have significantly contributed to the emergence and the process of strengthening the peasant social movement.

Three themes were identified for analysis: leading factors, enabling factors and reinforcing factors. The results of analysis show that the emergence of the peasant social movements in this region cannot be separated from the history of exploitative and repressive foreign power intervention that had disrupted the socio-cultural and economic life system of the people. This resulted in community dissatisfaction which was manifested in covert and open movement patterns.

In situations where exploitation occurs repeatedly, covert movements become their rational choice. However, when social change provides opportunities for empowerment of the peasants, discontent becomes consolidated as a collective force and is presented as an open movement.

The open movement was then coordinated after independence because it was driven by the peasants' concern that the legacy of exploitative colonial policies would continue to be preserved by the state. Therefore, based on their historical experience and inspired by Timor-Leste's national liberation ideology, they established UNAER to organize an open peasant social movement by mobilizing internal and external resources.

1. Leading factors of the Ermera peasant movement

Since coffee was introduced as a commodity that could bring huge profits to the colonial state, the government made efforts to increase its production by establishing plantations on lands confiscated from the people. After plantations were established, people were mobilized from various locations to be forced to work on these plantations. The colonial government tried to get economic benefits for the country by promoting trade-oriented agriculture and limiting people's subsistence agriculture where production was oriented only to family consumption.

Exploitative colonial policies during Portuguese rule, such as forced labour and imposition of head taxes on all males aged 18-60 years, forced the local people to work hard on existing plantations. Some of them also worked for the Chinese or the other rich people in their villages to be able to pay head taxes. For those who at that time were unable and/or caught in defiance, their land, livestock and/or assets were confiscated for that purpose.

Various coercive approaches were used to force local people to only obey the colonial government in pursuing their economic interests. This made local people marginalized in an exploitative colonial structure and caused their dissatisfaction. The harmony of their socio-economic and cultural life was disrupted and in turn encouraged the emergence of resistance in the form of hidden actions and disguised disobedience behaviours.

The intervention of foreign powers led to the transformation of the local people's lives, which in the past were based more on bartering than on cash. Subsistence production activities which previously relied more on family support in relation to customary clans and were based on the principle of mutual cooperation, were disrupted by colonial policies that prioritized increasing production through systematic exploitation of the peasants for the benefit of the state and the wealthy.

This capitalistic colonial intervention led to agrarian changes, from traditional management based on local cultural systems, to agrarian management of the state. This rational legal approach weakened the position and role of customary law and ignored local wisdoms that contributed to ensuring the sustainability of the livelihoods of local communities.

The lives of local people were supported by the subsistence farming system. The management of livelihood resources based on their local culture and belief system preserved

and guaranteed the sustainability of their use for their children and grandchildren. State intervention through the plantation industry made the local subsistence management system marginalized by colonial economic exploitation and trade. As a result, lands and natural resources were controlled by the government for the benefit of the plantation industry which depended on compulsory labour from local communities.

Even though the impact of these changes caused local community dissatisfaction, they were not able to manifest it in the form of open social protest because of strong colonial repression. Therefore, they could only fight covertly in the form of hidden actions and certain patterns of behaviour that marked their defiance to colonialism and capitalism in their subsistence life.

The covert movement was the rational choice of the peasants to survive in their oppressed conditions. This hidden pattern of resistance during the Portuguese colonial period could function effectively because it was coordinated utilizing the social networks of the peasants based on their customary clans (social relations based on traditional ideology).

Portuguese colonization ended in 1974 and then the Indonesian occupation started the next year. During the period of Indonesian military occupation, the exploitative colonial approach continued, but was more militaristic and repressive.

The peasants continued to live in an oppressed situation, as natural resources, customary lands and sacred sites of local communities were controlled and monopolized by the military. Thus, the peasants continued to be exploited and marginalized in a repressive political structure.

The monopoly and military repression were politically aimed at forcing the Timorese to accept the integration of East Timor into Indonesia. As a result, public dissatisfaction accumulated and led to various forms of resistance from the Timorese people organized by FRETILIN.

Foreign domination continued without open protests from the Ermera peasants, but the covert movement continued through actions such as stealing coffee in plantations, secretly destroying plantations and violence directed at the authorities.

At the same time, the occupying military government's deprivation of political and economic rights for the East Timorese people resulted in active participation in the activities of the clandestine movement organizations to fight for the independence of Timor-Leste. This

enabled their collective and critical consciousness to be awakened and in turn allowed them to consolidate their collective power to express resistance openly.

The seizure and control of people's lands by the Portuguese colonial government had been based on the assumption that these lands were abandoned and that they could be more productive through the plantation industry. In fact, these were community lands whose ownership and management was based on subsistence-based management and local customary law.

The management of local people's subsistence production and land tenure was defined collectively based on a clan system. The means of production, natural and mineral resources for human life, such as land, springs, forests, and rivers, according to their customary law, should not be controlled and owned for personal interests. The collective ownership and management of the subsistence system based on local culture was disrupted by the presence of colonial interventions that promoted private ownership and industrial-based production management.

Like the Portuguese colonial government, the control of plantations by the Indonesian government also rested on rationalization based on a positive legal perspective, which only recognised official documents but completely ignored the history and socio-cultural context behind foreign domination over people's lands. As a result, there was a cultural clash between the colonial occupation of people's lands and the communities' conception of land ownership, production management and utilization of natural resources. Similar findings were made by Mustain (2007) in Indonesia.

As land claims are based on different perspectives, the foreign powers inherited the potential for agrarian-based conflicts, which were not only rooted in issues of economic and political interests but also involved the cultural interests of the community.

This study concludes that the main cause or leading factors of the emergence of the Ermera peasant social movement were rooted in the history of repressive foreign power intervention in rural transformation through the plantation industry which disrupted the economic system and culture of the local subsistence community. Systematic exploitation by repressive colonial governments led to the early emergence of peasant resistance in the form of hidden actions. However, the transition from colonial governance to military occupation resulted in covert resistance to develop into collective actions. After independence, this became more organized and formed a peasant social movement.

2. Enabling factors of the Ermera peasant movement

After Portuguese colonialism ended in 1974, it was followed by a repressive Indonesian military occupation. This led to the emergence of a national resistance movement to fight for independence. This transition in the political landscape resulted in the peasant movement to find ideological inspiration which led to the transformation of the movement from a hidden pattern of resistance to an open pattern of resistance and after independence organized into a peasant social movement coordinated under UNAER.

The emergence of the resistance of the peasants continued to develop adaptively to the processed of change taking place. The enabling factors were the radicalization of the peasants and the transitional circumstances that provided opportunities for the consolidation of collective power.

The young peasants who previously carried out hidden actions then joined the clandestine movement organizations in their villages. This enabled them to mobilize the support and active participation of the peasants in the national resistance movement. During this time, they received political enlightenment from several members of FALINTIL and leaders of clandestine organizations in a process of radicalization of young peasants as movement activists.

The importance of the clandestine movement, besides their ideological awakening, was to be able to carry out a process of raising awareness of the peasants and then mobilizing them to occupy plantations openly to demand traditional ownership rights to their ancestral lands, as part of the agenda for the struggle for independence.

The emergence of the collective consciousness of the peasants allowed hidden resistance that was previously carried out individually to be consolidated into collective actions using the support of the clandestine movement organizations.

After the restoration of independence, youth activists, previously active in the clandestine movements led by youth and student organizations or based in rural areas, met in community activities driven by shared concerns regarding the future of their country. During this time, the activists reflected on FRETILIN's national liberation ideology and contextualized it as an important instrument to raise the collective and critical awareness of the peasants. This empowering community organizing approach allowed the collective

actions of the peasants to be consolidated through farmer organizations, such as ERPOLEQS, KJHR and HAKOMAFa. With the support of KSI, these organizations were strengthened to be able to continue to organize and empower communities, which allowed the emergence of an open and consolidated farmers' social movement under UNAER in 2010.

The enabling factors include two partnership models that allowed the radicalization process of activists to encourage the organization and strengthening of the Ermera peasant movement. The first model was a partnership based on the interests of the national struggle which was formed through the active involvement of the peasants in the clandestine movement network as already described.

The second partnership model was established after the 1999 crisis which encouraged the democratization process and opened opportunities for civil society organizations to start community empowerment programs in villages. Thus, farmers started to build partnerships with civil society organizations, which enabled peasant resistance to be consolidated into an open and organized peasant social movement. By utilizing the support of civil society organizations, empowering community organizations and the process of strengthening the movement continued to be carried out to encourage the radicalization of farmers through educational programs, training and other empowerment activities that were carried out extensively so that farmers' social movement organizations could be further strengthened.

In addition to the process of radicalization of the peasants, the change also opened opportunities for consolidation and strengthening of the peasant social movements.

The strength of the military repression led to an accumulation of peasant dissatisfaction with the Indonesian occupation government manifested in various forms of hidden actions, which later developed into collective actions for the open occupation of plantations after being supported by the clandestine movement organizations. The clandestine movement network allowed the collective power of the peasants to be consolidated so that the peasants' dissatisfaction with the Indonesian occupation was expressed openly through collective actions. Thus, the changes allowed covert movements, which utilized social relations based on traditional ideologies, to develop into collective actions, coordinated by clandestine organizational networks. This development led to the formation of a collective consciousness such that covert movements were able to develop into open and coordinated movements.

Political changes led to the 1999 referendum, which gave pro-independence supporters a resounding victory and led to an UN-run transition to independence. The descendants of Portuguese colonial plantation owners who had previously fled to their country returned to claim their plantations which had been occupied by the peasants.

In 2000, tensions between peasants and colonial plantation owners began to emerge. The peasants protested the claims of colonial plantation owners because East Timor had become independent and they considered the plantation owners (mostly *mestiços*/Portuguese descendants, even though they had Timorese heritage) no longer had rights to the ancestral lands of the farmers. With the support of KSI, the activists organized a peasant social movement and established UNAER to develop strategies for empowerment and strengthening of the movement.

Transitional circumstances provided opportunities for the democratization process at the local level, which enabled peasant activists to build alliances with civil society organizations that shared the same concern to strengthen the peasant social movement as an important instrument in fighting for farmers' rights and encouraging the process of transformative change.

This kind of social and political conduciveness allowed the peasants to construct the identity of their social movement based on internal forces that were more deeply rooted in their socio-cultural identity. By taking advantage of broad support from civil society organizations, the advocacy of this movement has been linked at the national and international levels, so that the local interests of the peasants can be raised and integrated into the agenda of the wider social movement to fight for the improvement of living standards and farmers' rights.

In this context, this study concludes that the enabling factors for the transformation of the peasant movement from a covert movement into an open and organized social movement under UNAER coordination are rooted in the process of radicalization of the peasants and transition processes from Portuguese colonialism and Indonesian occupation to Timor-Leste's independence. These processes provided opportunities for empowerment and consolidation of the collective power of the peasants through their partnerships with clandestine movement organizations and civil society organizations, which gave them the ideological awareness as well as the ability to develop organizational strategies to strengthen and empower the Ermera peasant movement as a social movement.

3. Reinforcing factors of the Ermera peasant social movement

From UNAER's perspective, their social movement aims to fight for farmers' rights and social justice. Therefore, farmers must be strengthened so that apart from having access rights to land for production, they must also be empowered to be actively involved in influencing decision-making processes regarding their future. UNAER strives for the peasants to have the ability to respond to the processes of change that has implications for their lives. Therefore, the UNAER peasant social movement also aims to empower the peasants, both politically and economically.

The strengthening and empowerment of the movement occurred through the strategies and approaches of community organizing by UNAER which relied on the mobilization of internal resources and support from civil society organizations.

UNAER also encourages the formation of cooperatives in some of its base communities to diversify their production systems with various crops and fruits to strengthen the family economy.

The strategy for empowering and strengthening this movement is integrated with education programs for movement activists and training for peasants, based on the principles of national liberation and community empowerment. Strategies and approaches like this have led the Ermera peasant social movement to gain broad support at the local, national and international levels so that this movement is further strengthened and can influence public policies at the local and national levels.

The three main strategies of UNAER's efforts to empower and strengthen the peasant movement in Ermera are: (1) encourage farmer participation through mobilization of collective memory; (2) strengthen the movement through resource mobilization; (3) empower farmers through education and training as well as sustainable agriculture. These are presented in more detail below.

3.1. Encouraging farmer participation through mobilization of collective memory

Transitional circumstances that made the peasants politically enlightened to reclaim plantations, enabled the activists to find strategies for strengthening the movement through

the mobilization of the peasants' collective memory. This strategy fosters collective awareness of the importance of unity and active participation of farmers in supporting and strengthening movement organizations.

The activists held community discussions to raise the collective consciousness of the peasants through critical reflection on the oppression they had experienced as well as their experiences and strategies in responding to it. The younger generations who listen to these discussions are also inspired and thus critical awareness can be built to strengthen the movement.

Activists also identified *lia nain* (customary elders) and community leaders to tell stories about the early history of colonial intervention that led to the expropriation of their ancestral lands by foreigners to establish plantations. At the same time, the older people also informed them about the agrarian reform they heard and/or learned about from FRETILIN in 1975 or during the struggle for independence. These processes enabled the re-emergence of the peasants' awareness of the importance of collective resistance.

The strategy of mobilizing the collective memory of the peasants makes them aware that their struggle is closely related to structural problems. Their common enemy is the system that has made them shackled and powerless to fight, if they do not unite and organize themselves to build a common movement.

3.2. Strengthening the movement through resource mobilization

The strengthening of the movement also occurred through the strategies of organizing and/or mobilizing local and external resources by UNAER through support from civil society organizations.

UNAER continues to encourage the peasants to reclaim colonial plantations and strengthen them through customary claims, because they know that these plantations have been built on people's land which was seized by the state and rich people during the colonial period.

The approach to organizing the movement, which is based on the historical and cultural experiences of the peasants, is further strengthened through a network development strategy by utilizing support from KSI and other civil society organizations from local, national to international levels.

The partnership between UNAER and civil society organizations allowed UNAER and KSI to work together with the church and local government to organize *Tara Bandu* throughout the Ermera region on 27 February 2012. *Tara Bandu* aims to build public awareness of the importance of living frugally and investing in productive activities for the sake of a better future for their generation. *Tara Bandu* is a local wisdom, which was previously only carried out at the village level but was raised to the municipal level to be further strengthened and used as an important instrument in efforts to build community collective awareness.

The partnership between UNAER and civil society organizations and local governments allows the role of customary law to be reinforced and synergized with positive law in an effort to raise public awareness to actively participate in the development process. UNAER's strategy has enabled local values to be adopted and promoted as an important instrument in their social movements.

At the local level, UNAER and KSI played an active role in encouraging peasants in other places to form farmers' unions, such as the cases in the municipality of Liquiça and the municipality of Covalima. At the same time, UNAER also plays an active role in strengthening movement advocacy at the national level through a network of civil society organizations such as HASATIL, MOKATIL and Rede ba Rai. This partnership has enabled the formation of MOKATIL as a farmers' union at the national level to represent Timor-Leste's peasant social movement in international forums, including representing Timor-Leste's membership in an international peasant movement organization called *La Via Campesina*.

Through partnerships between UNAER and civil society organizations that have been formed at the international level, it is possible to advocate for the strengthening and empowerment of the peasant movement. This allows issues at the local level to be widely raised and advocated through existing networks of social movement organizations. This external resource mobilization strategy makes UNAER have a strong bargaining position in influencing state policies that are directly related to the interests and rights of the peasants.

3.3. Empowerment of farmers through education, training and sustainable agriculture

The organization of the movement by UNAER has been carried out for the purpose of empowering the peasants. Empowerment strategies include education and community organizing activities for sustainable agricultural development.

UNAER strives for farmers to participate in social movements as an instrument to address their problems. Therefore, in addition to strengthening advocacy, UNAER also prepares young activists through education to become community organizers to ensure the sustainable benefits of this movement for farmers.

UNAER established IEFS as an activist school to internalize the ideological perspective of the movement to community organizers to be able to support movement organizing activities at the grassroots level that rely on the principles of community empowerment and strengthening. This school was inspired by FRETILIN's national liberation ideology and Paulo Freire's educational approaches which were more directed at building the critical consciousness of the peasants.

Young farmers from the villages were recruited and prepared as the backbone of UNAER in its efforts to empower the peasants through agricultural production activities and the establishment of community cooperatives. This empowerment strategy promotes bottom-up transformative community leadership. As a result, the interests of local communities can be raised and reflected also in the development process.

The IEFS educational philosophy is to bring back resources to the community. This transformational process brings experience and knowledge to encourage social change. The participatory approach to education allows the emergence of critical consciousness through dialogue.

IEFS encourages integrated teaching and learning between classroom activities and community organizing. This fosters the sharing of experiences and knowledge among the peasants to promote a critical reflection on their social reality. At the same time, they also discover new knowledge which is contextualized according to the principles of people's liberation for the purpose of transforming society.

Students are sent back to the community to do community organizing, allowing participatory and exploratory discussions between students and farmers to take place. At the same time, they are aware of and understand the exploitative social realities in their lives,

both rooted in the history of external intervention and in the customs of society. Students facilitate the critical awareness of the peasants to be awakened, so that they dare to question the exploitative social system and identify joint initiatives to get out of the reality of their oppression.

The empowerment process is also carried out by bolstering agricultural production. UNAER works closely with APHEDA to empower its members to increase their family income through a sustainable agriculture program known as *kuda rai ho sistema integradu* (cultivating with an integrated system). The peasants receive training in the basic techniques of this new system. They also build nurseries and pilot gardens in each UNAER base community to gradually begin to diversify the coffee plantations that have been controlled by the farmers. UNAER's efforts, apart from aiming to improve the lives of the peasants, are also to ensure the sustainability of the movement's existence and its benefits for the peasants.

4. Final reflection

This research has demonstrated that the determinants of the presence of a social movement are not only caused by economic and political factors, but also socio-cultural factors.

The resistance of the Ermera peasants was initially a local community reaction in the form of a covert movement against the hegemony of the colonial state and the penetration of capitalism into rural areas. However, because the repressive colonial intervention had led to widespread deprivation of people's political, economic and socio-cultural rights, community dissatisfaction was then accumulated, and this prompted the emergence of an open and coordinated social movement.

Social conduciveness and transitional circumstances can empower and encourage local movements in the form of covert actions and disobedience behaviour (in this study referred to as covert movements) into an open and coordinated social movement.

This study finds that in repressive situations, the dynamics of social movements occur in the form of hidden coordination utilizing social networks, both those based on socio-cultural relations (such as networks of customary clans) or those based on political ideology (such as networks of clandestine movement organizations).

In this context, I argue that covert movements, or what in Scott's perspective (1976; 1985) is referred to as hidden resistance, does not always occur in an uncoordinated form as stated by Scott. The results of this study indicate that covert movements can actually be coordinated using traditional organizations and/or clandestine movement organizations.

The hidden coordination of the Ermera peasant social movement model also proves that social movements, as a form of social resistance and/or protest, do not always have to be manifested openly in public and officially, as stated by Lofland (2003).

Weak people who are marginalized in an exploitative and repressive system and structure, as experienced by the Ermera peasants during foreign occupation, cannot express their protest formally and openly, unless they deal with it through hidden actions and/or covert disobedience, as has been explained by Scott (1976; 1985) in his theory of the moral economy of the peasants. The open resistance of the Ermera peasants, in Lofland's (2003) perspective, could occur when the transitional situation made the peasants ideologically empowered to be able to consolidate their dissatisfaction as a collective force.

The emergence of awareness of their oppression encouraged the formation of collective power. This allowed social protests to be manifested in an open and coordinated manner, as happened in the emergence of an open peasant social movement after independence coordinated by UNAER in Ermera, in Timor-Leste.

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Appendix 1: INTERVIEW LIST

Primary Interviews

| Number | Code | Age | Role | Place and date | Other details |
|--------|-------|-----|--|---|--|
| 1 | AlGMS | 59 | President of UNAER | Maudiu, Ermera, 10/9/2017; 15/2/2018 23/9/2019; 9/11/2019 | |
| 2 | JAT | 50 | Vice President of UNAER | Lekesi, Ermera, 11/11/2019 | |
| 3. | LSB | 45 | UNAER Base Coordinator in Lekesi | Lekesi, Ermera, 11/11/2019 | |
| 4. | LS | 42 | UNAER Base Coordinator in Gegemara | Lekesi, Ermera, 24/9/2019 | |
| 5. | AdC | 35 | UNAER Base Coordinator in Kmalpun | Kmalpun, Railako, Ermera, 28/9/2019 | |
| 6. | JenS | 36 | Director of KSI since 2017-now | Dili, 13/11/2019 | Also one of the Board members of MOKATIL |
| 7. | ASdS | 52 | Head of Ponilala Village | Sakoko, Ermera, 1/3/2018; Maudiu, Ermera, 9/11/2019, Ponilala Ermera, 15/2/2018 | |
| 8. | EdN | 46 | Women's group organizer for cooperatives in Lekesi | Lekesi, Ermera, 11/11/2019 | |
| 9. | AdS | 74 | Traditional elders from Poerema | 15/6/2017 | |
| 10. | LP | 42 | UNAER Base Coordinator in Lipelhei | Maudiu, Ermera, 30/11/2019 | |

Secondary Interviews (1)

| Number | Code | Age | Role | Place and date | Other details |
|--------|------|-----|--|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | TPdC | 26 | Secretary of UNAER | Maudiu, Ermera, 15/6/2017; 9/11/2019 | |
| 2. | BS | 28 | Vice President of UNAER | Maudiu, Ermera, 30/11/2019 | |
| 3. | LoS | 28 | Member of the UNAER Mobile Brigade and teacher at IEFS | Dili, 15/2/2018 | |
| 4. | MT | 50 | Former Director of KSI | Dili, 15/11/2019 | |
| 5 | AB | 52 | Board KSI | Dili, 12/11/2019 | |
| 6. | JdS | 42 | UNAER's lawyer | Dili, 24/11/2019 | |
| 7. | BSS | 30 | KSI field staff | 10/6/2019 | |
| 8. | BUA | 42 | Former UNAER base coordinator in Maudio | Maudiu, Ermera, 15/2/2018; 9/11/2019 | |
| 9. | DE | 29 | UNAER mobile brigade member and teacher at IEFS | Maudiu, Ermera, 15/2/2018 | |
| 10. | JS | 58 | Vice President of MPRA-L | Maubara, 4/7/2019 | MPRA-L |
| 11. | OPV | 50 | National Coordinator of Rede ba Rai | Dili, 14/11/2019 | |
| 12. | DSC | 37 | NGO Forum Director | 25/11/2019 | |
| 13. | EldA | 45 | Country Manager of APHEDA (Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad) | Dili, 22/11/2019 | Donor |
| 14. | DmN | 47 | Head of Maubu Village | 19/7/2019; 4/9/2019 | |
| 15. | HdS | 72 | Traditional elders from Aitumua | Maudio, Ermera, 15/6/2017 | |
| 16. | DdR | 75 | Traditional elders from Maudiu | Maudiu, Ermera, 13/7/2019 | |

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----|----|--|----------------------------|--------|
| 17. | DTS | 62 | Traditional elders from Ponilala | Ponilala Ermera, 15/2/2018 | |
| 18. | FdS | 60 | Traditional elders from Vatuguili Hamlet | Maubara, 5/7/2019 | MPRA-L |
| 19. | JBS | 60 | Traditional elders from Gegemara Hamlet | Lekesi, Ermera, 24/9/2019 | |
| 20. | TdN | 75 | Traditional elders from Lekesi | Lekesi, 16/6/2017 | |
| 21. | MBK | 62 | Declarator of MPRA-L | Bogoro, Liquiça, 15/9/2019 | MPRA-L |

Secondary Interviews (2)

| Number | Name/Code name | Age | Role | Place and date | Other details |
|--------|----------------|-----|--|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | DA | 34 | Coordinator of land cases in Rede ba Rai | Dili, 14/11/2019 | |
| 2. | FS | 55 | Director of the National Coffee and Industrial Plants Directorate (Director da Direcção Nacional Café e Plantas Industriais) | Dili, 2/3/2018 | Central Government |
| 3. | JuLS | 49 | Head of Department of Coffee Promotion | Dili, 2/3/2018 | Central Government |
| 4. | JM | 50 | Administrator of the Municipality of Ermera | Gleno, Ermera, 27/2/2018 | Local Government |
| 5. | MMFL | 44 | Director of HAK Foundation | Dili, 15/7/2019 | NGO |
| 6. | MS | 34 | KSI finance staff | 10/11/2019 | NGO |
| 7. | CP | 37 | Academic | 29/9/2019 | Academic |
| 8. | AdSL | 28 | Student from IEFS | 29/8/2019 | Student from IEFS |
| 9. | IdRT | 28 | Student from IEFS | 29/8/2019 | Student from IEFS |
| 10 | DdSS | 29 | Student from IEFS | 29/8/2019 | Students from IEFS |