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## The Timorese Indigenous Beliefs and The Christian Faith:

A parallelism in the perspectives of worship and communion

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## **ABSTRACT**

Understanding Parallelism between the Timorese Indigenous Beliefs and the Christian Faith is Essential in Evangelization and Catechesis for Greater Conversion and Transformation. The thesis aims to present the parallel perspectives in the act of worship and in the idea of communion together with a critical analysis about the reality studied. The results of our study, by observing, analyzing and comparing, revealed that certain elements of the religious indigenous practices and the meanings of their major religious-cultural symbols are parallel with those of the Christian faith. This should serve as a foundation for the dialogue between the Church and the local culture. In the critical analysis we also identified some obstacles that had slowed down the process of Christianization in Timor-Leste.

Key words: Timorese indigenous beliefs, Christian Faith, perspective of worship and communion.

## **ACRONYMS**

Act = Acts of the Apostles

Col = Letter of Paul to the Colossians

CN = Communio Notio, of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

1Cor = First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

2Cor = Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

Dt = Deuteronomy, the fourth book of the Pentateuch

DV = Dei Verbum

Eph = Letter of Paul to the Ephesians

Ex = Exodus, the second book of the Pentateuch

Gal = Letter of Paul to the Galatians

Gen = Genesis, the first book of the Pentateuch

Jn = The Gospel according to John

LG = Lumen Gentium

Mt = The Gospel according to Mathew

Phil = Letter of Paul to the Philippians

RM = Redemptoris Missio

Rom = Letter of Paul to the Romans

1Tim = First Letter of Paul to Timothy

2Tim = Second Letter of Paul to Timothy.

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## INTRODUCTION

Most of the Timorese younger generation have ignored the traditional religious-cultural practices and the symbolic common union implied in the figure of *Uma-lulik* (Sacred house/shrine). Only recently they have tried to grasp the meaning of these rituals and what the *uma lulik* portrays and its relation to the Christian faith. The scope of the thesis is focusing on these two aspects: such as mediation in worship as expressed in the veneration of *fatuk-lulik* (sacred stone/rock) and *ai-lulik* (sacred tree) and the sense of communion under the shadow of *uma-lulik* (shrine). We are exploring all elements related to these two aspects of mediation in worship and sense of communion comparing them with the Christian faith. *Lulik* (Holy/sacred/sacral) is the key word that unites all Timorese value-systems in the society. Based on our pastoral experiences with the native Catholics who keep on practicing their ancestral religious tradition we took up some important points analyzing and comparing them with the writings related to the religious sentiment of the people. We will attempt to formulate and clarify these religious phenomena carefully. These can serve as a foundation for dialogue between the Christian faith and the local beliefs as an integral part of the cultural identity of the people.

The phenomena of religious manifestations in the Timorese indigenous world awoke many researchers around the world, especially from Australia, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, UK, USA, etc. Thanks are due to those who tried to explain this matter in their own way. We highly appreciate those who left behind copies of their investigations, of their own way of perceiving the Timorese people with their religious-cultural traditions. The books like “Gentio de Timor” by Armando Pinto Correia, “O Rei de Nári” by Jose Bernardino Rodrigues, “Timor: Ritos e Mitos Atauros” by Jorge Barros Duarte, “História de Timor-Leste da Pré-História à Actualidade” by Frédéric Durand, with other related articles and books in various languages, are valuable inputs for us to explore more the Timorese indigenous people with their respective belief systems. Their initiatives and works evoked the curiosity of some native researchers to write down their findings in the light of their own perspectives as autochthonous. We intend to present some of the essential points related to the Christian faith in the perspectives of the act of worship and the concept of communion.

This work is divided into a general introduction, four (4) chapters and conclusions. The first chapter is about the background of the work. The second chapter

is the theoretical foundation of the studied reality. In the third chapter we will present the content of the work and elaborate on its significance. In the fourth chapter we present some critical analyses.

## Sources

The research has been carried out through the following process. We make use of the data gathering by means of the bibliographical study related to our direct and indirect observations; analysis of the data found comparing it to the Christian faith; and sharing the results in this thesis. We compare all information found in the books and articles with our experiences, or observations in the field, comparing them with the Christian faith, particularly the Catholic faith. Because of lack of resources and time we have opted to have bibliographical studies and make use of our experiences, or observations. The collected data and observations in the field are examined and analyzed in the light of theology. We compare these sources with Christian faith, particularly the Catholic faith as expressed in worship and communion. The experiences of the researcher and the bibliographical information are the principal sources of this thesis. Analyzing, comparing, and identifying the parallel aspects of the Timorese indigenous beliefs with the Christian faith, build up the whole process that we come through.

The Timorese indigenous beliefs are an oral tradition, unlike the written tradition of Christianity. We are able to establish the relations between the two faiths through the support of various literary sources, field observation and experiences. Our pastoral experiences have resulted in so much accurate information in doing this academic work. From these experiences in the past we wrote up all necessary points related to our interest. Therefore, we rely on two major sources: such as described in various books and articles related to the issue interpreted by other people from outside; then recalling our experiences, direct/indirect observation on the religious phenomena in the field, as insider of that native world (autochthonous world). In concrete, the objects of our observation are the *Uma-lulik* (the Sacred House/shrine), the *hamulak* (prayer) and the *tunu* (ritual sacrifice), and other religious styles under the *Ai-lulik* (Sacred tree) and over the *Fatuk-lulik* (Sacred stone/rock). We have been privileged to access these sacred spaces and even in some places we have had direct contact with such objects because they consider the native Catholic priests as *lulik* and a blessing for them.

According to Raymond Quivy and Luc Van Campenhoudt, “the direct observation is the observation where the investigator himself directly proceeds to the gathering of information, without going to the interested subjects <sup>1</sup>.” We also have some indirect observation through certain subjects in order to get the information <sup>2</sup>. However, we verify this indirect observation with the information gathered from the direct sources. This collection has been done through the informal chats with those competent autochthonous in the researched areas, otherwise they would not tell us the truth. We inquired about what other objects were considered sacred, how did they *hamulak* (pray) and *tunu* (ritual sacrifice), and the objective of the acts, and their meanings. In our direct observation, or field experiences, we found out many common religious-cultural phenomena all over the Country. The *Uma-luliks* (Sacred Houses) are scattered over the hills and mountain slopes nearby the villages. And under the house are the archaic objects considered as sacred (*lulik*). Another phenomena are the *hamulak* (prayer), the rituals, and many other religious ceremonies in certain spaces and times of performing them. These experiences evoked our curiosity to search for their deep motivations. After consulting all literary sources that other people from various areas wrote about the same matter there emerged some conclusions as results to be shared. Therefore, we gathered the data from these three sources: the direct observation in the field, confronted with the oral information from other informants and with the reports or other written data in the form of books and articles related to the theme. It is a comparison of this data with the Catholic faith as expressed in worship and fraternal communion.

In our pastoral experiences in the mountains (rural) we have dealt most of the time with the natives who keep on practicing their ancestral religious traditions. Although they are Catholics they find hard to leave those religious traditions, which are inseparable from the cultural practices and outlook (for well-being and harmony). Many times we have taken advantage in talking with the elders informally about the matter in order to grasp the meaning of those practices. Listening to their stories was interesting to identify some truths behind the scene. Thus we try to know those words that cannot be pronounced in the certain spaces and situations, and to keep in touch with their complaints. From these observations we make an effort to understand the meanings of the ritual phenomena with the help of various informants and the literary sources as we

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<sup>1</sup> QUIVY, Raymond – CAMPENDHOUDT, Luc Van, *Manual de Investigação em Ciências Sociais*, 2<sup>a</sup> ed., Lisboa: Gradiva, 1998, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*.



mention above. We try to interpret this data and search for certain parallel elements with the Christian Catholic worship and rituals. The indigenous *hamulak* inspires us most to understand the process of mediation as usual in the Catholic prayers.

Information gathered is representative of all Timorese indigenous faith as manifested in the cults and other religious phenomena. The religious and cultural aspects of the Timorese indigenous ritual life are also common in the whole region of the Southeast Asia, especially eastern Indonesia. Looking at the geographical background Timor Island is part of the eastern Indonesia setting under the region of Southeast Asia as well as Oceania.

### **The Method**

According to Manuela Sarmiento “in a simple form one can define methodology as being a process or a method to achieve an objective or an end. The word method has its origin in Greek and means ‘way to achieve an end’<sup>3</sup>.” Here we want to present the methodology, how we make the research. The way we gather the data, the sources and the objective, are part of this methodological setting.

In this study, the researcher used the qualitative method, which is a descriptive comparison method of research. The descriptive method describes the data and characteristics of what is being studied, while the comparative method compares the data being collected. According to Paula Espírito Santo “The comparison is natural and intuitive to the human analysis. This aspect constitutes the first premise inherent to any scientific area that uses the comparative method. In a wider sense, the comparison is part of the logical analysis of human thought: there exists the need of making terms of reference, of delimiting objects of observation, of starting a point of departure and permanently reviewing it based on new terms of reference<sup>4</sup>.” According to Mattei Dogan and Dominique Pelassy “the comparison is a natural enterprise of the spirit. There is no major spontaneity than appreciating the persons, the ideas or things in function of other persons, of ideas, of other things. All the knowledge has necessity of the point of reference<sup>5</sup>.” This is an old method in terms of the analysis and reflection of the philosophical nature. The essence in this method is the description or the analysis.

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<sup>3</sup> SARMENTO, Manuel, *Metodologia Científica: para a elaboração, escrita e apresentação de tese*, Lisboa: Universidade Lusíada Editora, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> ESPÍRITO SANTO, Paula do, *Introdução à Metodologia das Ciências Sociais: Génese, Fundamentos e Problemas*, Lisboa: Ed. Sílabo, 2010, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 48.

“In the scope of the social sciences, the application of the comparative method dated back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, having been applied above all in areas related to the anthropology and to the studies about the comparisons among cultures”<sup>6</sup>.

It does not mean that we ignore other methods. We also combine with other methods like ethnographical method because our object of research is one aspect of culture. Our study demands a comparative method because we are comparing two faiths or the faith of two groups of people, though one is local and irrational, and another is universal and rational. The analytical method is needed in analyzing the data we found from various sources. According to Raymond Quivy and Luc Van Campendhoudt, “the qualitative method is also applied to verify the religious sentiments of a certain group<sup>7</sup>.” Since we are studying the culture of a certain group then we have also the ethnographical style in our description<sup>8</sup>. The result of the investigation, analysis, and comparison of the religious phenomena leads us to the conclusion that the Timorese indigenous beliefs have common objectives, ritual functions and meanings, parallel to the Christian worship and agape. It means that they show some parallel perspectives in terms of worship and communion in the table sharing. We do not pretend to enter into details in this thesis. According to Judith Bell “no approach depends on an only method alone, so that any form cannot exclude certain method just because it is considered quantitative, qualitative, or designated as case study<sup>9</sup>.”

The use of the ethnographical style is very relevant as some anthropologists had done in gathering the data about the Timorese native belief systems. For according to Judith Bell “the ethnographical style of the field research was originally developed by the anthropologists who had pretended to study in depth a society, or an aspect of it, a culture or a group. They developed an approach that greatly depends on the observation and, in some cases, on its full or partly integration in the society studied. This form of participant observation allowed the researchers to share as much as possible, the same experiences of the individuals that constituted the object of their study and then to understand better why these individuals act like this or like that. This approach is not limited to the anthropological studies and has been effectively used in many studies<sup>10</sup>.”

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>8</sup> BELL, Judith, *Como Realizar um Projecto de Investigação*, 2<sup>a</sup> ed., Lisboa: Gradiva, 2002, pp. 24-25.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 85.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

The scope of this academic work is limited only to the common characteristics that all Timorese indigenous have, like all tribes in eastern Indonesia have. But we do not include the Indonesian part in our work. The focus is in the religious phenomena as expressed in the ritual objects, like *Fatuk-lulik* (Sacred stone) and *Ai-lulik* (sacred tree), gathering for *hamulak*/prayer and for agape (table sharing) or other religious ceremony under the shadow of *uma-lulik* (sacred house/shrine). Of course there is also another ritual acts such as *tunu* (ritual sacrifice) linked to the *hamulak* done in the sacred spaces interceding for the well being of the tribal community or clans of the same family lineage.

We opt for the qualitative method because our interest relies more on understanding the perceptions of the world we intend to study. We are also fully aware of the weakness of the participant observation approach because it sounds a bit subjective and partial. That is why we combine several approaches in order to have a counter balance. Using bibliographical studies to compare with our findings is essential in this thesis. The instruments being used in this study are just the written sources as in the books and articles with the help of the notes taken during the observation in the fields. The experiences of the researcher as agent of both the Timorese culture and the Christian Catholic faith are far more important in this academic work. Therefore, it is a comparative study in order to determine the parallel elements of both faiths through the bibliographical studies compared to the experiences of the researcher.

### **The Objective**

Our objective is to present the results of our studies that may serve as a valuable contribution to further reflection in order to make some manuals for an inculturated evangelization and catechesis in the Timorese context. It is essential to understand the indigenous religious faith as expressed in the rituals with their respective meanings. We cannot ignore this fundamental aspect of the people as an expression of their religious sentiment that forms their core identity otherwise our work of evangelization and catechesis would not touch their lives. Conversion to Christianity would become superficial if we do not touch the inner world of the people. With these findings we also intend to explain and clarify the motives of our people in their primitive religious practices. This serves as the foundation for the dialogue between Christian faith and the local culture as manifested in their most sacred acts.

The real personal conversion is only possible if the pastoral agents take into serious consideration the culture of the people, particularly their religiosity explicitly expressed in all sacred acts. We find the core values of people in the culture. The incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ is the fundamental proof of inculturation from the part of God. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets but to bring them into perfection<sup>11</sup>. Everything written in the Law and the Prophets is an expression of the Jewish religious-cultural traditions. Thus evangelization is not meant to abolish the native belief, which is integral part of their culture, and nor even to ignore it. It is in the culture we find the delicate sentiments of the people relating to the Supreme Being or the Sacred. The way God chose to save mankind is through the human way, in the culture. Therefore, it is necessary and urgent to inculturate the Gospel message and Christian values with the local religious-cultural traditions otherwise we fail to convince them to conversion. Conversion does not mean leaving behind all cultural practices, essentially the native religious traditions. It means turning toward Christianity in order to enrich and enlighten more our cultural traditions including our expressions as a people. In the strict sense it is improper to say that the indigenous people should convert to God, because they are already believers in God though they might not yet reach the metaphysical stage in explaining themselves. Conversion for them means to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God who revealed himself in order to save humankind as professed by the Christians. We have to admit that they are profoundly religious.

Thus evangelizing the culture means to purify it from certain practices and to enrich it with revealed truth brought by Christ. The call to conversion is a call to change our direction in order to attain our full human realization in Jesus Christ. The fundamental challenge of evangelizing the native people is how to convince them to change. This change is not substantial or is not meant for an identity change as a people. Considering that the flaming fire appeared to Moses in Mount Horeb, in the desert, did not change anything substantial in the bush<sup>12</sup>. The burning bush remained substantially the same although it was shining attractively. It became more a brilliant object of attraction and at the same time it is a *mysterium tremendum*, the space of encounter with God because of the *theophany* (God revealed himself). It is important to let the people know that they profess the Christian faith according to their own cultural expressions. This needs to be properly addressed with proper words that touch their life. Invitation

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Mt 5:17.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Gen 3:2.

for conversion to Christ, the Kingdom he proclaimed, needs wisdom and sensibility in order to convince the people.

Greater transformation in the personal and social levels depends on the religious-cultural development. Communication with the indigenous people is important in order to understand them better. It is important to explore more deeply the religious sentiments of the indigenous people, however, we have to admit that this effort is not so easy. We simply rely on the phenomena, or appearances, that can give us clues to evaluate and to interpret the sentiments or feelings of the people. It is very risky because our interpretations and evaluations may not be impartial. We have our own biases, however, we try to be more objective in our analysis of the data we gathered.

## **CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND OF THE REALITY STUDIED**

In order to understand the Timorese indigenous beliefs we have to know their geographical, historical and theological backgrounds. The geographical character and situation of the Timor Island helps us to articulate the cosmological views of the people. The history contributes to the common understanding of social, cultural and religious identity of the people. We acknowledge that the society of the native people is so heterogeneous. Instead of this diversity, the Timorese native religious beliefs have certain common lines, such as the importance attributed to the Sacred, the soul of their ancestors including their relics, the spaces for worship and the mediation. All Timorese indigenous recognize a Supreme Authority in the category of “Lulik” (Sacred). We try to trace these common lines and compare them with the Christian faith. It is necessary to have a look at their geographical, historical and theological contexts in order to understand them. These panoramas help us to enter deeply into their primitive world.

### **1.1. Geographical Background**

The Island of Timor is situated within the Malay Archipelago and the largest and easternmost of the Lesser Sunda Islands. It is a mountainous island. To the north of this island are the Ombai and the Wetar straits, to the south is the Timor Sea separating the Island from the Australian Continent, while to the west are some other small islands. Timor-Leste is the eastern part of the Island of Timor situated between the two giant countries, Australia and Indonesia. It belongs either to the Pacific/Southeast Asian Region or the Oceanic Region. The highest part of Timor-Leste is the top of Mount Tata Mai Lau. It is located in the geographical coordinates of 8°50'S 125°55'E. The Country comprises the eastern half of the Island of Timor, the enclave of Oecusse – Ambeno on the northwest portion of the Timor Island, the Island of Atauro and the Isle of Jaco. It makes up a total area of 15007 Square Kilometers<sup>13</sup>.

The process regarding the borderline delimitations was a very long negotiation between the Portuguese and the Dutch Governments. The negotiation started in 1850 and only reached its final and definitive agreement on the demarcated borderlines on November 1, 1916<sup>14</sup>. It was a long process because of so many enclaves. The agreement reached on June 10, 1893 was just partial in order to follow up precisely the negotiation

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<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.easttimorgovernment.com/geography.htm> (visited on October 30, 2014 at 4:10 pm).

<sup>14</sup> DURAND, Frédéric, *História de Timor-Leste: Da Pré-História à Actualidade*, Lisboa: Ed. Lidel, 2010, pp. 94-95.

of 1850. Even the certificate was lately legalized on October 1, 1904; however, there still remained some issues regarding the enclaves. The delimitation of the enclave of Oecusse was definitively settled on June 25, 1914<sup>15</sup>. Yet there were still some necessary measures of the remaining land borders until finally solved in 1916.

In the center of the Island is the mountain range of Ramelau, whose highest peak or point is Tata Mai Lau, at 2980 m above sea level. Parallel to it is the Mount Kablaki, which is 2472 m high. The Mount Katarai is 2100 m high separating Atsabe from Letefoho, and between Atsabe and Ainaro is the Mount Darulau at 2320 m high. In the west we can see the Mount Loilaku and Mount Tapu, both are 1900 m high. In the region of Fatululik there is the Mount Taroman, which is 1746 m high. In the eastern zone are the Mount Matebian at 2373 m high and the Mount Mundo Perdido at 1763 m high. In the district of Lospalos is laying the plateau of Fuiloro and in the district of Baucau we can see the plateau of Baucau where the International Airport is located. In the Southern coast are vast plains where we can view beautiful rice fields of Watulari and Watucarbau in the eastern region of Viqueque District and Natarbora in its western part, which belongs to the Manatuto District. In the northern coast we see the plains in Maliana, Manatuto and Seixal (Baucau)<sup>16</sup>. These high and long mountain ranges and vales with vast plains make the country beautiful with an amazing landscape.

In the hydrography aspect we find rivers from north and south. We see in the northern coast the Loes River, which flows affluently from Nunura and Marobo, together with other rivers like Gleno, Comoro, Lacló, Laleia, Seixal, Wai Muhi, Laga, Laivai, Raomoko and Malailaba. In the southern coast the principle rivers are: Tafara, Karau-Ulun, Mota Sahen, Dilor, Irabere<sup>17</sup> and so on. These rivers become boon and bane during raining season. When the rivers are overflowing they cause disasters. Most of them remain dry during the dry season. But the big ones like Loes, Sahe, Irabere and some others, maintain flowing water arising from springs from underneath mountains, which provide waters for irrigation.

The local climate is tropical and generally hot and humid, characterized by distinct rainy and dry seasons. The relative humidity is high during the whole year around 70% and 90%. Annual precipitation is between 500 and 3000 mm. From

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<sup>15</sup> BELO, Carlos Filipe Ximenes, *HISTÓRIA DA IGREJA EM TIMOR-LESTE: 450 Anos de Evangelização (1562-1962), 1º volume 1561-1940*, Porto: Fundação Eng.º António de Almeida, 2013, p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

November to January we find very hot weather. The temperature during the days of great heat can reach 36° to 40°C. In the central zone, the climate is cooler and even coolest in the regions of Maubessi, Fatubuilico, where registered temperatures below zero (-4). So during the months of July and August the climate is cooler<sup>18</sup>.

There are very little thick forests in the Timor Island. The forest has been vanishing because of burning and cutting during these last 4 decades, most especially during the Indonesian occupation. The big trees in Timor are: *Ficus benjamina* (*hali* in Tetun), *Eucalyptus*, palm trees, bamboos, *casuarina*, with all other kinds of tropical trees and plants like mango, coconut trees, banana, guava, papaya, and many others<sup>19</sup>.

The biggest domestic animals in Timor are water buffaloes, horses, cows, and the small ones like pigs, goats/lambs, chickens, dogs, cats, and so on. The wild animals are crocodiles, pythons with other kinds of snakes even poisonous ones like *samodok* (green snake), deer, monkeys, wild pigs, with others. The birds are *loriku*, *Kakatua*, *kakoak*, doves, eagles, and so on. Minerals: hydrocarbon, gold, silver, manganese, and others still to be discovered<sup>20</sup>. There is also a mysterious type of snake named “sakoko” (a chicken-like or cock-like snake), which is nearly extinct.

In terms of population the Timorese are dominated by the Malayan race. In 1916, three years after the Manufahi revolt, the number of the population of Timor-Leste was 394518, comprising 209202 men and 185216 women. In 1960, the average density of population per square kilometer was 34.6<sup>21</sup>.

The languages: Tetun is one of the official languages in Timor-Leste along with Portuguese. Tetun Terik is spoken in the regions of Alas, Soibada, Barique, Luca, Viqueque and some villages in Suai, and Balibo. Fataluco is spoken language of the Lautem Sub-districts like Lospalos and Tutuala; Macassai (Makasae) is spoken in Laga, Quelicai, Ossu, in some villages of Baucau, Baguia, Luro, Viqueque, and Watulari; Mambai is spoken in the districts of Aileu, Ainaro, Ermera, Maubessi, Laulara, Letefoho, Hatobuilico, Hatulia, Turiscas, and in some villages of Bazartete and Liquiça; Bunak is spoken in some villages of the sub-districts of Same, Hatudo, Zumalai, Bobonaro, Lolotoe; Kemak is spoken in the sub-districts of Atabai, Atsabe, Cailaco, and some places of the sub-district of Bobonaro and Maliana; Tokodede is spoken in the sub-districts of Maubara, Liquiça and in some villages of the sub-district of Bazartete;

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.



Galole is spoken in the sub-districts of Manatuto, Laclo and Laleia; Waima'a is spoken in some villages of the Sub-district of Baucau, Vemasse, and Venilale; Kairui is spoken in some villages of Laleia, Venilale, Ossu and Viqueque; Midiki is spoken in some villages of Lacluta; Idate is spoken in the Sub-district of Laclubar; Habo is spoken in some villages of the sub-districts of Barique and Laclubar; Laclei is spoken in the village of Fahi-Nehan (Sub-district of Fatuberliu); Naueti is spoken in the sub-district of Watu-carbau and in some villages of Watulari and Baguia; Makalero is spoken in the sub-district of Ilomar. In the year 2010, the population of Timor-Leste was 1130000 inhabitants. In the aspect of administrative organization, there exist 13 districts, 67 sub-districts and 447 villages<sup>22</sup>.

Looking at this geographical background we could imagine the idea of Sacred (*Lulik*). As usual the mountainous people have the same religious impression of a great power behind the scene. The hills and mountains in Timor-Leste have a common characteristic that is mostly rocky with underground springs. These rocks preserve waters that support life. Large amounts of water flow are flowing out from the rocks underneath the mountains and hills. This evokes sense of greatness and abandonment to the *Lulik* (Sacred) who created things amazing that bring colorful life. It is in this environment that we can articulate the cultures of the Timorese People. The natural characters and profiles give us the idea how the indigenous people find it hard to abandon their traditions and costumes.

## **1.2. Historical Background**

We divide the historical background into three parts: the pre-history and the modern history, which in turn is divided into three phases. These three historical phases marked the Timorese People.

### **1.2.1. Pre-history period**

Based on the recent archeological discoveries the pre-history of Timor-Leste began about 42000 years ago. These findings give us a strong clue that affirms the arrival of human being to Australia passing through the Island between 50000 to 60000 years ago. There are many other accounts hidden in myths, rituals and symbols that we need to explore the messages they portray. Thus we come to know the Timorese pre-history revealed very recently.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 42.

The island of Timor was populated as part of the human migrations that shaped Australasia in general. We are convinced that many long years back before the arrival of Portuguese in those islands in the region, where Timor is situated, there had been movements of traders and sailors along the South East Asian Archipelago. It seems that the interaction among them and with the proto-Malayans formed peoples around those islands. However, the historical accounts about Timor came very late. The first historical record about Timor Island is from the 14<sup>th</sup> century in the *Nagarakretagama, Canto 14*, that identify *Timur* as an Island within the realm of *Majapahit*. The author mentioned an island full of sandalwood<sup>23</sup>. It referred to the Timor Island that has been known, since then, as the Island in the region that grows the sandalwood. The Timorese pre-history began with three waves of migration, which have shaped the Australasia region in general<sup>24</sup>:

- The anthropologists described the first wave as the *Vedo-Australoid* type who arrived from the north and west around 42,000 years ago.
- The second largely migration made up of Melanesians who came around 3,000 years before Christ (BC), and forced the *Vedo-Australoid* people to withdraw to the mountainous interior of the Island.
- The last wave was Proto-Malays who arrived from South China and Western Indochina around 2,500 BC.

It is believed that the survivors of these waves of migration still live in the country. Myths about the Timorese ancestral genesis say that they sailed around the eastern end of Timor landing in the south. Some other accounts say that the Timorese ancestors were journeying from the Malay Peninsula or the Minangkabau highlands of Sumatra. The latter Timorese were not seafarers; rather they were land-focussed peoples who did not make contact with other islands and peoples by sea. Timor was part of a region of small islands with small populations and similarly land-focussed peoples that make up eastern Indonesia. Contact with the outside world was via networks of foreign seafaring traders from as far as China and India<sup>25</sup>.

We have no knowledge exactly when human beings inhabited the Island. However, there are recent archaeological discoveries, led by Dr Susan O'Connor, an Australian archaeologist from the Australian National University (ANU), which have

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<sup>23</sup> DURAND, Frédéric, *História de Timor-Leste*, p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> GOMES, José Câncio da Costa, *Uma Versão Analítica sobre a Lenda Crocodilo de Timor: o homem e o crocodilo*, in <http://forum-haksasuk.blogspot.pt/2008/07> (visited in 16 October 2014 at 5 pm).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

revealed the oldest Timorese occupants. In her initial discovery in a cave called *Lene Hara* (in the year 2002) she discovered that the human being who occupied the cave site was around 35000 to 30000 years ago. The cave was discovered by the scientific community in the early 1960s and first investigated in 1963 by the Portuguese anthropologist, Antonio de Almeida<sup>26</sup>. Lately, her discovery in another site, called *Jerimalai Cave*, revealed the oldest evidence of occupation by modern humans, *Homo sapiens*, in the cave, as a stepping-stone from South East Asia to Australia. Dr O'Connor unearthed ancient stone tools and shelter used for decoration in the limestone shelter, known as *Jerimalai* on the eastern tip of the Island. The *Jerimalai* site is more than 42,000 years old, according to the detection limit of the radiocarbon dating method used. The team led by Dr O'Connor also found the earliest recorded fish hook in the world, made of shell and dating from between 23,000 and 16,000 years during the excavation as published in the journal *Science*, Agence France-Presse, November 25, 2011 10:45 am ET. She was confident that the inhabitants of *Jerimalai* were modern humans (*Homo sapiens*), because of the evidence for their sophisticated behaviour found in the dig<sup>27</sup>. The archaeologists also detected that humans passed through the region of the *Ili Kere-Kere cave* in Tutuala (Lospalos) around 4,000 to 2,000 years ago<sup>28</sup>. There are many other related archaeological findings, which revealed the pre-history of the Timorese people.

With these archaeological findings, we can certainly conclude that human beings had occupied the Island of Timor since the Palaeocene period and probably at the early stage of that period. No one can deny that there had been movements and waves of migration of people into the Island thousands of centuries before Christ. The Island itself was then strategic because it served as stepping-stone from South East Asia to Australia and it is attractive because of its fragrant sandalwood. Those nomad migrant peoples comprised mainly the Polynesians and Malaysians, which later on formed the Austronesians (combination of Polynesian and Malaysian races), together with some Melanesians. It is a very complicated matter still to be determined. They were most

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<sup>26</sup> See <http://donsmaps.com/lenehara.html> (visited on November 16, 2014 at 4 pm).

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/timor-cave> (visited on November 16, 2014 at 4:30 pm). See also the article entitled *Prehistoric man a master deep-sea fisher, research reveals*, in: <http://news.nationalpost.com/2011/11/25> (visited in the same day November 16, 2014 at 4:45pm).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

probably divided into small groups sporadically and moving here and there (nomad), in and out of the Island frequently. Then there had been a movement towards tribalism<sup>29</sup>.

However, in our observance, there remain two major distinctive characteristics of the People in the Island of Timor today:

- One group is very quiet/calm and more civilized,
- Another one is very brutal and quite barbarous.

Probably the tribal structures might appear several centuries after their permanent settlement in the Island. The evidence is shown by the existence of the monarchy traditions such as the *Lurai* (higher king), the head of several tribes, and the *liurai* (small king) who acted as the head of a tribe since then up to the last stay of the Portuguese in 1975. The Portuguese had preserved this tribal structure. Only the Indonesian invasion destroyed that structure in the Timorese society. The tribal kingdoms had been very fragile, and always having power competitions among them. Broken wars among the tribes, led by certain warriors, were unavoidable. There are so many myths and tales telling us about such tribal fights and peace pacts. Even the impact is still evident today in the rural or mountain regions (interior). One of the famous myths is the Crocodile, which they believe as their grandparent (avó). The Crocodile Myth gives us a clue of these tribal pacts<sup>30</sup>.

### **1.2.2. Modern period**

In this modern history setting we divide into three phases, subdivisions: the Portuguese domination with Christianization, the Indonesian occupation and the independence era. We also consider the Japanese occupation of three years but under the setting of the Portuguese domination. Since the Dutch also occupied some parts of Timor-Leste, like Maubara, therefore, we do not neglect their influence in the process of border demarcation and Christian expansion. However, this we classify under the setting of the Portuguese dominion.

#### **1.2.2.1. Portuguese domination and Christianization (1512-1975)**

This period is essential in the introduction to the western influence. The first reference to Portuguese was in 1512, when Afonso de Albuquerque conquered Malaca and extended to the islands of Maluku (Molucas). Timor became a destiny for the Portuguese because of the sandalwood and spices in the surrounding islands. However,

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<sup>29</sup> GOMES, José Cânciao da Costa, *Uma Versão Analítica sobre a Lenda Crocodilo de Timor*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

the real Christianization happened later in 1550 by the Dominicans residing in the Island of Solor who initially came to Timor to establish the regular trading of the sandalwood, especially with the kings of the west Timor. The Portuguese arrived to India in 1498 and to Malaca in 1511. From Malaca they sent a first expedition to the islands of Molucas (Maluku in Malay) commanded by Antonio Abreu in 1512. Since then up to 1650 the Portuguese had only stayed in the coastal zones mainly for commercial reasons. Practically, they did not penetrate to the inland mountains. In 1665 Simão Luis was appointed as the first *capitão-mor* in the Island. At the end of the century they appointed the first governors, but the real established authority occurred only in 1702 with the arrival of governor Antonio Coelho Guerreiro to Lifau, as the first governor appointed in 1701 (a year before). He was also appointed as the governor and *capitão geral* (General Captain) of the Islands of Solor and Timor. In the 1769 there happened many rebellions among the Timorese tribal kingdoms. On August 11 of that year the governor Antonio Jose Teles de Meneses burnt Lifau and transferred to Dili. Since October 10 in the same year Dili became the centre of Government office. In 1844 Timor-Leste was associated to Macau, forming the province of Macau and Timor by the decree of September 20, 1844, and automatically Timor separated from the State of India. In 1858 Dili was elevated to the category of a villa. Through the decree of September 17, 1863 Dili was elevated to the category of a city with the status as the capital of the “Província Ultramarina” and headquarter of the Government<sup>31</sup>.

Up to 1859, the Portuguese possession of Timor had not had administrative structure yet. The native kingdoms were dominant and the small Timorese kings (*liurai*) had exercised their authority over small territories. It was the governor Antonio de Castro who established an administrative structure unifying the kingdoms under the military commands. Later these military commands were transformed into the civil commands or civil circumscriptions, giving rise to the origin of the administrative councils or districts. Thus Timor-Leste had become the Portuguese colony up to 1975. However, we cannot forget the invasion of the Japanese troops in 1942 to 1945, which caused many victims and destruction including some church buildings destroyed by the bombs<sup>32</sup>.

The Christianization in Timor-Leste was related to the Island of Solor, an Indonesian Island nearest to Timor. In fact the process of evangelization only began in

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<sup>31</sup> BELO, Carlos Filipe Ximenes, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

1562 with the first foundation of Catholic Mission by the Dominicans in the Island of Solor, precisely in the village of Lohayong (today it belongs to the district/kabupaten East Flores)<sup>33</sup>.

In 1589 a Dominican priest, Father Belchior da Luz, landed in the Island of Timor and stayed in the coastal village of Mena (20 km from the east of Oecusse) around six months. He was dedicated to the mission of evangelization of the Island. In 1613 the Dutch conquered the Island of Solor and forced the Portuguese out to the Flores Island. Consequently the Dominican priests also moved to stay in Larantuka (Flores Island) where they started a mission in Postoh and others opted to go to Timor Island. In Timor they baptized some natives in a coastal village of Citrana (Suterana), about 30 km away from west Lifau. In 1633 another Dominican priest, Fr. Cristovão Rangel, was sent to establish a mission in the village of Silawan (West Timor), where with the permission of local tribal leader he built a chapel and taught the Christian doctrine<sup>34</sup>.

The real step up of evangelization in those Islands, including Timor, was in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Dominican Superior of the Missions of Solor, Father Miguel Rangel, appointed priests to the more important villages. His policy had benefited evangelization in Timor by sending Frei Antonio de São Jacinto to the Island. This great priest Father Antonio de São Jacinto was the one who opened the way to establish and consolidate the presence of the Portuguese civil authority in Lifau. This gave more possibility to the building of missions in Mena, Lifau, Amanuban and Luca (Timor-Leste). He had established solid foundations of the mission in Timor before returning to Goa. And then came other Dominicans to continue developing his work in Timor Island<sup>35</sup>.

It was at that time that Manuel de Santo Antonio was born, the future missionary and hero of the Gospel in Timor-Leste. Later on he became bishop of Malaca but opted to reside in Lifau (Oecusse – Timor-Leste). The proper Christianization in Timor-Leste began with this future bishop. He was a great Dominican priest and missionary. However, conversion to Catholicism in Timor-Leste was a very slow process and until the invasion of Indonesia consisted of only about 30% Christians (Catholics) of the whole Timorese population<sup>36</sup>. The reasons for this slow conversion will be presented in the last chapter.

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<sup>33</sup> IDEM, *Dom Frei Manuel de Santo António*, Porto: Edições Salesianas, 2013, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

#### 1.2.2.2. The Indonesian occupation (1975-1999)

Before leaving the colonial territory the Portuguese Government, under the Governor Mario Lemos Pires, in Timor-Leste made a decree allowing the Timorese to form the political parties in preparation for elections in order to form a constituent assembly in 1975. Among them were three main political parties: the Timorese Democratic Union Party (UDT), the Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT) and the Timorese Popular Democratic Association (Apodeti). They were deeply divided. This division opened the way for the Indonesian invasion. Under the Suharto Regime the Indonesian Military forces launched a massive air and sea invasion, known as *Operasi Seroja* (Lotus Operation), on December 7, 1975. During the invasion killings, kidnappings and rapes took place in all the Timorese Territory<sup>37</sup>. We were under persecution during three years hiding in jungles and mountain caves. As victims, first hand witnesses, then at the age below ten, we have many things to tell. However, this is just the background of the work so we do not have any intention to narrate all events in detail.

The Indonesian occupation period also becomes a solid background for this thesis, because we grew up at this time marked by the moments mixed of banes and boons. During this period of 24 years, almost 25, there were a lot of changes in all aspects. Beside the banes there were boons that should be acknowledged. The new religious phenomena were blooming from the suffering and great loss. The Catholics were growing quantitatively and we also presume their inward growth as well. This period cannot be compared with the 450 years before. Every moment in the history should be understood in its own context.

Recently we have witnessed some religious phenomena proving that the Church in Timor-Leste has an excellent historical moment in its experience with the Indigenous people. The increase in the number of Catholics in this period is a great testimony. It is not true that the Timorese indigenous were converted to Catholicism during the Indonesian occupation only because of merely political reasons. There is some hidden message we will explore later in the last chapter. Great numbers of young people are leaving behind everything to follow Christ more closely as consecrated persons and priests. The war is an awakening as well as enlightening moment in the history of the Timorese people.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

The quantitative growth of Catholics during the Indonesian occupation reveals the change of attitude and strategy of the Church towards the natives. There are several reasons for this growth. At the end of the invasion it was almost 99% Catholics. Many Timorese had been converted to Catholicism, some said, because of the situation that obliged all to have a formal religion acknowledged by the Indonesian Government. Indeed the Indonesian Constitutions oblige all citizens to have one formal religion, those who do not belong to any of these five religions (Islam, Catholic, Protestant, Hindu and Buddha), recognized by the Law, are considered as communists and will be executed according to the law. Therefore, the atheism and the traditional religions were not allowed, that is prohibited. People had to opt either for Islam (about 80% in Indonesia), or for Catholics (more or less 5% in Indonesia), or for Protestant (about 10%), or for Hindu, or for Buddha. The majority of the Timorese People opted for Catholicism because it was the only religion that shared with their sufferings. Even they categorized the other religions, especially the Islam, as invaders that caused them trouble. The Christian religion, especially the Catholic, was then politicized in Timor-Leste. Both the Timorese clandestine movement and the Indonesian military regime had used the Catholic Church for the sake of their political propaganda.

The option of the people for Catholicism is understood in the context of current situation and conditions. The Church was really challenged to live out the spirit of the Second Vatican Council opening up its doors and windows widely. The clerics together with the consecrated men and women were deeply moved to reach out to the people answering to their needs, organizing catechesis and promoting lay empowerment for the apostolate among the natives. The Indonesian invasion forced the Church to make option to stand by the poor. The only credible and resisting institution in Timor-Leste (Timor-Timur then) at that time was the Catholic Church. It was the testimony of the missionaries who always stood by the poor and suffering people against a giant invader country like Indonesia. During the three years of persecution in the mountains and jungles there were several priests who kept on running and hiding with the people, they were also suffering with the people. The Church became a place of refuge for those young people and adults who had been persecuted during these two decades. We were still very young boys at that time witnessing many incidents where the Church stood out as the protector of the people under the umbrella of human rights. Indeed defending the right of a people is also a political act. The Church came out as the voice of the voiceless, as Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo used to do then. The testimony of the



missionaries was seen in all aspects of social concerns. They were opening the doors of convents and churches to welcome those under persecution and building schools to educate the young people, clinics for the sick people, orphanages for those left behind by their parents because of war, etc. Therefore, the great conversion was the fruit of the living witness of pastoral agents of the Church (the priests and religious men and women).

In the religious context there were intensive doctrinal instruction (catechesis) to promote and deepen the Catholic faith for the neophytes, centers for catechetical formation, building chapels in many places, organizing Eucharistic celebrations in all these chapels even in the rural areas near to the battle lines, pilgrimages to the Marian Sanctuaries ending with a Marian pilgrimage visiting the whole territory, and so on.

People learnt from these experiences and felt the Providence of God through and in the Church. The war is an awakening moment for all people even for the Church. For it is also the especial moment of religious experience, where people feel the presence of God in various forms as protector and guide in uncertain moments invaded by the feelings of hopelessness and powerless. There were moments of awe in which no words can explain. Experience of God is precisely when we feel abandoned and hopeless. We can use the term *Mysterium Tremendum* of Rudolf Otto to articulate this experience. Tremendous events manifested by God to the people in innumerable unexplainable experiences. Without the divine intervention there might be worst. It is interesting to underline something we could not imagine. People were using their *Lulik*, or sacred objects taken from the nature, sometimes the Crucifixes, the image/statue of Our Lady or images of Saints or rosary, serving as protectors with the formula of Our Father or Hail Mary or any traditional prayer (*hamulak*), in order to protect them from harms or from being killed. It is not any magic experience, but the faith of the people to the Sacred God, even if He is unknown to some, who saved them from disasters and performed miraculous events. We find it very hard to understand, but it is real. And we do not say that it is a syncretism though they combined native *Lulik* with Christian religious objects. However, we only want to present the case that could justify that it is the same God represented by those sacred objects (*lulik*).

#### 1.2.2.3. The independence era

On August 30, 1999 the people of East-Timor voted in a referendum organized by the United Nations and the results were overwhelmingly (78%) in favour of the independence separating from the Indonesian Republic. Instead of the threats from the

pro-Indonesian militias the people chose for freedom according to their conscience. On September 1, a day after, the pro-Indonesian militias, supported by some Indonesian military units, started burning houses and killing people arbitrarily in Dili and other districts. Most of the administrative buildings were burnt and destroyed and many people pro-independence were killed. The violence became worst after the announcement of the results of votes on September 4, five days after the referendum. After the criticism raised from all over the world against the violence the Indonesian President, Mr. Habibie, accepted the International Forces to come in to secure the people in the territory. On September 20 the International Forces for East-Timor (INTERFET), led by the Australians, entered Dili. The administration of East-Timor was taken over by the United Nations Transitional Administration for East Timor (UNTAET), established on October 25, 2000 headed by a Brazilian politician. The elections were held in 2001 for the Constituent Assembly in order to draft the Constitutions. East-Timor became formally independent on May 20, 2002<sup>38</sup>. Since the invasion Indonesian troops, supported by the pro-Indonesian militias, had killed many Timorese but they were unable to kill the spirit of the people and finally the dream for an independent country came true.

As a post-conflict and developing country, like Timor-Leste, high social tensions are unavoidable. Wounds from the past need time to be healed. Timor-Leste, a broken people with broken hearts, remains open to Christian message of love and forgiveness. The process of reconciliation is confronted by a deep sense of justice. Unemployment and lack of experience become a very big problem in the society.

### **1.3. Theological Background**

Even though the Timorese indigenous traditional beliefs have certain elements of animism, however, they have clear reference to God as the only Supreme Being. Theologically speaking this traditional belief has its foundation that should be recognized as Monotheism in orientation. In our pastoral experience with the Timorese indigenous people in the mountains, we used to have informal discussions with them about the native religious phenomena. Once an old man told us the prayer they were using in *hamulak* (traditional prayer) *Hato´o ba! hatutan ba!*<sup>39</sup> (Inform to! transmit to!).

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. DURAND, Frédéric, *Historia de Timor-Leste, da pré-história à Actulidade*, p.150.

<sup>39</sup> Narrated by a Timorese indigenous in an informal chatting in the mountain of Matebian, district of Baucau. Then he explained the meaning of *hamulak* (indigenous traditional prayer), which we concluded with the idea of mediation and orientation.

This evoked in us a curiosity to try to analyse the meaning of this prayer. This raises two questions that “who is the one to inform and to transmit? To whom is this prayer addressed?” There should be someone who acts as mediator and the other one to whom the prayer is addressed. Normally they said that *Maromak* (God) first and then *Matebian*, the spirit of the deceased ancestors and brothers/sisters, or *Klamar* (Soul). Here is the point of being misunderstood by the foreigners including the missionaries and many authors of literary works about the Timorese traditional belief systems. For the Timorese there is no distinction between *Klamar* and *Matebian*, both words are synonymous, and mean soul.

A Spanish missionary told us his testimony about the concept of monotheism in a conference that the Timorese indigenous in the most eastern part of Timor-Leste (Lospalos) affirmed that *Lulik* (Sacred) is only one (*Ukane haa*). They have no concept about God, but have an idea of Him as the Only Supreme Being above all souls. In this context we can understand the prayer *Hato´o ba! Hatutan ba!* The Souls of the ancestors are acting as the mediators who inform and transmit the message of the living to God or *Lulik* (Sacred).

We do not really know from where they got the source of this Monotheistic affirmation. Jorge Barros Duarte affirmed the animistic elements and at the same time admitted the idea of God in the traditional beliefs of Timorese<sup>40</sup>. The term *Maromak* as a Supreme Being is the only formal concept referred to God alone. This concept is related to the idea *Light* as the term means in Terik, Tetun in Wehali version that was adapted for all Timorese even for the Church. *Maromak* is a higher entity in the top of the hierarchy of *Lulik*. However, every tribe has its own conceptual denomination of God. They are using the representation of the higher Nature, like the Sun or the Moon, in reference to God. This designation came from their religious experience of the divine manifestation in the ancient time. We will explain this later. All rituals express the idea of the Sacred (*Lulik*) that cannot be conceptualized. Pinto Correia also mentioned *Maromak* as the Supreme divinity in his book “Gentio de Timor” and highlighted the meaning of the word *Maromak* as “Clarity” or as Light<sup>41</sup>. In another point he misunderstood the representation of the sacred objects<sup>42</sup>. It is not true to say that the

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<sup>40</sup> DUARTE, Jorge Barros, *Timor: Ritos e Mitos Ataúros*, Lisboa: Arquimedes Livros, 1984, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> CORREA, Armando Pinto, *Gentio de Timor*, 2ª ed., Funchal: Artes Gráficas, 2009, p. 30.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 226.

Timorese indigenous people adore idols, and it sounds contrary to his affirmation of *Maromak* (God/Clarity/Light).

The Timorese eschatology is actually interesting and it affirms the monotheistic conviction. Jose Bernardino Rodrigues underlined in his book “O Rei de Nári” that the Timorese indigenous people believe in the existence of heaven and hell<sup>43</sup>. Though it is not clear about the theology of this belief but this serves as basis to be recognized as theological foundation. If we look at its pre-history we have to admit that East-Timor was not isolated from the outside world. The influences of the Melanesians, Polynesians and Malaysians are still very obvious. They also admit that *Maromak* is the origin and the end of all things. There are myths about creation revealing something exactly the same as Jose Bernardino Rodrigues wrote in his book “O Rei de Nári”.

#### **1.4. The Interest**

Based on the religious and cultural evidences, rooted in the history full of meaning, we want to clarify to the world that the Timorese indigenous people are not idol worshipers. The word “Pagan/Gentio” is not worthy for them, if we understand it in the religious context. The traditional prayer (*hamulak*) *Hato’o ba! Hatutan ba!* is telling us something very clear about the religious mediation and orientation. This evokes our curiosity to explore this thesis by observing, analyzing and comparing, information and data gathered by other authors in books and articles. Then we attempt to interpret them according to our own point of view as a Timorese and Catholic Priest. Everything about the Timorese indigenous beliefs is situated in these contexts. It is from these contexts we were moved to do this academic work.

Besides making known the religious feelings of the people we also have pastoral orientation in mind. Our curiosity is not just to make known the hidden realities of the Timorese deepest feelings. We also have another interest to evoke and influence others to think about the importance of Timorese indigenous faith connecting to the Christian faith. It is curious to discover the hidden elements that provide a bridge for the real encounter of both faiths, which did not really happen in the past. By doing so we want to contribute to a real evangelization and catechesis for our people. In sum our interest is to promote the Christian faith in the context of the Timorese world, which means at the same time to promote the Timorese culture. In other words we are intending to

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<sup>43</sup> RODRIGUES, José B., *O Rei de Nári: Histórias, Lendas, Tradições de Timor*, Lisboa: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1962, p. 105.

promote a contextualized evangelization in the Timorese cultural setting. It is exactly an incarnational view of evangelization that we want to promote. We are fully convinced that the dialogue between the Christian beliefs and Timorese beliefs is always possible because the parallelism that we are exploring. All cultural aspects that manifest the religious sentiment of the people must be considered in the dialogue.

## CHAPTER 2: THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

In this second chapter we are going to present the theoretical foundation in order to define some key ideas in this thesis. The chapter is divided into four (4) sections. First, we started with the notion of indigenous beliefs. This explanation is basically taken from the anthropological approach. The second section is about the notion of faith in the Catholic understanding. This section is based on the Church documents and the theological writings taken from various authors. In the third section we will define the concept of worship in both religious perspectives. And in the last section we will explain the notion of communion in the religious-cultural sense as expressed in the table sharing.

### 2.1. Notion of the Indigenous Beliefs

The word indigenous is derived from Latin *indigenus*, which means born in a country or native. Linking to the word *indigena* it literally means in-born, or born in a place. The synonyms of this are: autochthonous, original, natural. It is native to particular region, or environment, although it can be occurring and existing in other places as well. Therefore, an indigenous belief is a religion, or a form of worship, which was born within a specific location and practiced there<sup>44</sup>. According to John A. Garing, from the Yale University, “the term indigenous is a generalized reference to the thousands of small-scale societies who have distinct languages, kinship systems, mythologies, ancestral memories, and homelands. These different societies comprise more than 200 million peoples throughout the planet today. Since these societies are extremely diverse, any general remarks are suspected of imposing ideas and concepts on them. Indigenous religions do not constitute a world religion in the same way as for example Buddhism or Christianity. Central to the indigenous traditions is an awareness of the integral and whole relationship of symbolic and material life. Ritual practices and cosmological ideas, which undergird society, cannot be separated out as an institutionalized religion from the daily round of subsistence practices. The term, ‘lifeway’, emphasizes this holistic context that grounds the traditional environmental knowledge evident in the cosmologies of indigenous peoples. Cosmologies, or oral narrative stories, transmit the worldview values of the people and describe the web of human activities within the powerful spirit world of the local bioregion. In this sense, to analyze religion as a separate system of beliefs and ritual practices apart from

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<sup>44</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/indigenous> (visited on Nov. 9, 2014 at 3:30 pm).

subsistence, kinship, language, governance, and landscape, is to misunderstand indigenous religion”<sup>45</sup>.

It is also important to recognize family characteristics among the “life-ways of indigenous peoples like the concern for spontaneities of religious experience, remarkable intimacy with local bioregions often believed to be the source of sacred revelation, and developed ritual practices, which instill the collective memories of the people and their homeland in individual bodies and minds. Survival in the face of human assault, natural disaster, or deprivation, has been a conscious concern of indigenous peoples”<sup>46</sup>. The definition of Garing is the most comprehensive understanding of the term “indigenous”. Collectivism is fundamental for the tribal survival. Common union is very strong in all indigenous peoples. The sense of collectivity implies all aspects of life.

The primitive people believe in some kind of supernatural forces actively working in the world, that those supernatural forces want specific things from humans, that these forces can be propitiated by sacrifices or rituals<sup>47</sup>. According to Robin M. Wright “the indigenous religious traditions can only be characterized by diversity recognizing that each people (tribe or nation) has a unique vision of how the universe came into being, is structured, shapes people’s behavior in life, and can undergo periods of total collapse followed by regeneration. Those visions are communicated and transmitted mainly through oral narratives, or performative, remembering of primordial acts in collective ceremonies”<sup>48</sup>. The characteristics of indigenous religion are based on the primordial vision of the local people and generally preserved in oral traditions. Here we find the cosmological vision as the context of their religious articulation. There are some common meanings of the indigenous religious view in the notions like the ultimate (afterlife), soul, and person. This type of religious tradition is characterized by heterodoxy in contrast with the orthodoxy of the universal religions<sup>49</sup>. However, every tribal group, or nation, has also its own specific way of seeing reality.

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<sup>45</sup> GARING, John A., *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology*, an article published in: <http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/indigenous> (visited on Oct. 10, 2014 at 8:10 pm).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. DIAMOND, Jared, *On religion*, in: <http://boldquestions.worldpress.com> (visited on Nov. 9, 2014 at 4pm).

<sup>48</sup> WRIGHT, Robin M., *Indigenous Religious Traditions*, in: <http://www.augsburgfortress.org/media/downloads/9780800698799chapter1.pdf> (visited on Oct. 10, 2014 at 8:30 pm).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*.

Generally indigenous traditions share some common features in their worldviews to ultimate reality. Robin identified them as follows<sup>50</sup>:

- 1) They attribute enormous importance to ancestral lands, sacred geography and local sacred sites, which are seen as portals to the primordial past through which people can receive the original life force of their own deities or ancestors.
- 2) Those who have undergone the trials and privations of initiations gain access to sacred knowledge or are apprentices to religious specialists.
- 3) Great value is invested in kinship obligations and their fulfillment, which are considered to be the arena of harmony and conflict, as well as key features in native peoples' orientation.

The indigenous people are very much attached to their ancestral heritage and traditions. That is the main reason for conflict and for peace pacts if both sides have some common grounds of understanding. It is hard for the indigenous people to let go their ancestral religious-cultural traditions and costumes. They have the conscience of immortality, life after death, and the existence of a supreme being, God or any divinity or entity beyond knowledge.

Rudolf Otto in his book *Das Heilige* (1917), translated to the Portuguese "O Sagrado", analyzed the modalities of the religious experience ignoring the study of the ideas of God and religion. He left aside the speculative part of the religion by focusing on the irrational part. Otto tried to understand the meaning of the "living God" believed by the faithful. According to him this God is not a God of the philosophers, neither an idea nor an abstract notion; but he is a terrible power manifested in the divine fury (cholera). In his book he attempted to clarify the specific characters of this terrifying and irrational experience. People are facing the sacred, the tremendous mystery (*mysterium tremendum*), the Majesty (*Majestas*), with feelings of terror. This is a religious terror because man is in the presence of the fascinating mystery (*mysterium fascinans*), where expands the perfect fullness of being. Otto designates this experience as numinous (*numinosum*)<sup>51</sup>.

Based on the description of Otto, Mircea Eliade presents the phenomenon of the Sacred in its totality. He defines the sacred in opposition to the profane. Eliade proposes the term *hierofania* to identify with this experience, for the Sacred reveals himself to man. This manifestation shows something absolutely different from the profane. He

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> OTTO, Rudolf, *O Sagrado*, Lisboa: Edições 70, 2005, pp. 13-15.



gives the importance focus to the space where the *hierofania* occurred. For the indigenous people the space is very important. There are sacred spaces and profane spaces. Not everything is sacred (lulik). The sacred space is highly respected because it is in that place that the Sacred manifested himself or some supernatural powers manifested to the ancestors of the local people or to one of them. The space where they believe that the manifestation took place is sacred (holy). The sacred reveals itself in certain stones/rocks or in the trees. Therefore, we cannot treat the veneration of a stone as stone, of the cult of a tree as tree. Rather the sacred stone, the sacred tree, are not worshiped as stone or as tree, they are worshiped because of the *hierofania*<sup>52</sup>. Thus space is not homogenous. It is in certain space that the Sacred manifested himself and not just space in general.

There are two modalities of experience that the primitive people are able to separate, the sacred and the profane. Though they might have so many elements of animism in perception, seeing everything as sacred, and ritual practices, however, they know how to separate the sacred from the profane. The man of archaic societies is indeed *homo religiosus*, but his behavior is generally equal with all men in all ages, consequently, he becomes the object of study to the philosophical anthropology, to the phenomenology, to the psychology<sup>53</sup>. In order to understand the indigenous world we need an interdisciplinary study. Eliade underlined the specific points of existence in a sensitive world of becoming sacred, by citing some examples of so many religions, belonging to different ages and cultures.

A sacred space becomes an integral part in the definition of indigenous beliefs. The space, how it is built, and why such a space becomes different qualitatively from the surrounding profane space, are essential in understanding the indigenous beliefs. Using the historic-cultural perspective Eliade showed the mistakes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with Taylor or Frazer, believing in a uniform reaction of human spirit facing the natural phenomena. According to him the progress of cultural ethnology and of history of religions shows that the reactions of man in front of nature are many times conditioned by the culture and in the last instance by the history<sup>54</sup>. History shows that the indigenous people have different perceptions in terms of faith (belief). Every stage in the history of humankind shows a difference of religious experience explained by the differences of

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<sup>52</sup> ELIADE, Mircea, *O Sagrado e O Profano: A Essência das Religiões*, Lisboa: Livros do Brasil, 1999, p. 26.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 29.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 30.

economy, of culture, and of social organization. Between the nomad hunters (collectors) and the sedentary farmers there is a common ground that unites them instead of their differences. Both of these groups are living in a sacred cosmos, both participate in a sacral cosmos, revealed in the animal world as well as in the vegetal world. These conditions are the context of their belief systems. The sense of unity with the nature is so strong in this sacred world. Modern people have lost this<sup>55</sup>.

Charles Taylor categorizes the primitive peoples as living in the enchanted world. Comparing the situation of the beliefs of the Christians in the middle age with our age (year 2000 beyond) Taylor shows the contrast between the two ages. He presents in his book “A Secular Age” the features of the ancient regime, the world in favor of belief that made the presence of God seemingly undeniable<sup>56</sup>:

- 1) The natural world they lived in, which had its place in the cosmos they imagined, testified to divine purpose and action. .... It’s because the great events in this natural order, storms, droughts, floods, plagues, as well as years of exceptional fertility and flourishing, were seen as acts of God. ...
- 2) God was also implicated in the very existence of society. .... A kingdom only could be conceived as grounded in something higher than mere human action in secular time. And beyond that, the life of the various associations, which made up society, parishes, etc., were interwoven with ritual and worship. ....
- 3) People lived in an “enchanted” world. ...

He states that people who lived in this enchanted world do not necessarily believe in God, certainly not in the God of Abraham, as the existence of countless pagan societies shows<sup>57</sup>. Indeed this enchanted world is part of the characteristic of indigenous peoples. It is in this context that we have articulated the indigenous religious traditions. This condition formed their cultures, way of life, attitude towards nature and fellow humans.

Taylor also characterizes this world of enchantment in which people lived in a world of spirits, as both good and bad. The bad sides are demons, spirit of the forest and wilderness and those that can threaten us in everyday life. Therefore, they needed to behave well begging the assistance of good spirits. These latter are also numerous. According to Taylor, they are not just God but also the saints, to whom they prayed and whose shrines they visited in certain cases, in hopes of a cure, or in thanks for a cure

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 31.

<sup>56</sup> TAYLOR, Charles, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge-Massachusetts-London: Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 25.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26.

already prayed for and granted or for secure (safety) from extreme danger<sup>58</sup>. The indigenous people share the same attitude of Christians in the ancient regime described by Taylor. They are having the same conditions. For them the souls of their ancestors are sacred, or holy, or saints according to their own perception, even they cannot pronounce their names otherwise they will get sick, or any disaster or anything harmful will happen to them. Respect for the good spirits is essential in order to defend and to protect them from the bad spirits. The sense of respect is shown in the acts of veneration, worship and sacrificial offerings.

For this we can affirm that things in the world, neither human being nor his expressions, are outside the mind, however, they may in their own way impinge on mind. Taylor explained them in two possible ways<sup>59</sup>:

- 1) We may observe these things, and therefore change our view of the world, or be stirred up in ways that we otherwise would not be;
- 2) Since we are ourselves as bodies continuous with these external things, and in constant exchange with them, and since our mental condition is responsive causally to our bodily condition in a host of ways (something we are aware of without espousing any particular theory of what exactly causes what), our strength, moods, motivations, and so on, can be affected, and are continually being affected, by what happens outside.

The indigenous people live exactly in this category of enchanted world, that everything is sacred and has power that affects their lives. This does not mean that they believe in idols without any reference to the one God. In the context of the Timorese indigenous beliefs there is reference to the one God without knowing him before contacting with the Christianity. It is the same and only God revealed by Christ. There are different notions to express the same and only God.

## **2.2. Notion of Faith in the Catholic Understanding**

Faith in the Catholic understanding is rooted in the Sacred Scriptures, Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, faith is an attitude that looks for the encounter with God in all things and events that to him one can find his ultimate meaning. It is this attitude that, above all the anguishes and uncertainties, builds up the biblical man, who is in front of God with a constant “yes”. The faith in the Old Testament is originated

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 32.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33.

from a historical religion: the Covenant. Faith is the first answer of the people to the covenant. The people of Israel annually in the feast of harvests renew their profession of faith (Dt 26, 5-10). Based on this creed we define the faith as a response to the action of liberation, power, fidelity and love of the gratuitous election of God<sup>60</sup>. There exist two verbal roots that express the faith in Hebrew: *aman*, emphasizes the certainty, the firmness; and *batah*, has a notion of faith and confidence. The verbal form *he'emin* (believes) designates the self-offering attitude to the one who cannot deceive, who is absolutely unshakeable (strong) and secure; and even: means to give-up (surrender) entirely to him who is worthy of this total self-donation without reserve. The verbal root *batah* means above all the élan of the faith, and shows that in it there is no place for passivity, because it contains in itself something of hope and wait. The first example and model of this kind of unlimited faith, of this confident self-offering to God, founded on the covenant, is Abraham, father of the faithful<sup>61</sup>.

The faith in the New Testament is based on the concept of the Old Testament as revealed in the inaugural preaching of Jesus Christ narrated in the Gospel of Mark 1, 15: *This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.* The concept of faith here can be described as the acceptance of the Kingdom of God proposed by the preaching of Jesus. This acceptance means conversion. The conversion proposed by Jesus means turning away from everything contrary to God and return to God. Return to God preached by Jesus is having faith in him<sup>62</sup>. Faith in God is the same as faith in Christ. That is the central idea of faith in the synoptic Gospels.

Faith in the theology of Saint Paul occupies the central place in the Letters to the Romans and the Galatians. Saint Paul has various concepts of faith, however, we intend to show only some of its essential notions. The word *πιστις* (substantive) means fidelity, conviction of faith and conscience. He explains the meaning of faith, beginning from Romans 10,4-17, as presupposes presupposing Revelation. Faith comes through the word, either immediate as he experienced on the way of Damascus (1Cor 9,1; 2Cor 4,6; Gal 1,15-16; Eph 3,3; and others) or mediated through the preaching of the word of God to men: *Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes from the word of Christ* (Rom 10, 17). The preaching word, according to Paul, puts Christ at the center. To believe (*πιστευειν*) means to act as Abraham did against all human hopes and firmly

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<sup>60</sup> BAUER, Johannes, *Dicionário de Teologia Bíblica*, Vol. 1, São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1973, p. 412.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 413.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 417.

convinced of the word of God who had called him (Cf. Rom 4, 21). The Christological expressions of Paul regarding the faith are very obvious: *πιστις εν Χριστω Ιησου* (Gal 3,26; 5,26; Col 1,; 3,13); *εις Χριστον* (Eph. 1,15; 1Tim 1,14; 3,13; 2Tim 1,13; 3,15); or *πιστευειν εις Χριστον Ιησουν* (Gal 2,16; Phil 1,29; Eph 1,13). These expressions are technical terms of the Pauline formulas, which mean the new state in Christ or being in Christ is born from the faith. Consequently, faith and communion with Christ are intimately related. This can be said that belief in Christ means that faith becomes complete in the vital relation with Christ. At the same time we can find faith in a genitive case *πιστις Χριστου* (Rom 3,22.26; Gal 2,16.20; Eph. 3,12; Phil 3,9; 1Tim 3,13; 2Tim 3,15). Like Paul spoke about the “anguish of Christ” (Col 1,24), about the “wounds of Christ” (Gal 1,24), about the “Patience of Christ” (2Tes 3,5) or about the “love of Christ” (2Cor 5,14; Eph 3,19; Phil 1,8), he also speaks the same about “the faith of Christ”. With this expression the apostle designates the faith itself that he has in the intimate communion with Christ. For Paul faith and obedience belong together. In Rom 1, 5 and 16, 26 he speaks about the obedience of faith, and it certainly means the faith that includes in itself the obedience, the acknowledgment of the Christian message and submission to the salvific will of God, to whom he reveals himself in it (faith). Paul also distinguished the faith of heart from the faith of confession<sup>63</sup>.

The Johannine concept of faith is many times expressed in the verb *πιστευειν* more than the substantive *πιστις*. Certainly he wants to say that the living reality of faith is more important than the theoretical discussion of its conceptualization. Unlike Paul using the genitive, John uses verb with the dative case. Believe in the word of Jesus or in the word that Jesus says (Jn 4,50; 5,47); Jesus says: *believe in me* (John 8,31.45.46; 10,37.38; 14,11); *believe in the Father who sent him* (Jn 5,24; 5,38). To believe is also substituted by other terms that explain its meaning: *to believe is to hear* (Jn 5,25; 6,60; 8,43.47; 18,37); *to believe in him means to come to him* (Jn 5,40; 6,35.37.44s.65; 7,37), *to receive him* (Jn. 1,12; 15,43), *to love him* (Jn 8,42; 14,15.21.23s; 16,27). John explains the nature of faith that becomes real in man, as in a progress towards perfection in various forms. The faith of the royal official became gradual until he totally believed when his son returned to life. Miracle in the wedding at Canaan was one among others in which Jesus manifested his glory and evoked faith in him and in the Father. To believe means to know, and to have life in the fullness or eternal life<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 420-423.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 424-428.

So the word faith comes from the Latin word “fides”. It is a personal adherence of the whole man to God that reveals himself. It holds an adherence of intelligence and of will to the revelation that God made of himself through his works and words (CIC, n. 176). Faith is a supernatural gift of God, a theological virtue, constituting a “habitus” that is in a condition of transforming a man integrally. The Old Testament presents the faith as a confident abandonment to the word of God, as an adherence full of hope to the preaching of prophets. For the New Testament, to believe is to acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, died and rose again in order to save all men<sup>65</sup>.

Joseph Ratzinger in his book “Jesus of Nazareth” wrote that the meaning of the profession of faith for Christians is to realize the salvation. Based on the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (15, 3) *that I handed on to you what I also received* he points out the notion of faith as reception and transmission in order to emphasize the essential reality that Paul pretended to say regarding the faith. This essential reality is fidelity. This fidelity in the context of Paul, according to Ratzinger, is a literal fidelity in transmitting what he received. What Ratzinger wants to underline is the common tradition of the Church since the beginning<sup>66</sup>. Here we can see the covenantal aspect of faith linking the Old Testament with the New Testament. It requires fidelity and community.

The notion of faith in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Divine Revelation is the response of man to God who reveals himself to him. This response means obedience of faith with total assent. This should be done freely and totally, with full submission of intelligence and will to God who reveals himself. In order to profess this faith, the grace of God is necessary<sup>67</sup>. Here the aspect of freedom is underlined. Since it is the initiative of God then grace is essential in this process. Grace cannot work without freedom on the part of man.

Therefore, the concept of faith in the Sacred Scriptures, either the Old Testament or the New Testament, is situated in the Covenantal context. The covenant between God and man was started with Abraham and renewed on Mount Sinai with Moses, then finally and definitively in the person of Jesus Christ on the cross. The concept of covenant implies some attitudes from both sides. The initiative is always from God, the

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<sup>65</sup> PETROSILLO, Piero, *O Cristianismo de A a Z: Dicionário da Fé Cristã*, Lisboa: Ed. São Paulo, 1996, p. 110.

<sup>66</sup> RATZINGER, Joseph, *Jesus de Nazaré, Parte II - Da Entrada a Jerusalém até à Ressurreição*, Cascais: Princípia, 2011, pp. 203-204.

<sup>67</sup> DV 5; cf. SEQUERI, Pierangelo, *A Ideia da Fé: Tratado de Teologia Fundamental*, Braga: Editorial AO, 2013, pp. 80-83.

higher part. It is an offer as well as a grace on the part of God. Man needs to reply or answer to the offer if he wants to be saved. So, this covenant implies fidelity and confidence from the part of man. Then God, in his part, provides security and salvation. This is exactly what was meant with the people of God in the Old Testament. Finally in Jesus Christ we find security and definitive salvation if we follow the conditions of living with attitudes of fidelity and confidence in him. The New Testament notion of faith is an affirmation of the old one with intensity by the acceptance of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Christ or believe in him and follow him. That is the central idea considered as theoretical foundation of the faith in the Christian context.

### 2.3. Notion of Worship

The general term of worship is an exclusively religious expression. Man as *homo religiosus* is always searching for the ultimate meaning. This ultimate meaning is only found in God, or in some supernatural powers and spirits as in the beliefs assumed by animism and polytheism.

Worship, according Oxford Universal Dictionary Illustrated, is reverence or veneration paid to a being or power regarded as supernatural or divine; The action or practice of displaying this by appropriate acts, rites, or ceremonies; means a feeling of reverence or expression of reverence, religious rites or ceremonies, consisting of a formal expression of reverence for a deity; Great admiration or devotion shown towards a person or a principle; As a verb it means to adore with appropriate acts, rites, or ceremonies, or showing reverence and adoration for a deity (god), taking part in a religious ceremony. It is derived from old English *weorthscipe* means worthiness, acknowledgement of worth<sup>68</sup>. The synonym of the word is cult. The word cult is from the Latin *cultus* derived from the verb *colere* means to venerate, to honor. It is the complex rites and behaviors, predominantly collective, with which we relate with the divinity, adoring it. In the context of Catholicism, especially in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord, perpetuated in the sacrifice of the cross, is the summit and foundation of all cult or worship<sup>69</sup>.

Worship strictly means “cult” in the religious sense. It is a system of religious veneration and devotion directed towards a particular figure or object. In the dictionary

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<sup>68</sup> *The Oxford Universal Dictionary Illustrated*, Vol. 2, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, in: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english> (visited on Nov. 14, 2014 at 2pm).

<sup>69</sup> PETROSILLO, Piero, *O Cristianismo de A a Z: Dicionário da Fé Cristã*, p. 77.

of biblical theology, Portuguese translation (Dicionário de Teologia Bíblica), the word cult, as derived from Latin *colere*, means encounter with the divine, and generally it has various forms. The meaning of encounter here is evidently wider. The content of the encounter also changes its forms. Varieties of places (spaces): natural spaces like mountains, man-made spaces like temples; Varieties of times: conditioned by the natural events or by history of a community and of an individual person. The encounter (meeting) is realized in relation to these spaces and times; the intentions that move them, as well as the effects that are experienced like security of life, increase of powers, sending away the demonic powers, expiation, and union with the divinity and others. Besides the space and time, there are also the executors (priests), the circle of participants (family, tribe, community) and finally the intensity of participation corresponding to the involvement of those present (participants)<sup>70</sup>. Cult in the history of religions is a reaction towards a religious experience, the effort to answer to the Sacred.

#### **2.4. Notion of Communion**

The word communion, according to the Oxford Universal Dictionary Illustrated, means sharing or holding in common, participation, community and fellowship<sup>71</sup>. In theology it is a term used most frequently in the expression of “Holy Communion”, which signifies the partaking in the Eucharist<sup>72</sup>.

The Second Vatican Council defines the Church as a sacrament of communion. This is an interesting concept of understanding the meaning of communion in its religious and social perspective. Right at the beginning of the first chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church the Council presents the Church as an instrument of the intimate union with God and of the unity of all humankind<sup>73</sup>. Max Scheler said that the Church is the community of love. Saint Paul had presented charity as a fundamental value and the essential cloth of the Mystical Body of Christ. The Catholic communion unites every person in love. It is only communion that can give the consistency to the community, that surpasses all borders that divide, in order to unite, that can merge all in the universal charity of Christ. Eucharist is the fountain and home of the community, whose sociability was obvious since the beginning. *Because the loaf*

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<sup>70</sup> KAISER, Odilo, “Culto”, in: BAUER, Johannes, *Dicionário de Teologia Bíblica*, Vol. 1, pp. 243-259.

<sup>71</sup> *The Oxford Universal Dictionary Illustrated*, Vol. 1, Oxford, 1933.

<sup>72</sup> *Chambers’s Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 3, London: Campos – Confession of Faith, 1970.

<sup>73</sup> LG 1.



*of bread is one, we though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf* (1Cor. 10, 17)<sup>74</sup>.

The word communion is derived from the Latin word *communione* and it means equal participation, having something in common; the Greek *koinonia* means as having in common. It refers to the participation in common beliefs, convictions or ideas. The term indicates the participation of the faithful in the Eucharist through the reception of the consecrated particles, the Body of Christ. It also refers to the communion of life in the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, as an effect of the participation in the Eucharistic mystery. This communion implies the union with God together with the Saints<sup>75</sup>. *I am the true vine and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word I spoke to you. Remain in me as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing*<sup>76</sup>. This passage reveals the deepest expression of love shown by Christ towards God the Father and his disciples. Love is the foundation of communion. Union with God in Christ is the context of understanding the concept communion. *Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me that they may be one just as we are*<sup>77</sup>. Jesus prayed for the unity of all his disciples, those who follow him. This is essential for salvation. *I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us*<sup>78</sup>. It is very clear that in the prayer of Jesus we find the communion in love. Union with God through Jesus Christ implies union with our fellow men.

The idea of communion literally means union between two persons or various groups and families. In the Eucharistic context communion means personal encounter with Christ. Eating the consecrated bread, the Body of Christ, means to communicate, to enter into communion with the Person of the living Lord. This communion, this act of eating is indeed a meeting between two persons, letting oneself be penetrated by the life

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<sup>74</sup> SPIAZI, Raimundo, *A Eucaristia na Vida Cristã*, Lisboa: Paulista, 1955, pp. 90-91.

<sup>75</sup> PETROSILLO, Piero, *O Cristianismo de A a Z: Dicionário da Fé Cristã*, p. 62.

<sup>76</sup> Jn 15:1-6.

<sup>77</sup> Jn17:11b.

<sup>78</sup> Jn 17:20-21.

of him who is living Love. That is why this communion demands adoration, and requires the will to follow Christ. Thus the adoration and the banquet are part of communion. This means assimilation of the life of the faithful to Christ<sup>79</sup>.

Communion is understood in relation to the community. All religious rituals have their objective in community building. This requires moral obligations based on established norms and customs. These ethical obligations have their full expression in the religious rites. In order to understand this communion in term of community we should understand the notion of a human person in his social dimension. A human being is not simply a living organism, but a being that can think, feel, decide, be moved, respond, enter into relationship with others. All this implies a language, a related set of ways of experiencing the world, of interpreting his feelings, understanding his relationship to others, to the past, the future, the absolute and so on. It is in the particular way he situates himself within this cultural world that we call his identity<sup>80</sup>. Therefore, a human being is only a member of a community if he is fully participating and sharing with it. This means he is bound with the other members of the community sharing joys and sadness. To participate in the community means to obey its norms and regulations in communion with other members or with the whole.

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<sup>79</sup> RATZINGER, Joseph, *Mostrar Cristo ao Mundo: Discursos, Homílias, e Mensagens*, Braga: Editorial AO, 2012, p. 202.

<sup>80</sup> TAYLOR, Charles, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 87.

### **CHAPTER 3: THE TIMORESE INDIGENOUS BELIEFS AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: PARALLELISM IN THE PERSPECTIVES OF WORSHIP AND COMMUNION**

In this chapter we present the content of the thesis or the results of our research. The scope of this thesis is limited only to some parallel aspects of religious worship and communion. This is a comparison between the two faiths. Here we are exploring some specific aspects of the Timorese indigenous beliefs, which serve as a comparison with the Christian beliefs. It is a primordial faith because we are dealing with the primitive beliefs of the Timorese people. Describing in details some phenomenal aspects of worship and communion does not say everything about the religious sentiments of the people. Religious fervour cannot be fully expressed in words. The Timorese indigenous religious symbols and worships reveal the deepest feelings of the people in relation to the *Lulik* (Sacred). These should be understood in the context of an enchanted world, which is a world full of *lulik* (sacred spirits) or a sacral world. Therefore, we can only have a better understanding of the religious phenomena in Timor-Leste if we grow up and emerge ourselves in this enchanted world.

Considering the scarcity of literary sources concerning the Timorese religious phenomena, in the theological sense, we rely mostly on our field experiences as native and pastoral agent among the indigenous people and with the help of some ethnographical and anthropological writings. We need to learn to make out the messages hidden in those religious symbols and rituals and to understand the religious feelings of the people. They are devoted Catholics but are also faithful to their ancestral beliefs and this reality becomes a big challenge to our pastoral works. We are able to decipher (to make out) some hidden messages of the religious symbols and rites of the Timorese traditional religion because we grow up within that world. These beliefs were once becoming part of the faith of our ancestors. As Christian and member of the hierarchy of the Church we want to have a wider understanding of our people in view of making some pastoral policies for a more effective evangelization that can help them to achieve a true conversion and human realization.

#### **3.1. The Timorese Indigenous Faith**

We have to acknowledge that the Timorese societies are not homogenous because they are constituted of so many tribes of different origins that had migrated to the Island as we mention above. The Malayans, the Indians and the Melanesians, came together

joining to the Polynesians and the Chinese, lately mingled with the Europeans; they all formed the peoples with cultural syncretism and symbiosis with diverse traditions throughout the geographical region where Timor Island is situated. Because of this heterogeneity we choose only some common elements of the religious phenomena manifested in symbolic objects, worships and other ritual styles that represent all Timorese indigenous beliefs in general. Our particular focus is on the *Uma-Lulik* (Sacred House/Shrine), or house of tradition, and the veneration of sacred stones/rocks and trees. We also explore the meanings and purposes of these religious performances (ritual acts).

The indigenous religion is generally characterized by its heterodoxy in contrast to the Catholic orthodoxy. Heterodoxy means diversity due to each tribe/nation with its respective tradition. We call it indigenous religion because it maintains and safeguards a native faith with local and tribal orientation. These indigenous beliefs (faith) attribute the importance of ancestral lands, sacred geography and local sacred sites as we have stated in the theoretical foundation. The Timorese indigenous beliefs are implicitly oriented to the worship of *Lulik* (Sacred), *Maromak* (God). We classify *Lulik* in four categories: the first category is *Maromak*, which literally means clarity or luminous associated to God or Supreme Being (highest *Lulik*); the second category is the souls of ancestors, or *matebian* (*klamar*), and the spirits; the third category is the sacred objects, places and animals that manifest certain supernatural powers. Bloodshed is forbidden otherwise *Lulik* will punish the killer or the one who causes the death of other. After killing enemies in a battle line, the warriors should purify themselves because of the bloodshed. They should be redeemed from all types of bloodshed.

The Timorese primordial people do not venerate the objects as such but as far as those objects manifest certain supernatural power. Here we see that spaces and objects are also not homogeneous. This means that not all objects and spaces are *lulik* (sacred). A tree, or a stone, is sacred (*lulik*) if it manifests a divine power or something tremendous (*mysterium tremendum*) that evokes awe or a religious fervour. A certain animal is *lulik* if it has some power beyond human understanding or imagination. Example, a crocodile is *lulik* (sacred) because it has extraordinary power and sensibility. Many Timorese consider a crocodile as their grandfather (avô)<sup>81</sup> precisely because of this reason. The crocodile myth is understood in this context. It narrates the origin of the people with their cosmological views. Their ancestors were probably coming from two

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. CORREA, Armando Pinto, *Gentio de Timor*, p. 227.

different races represented by the man and the crocodile. The pact between these two personages (man and crocodile) also reveals the religiosity of the people. Thus the Timorese ancestral origin is not homogenous at all. The crocodile is a symbol of an animal that sacrificed itself in order to give origin to the Island, which supports the life of the people. Many Timorese are convinced that if someone speaks harshly against a crocodile or wants to kill it, he will absolutely pay for it once he goes fishing in the sea or bathing in any beaches and banks of rivers<sup>82</sup>. The animal will go after him, hunt him, throughout his life. If you treat the animals with respect, kindness, and with care they will never attack you even though you might swim nearby them. They have such a conviction that certain crocodiles and pythons are considered as sacred<sup>83</sup>. Thus not all of them are sacred and there are also wild crocodiles and pythons; and the sacred ones are only those that are fed by men. Even so, most of the Timorese are afraid to hunt crocodiles. Therefore, this conviction has ecological dimension.

### **3.1.1. The ancestral religious tradition**

The primitive faith is an integral part of the cultural identity of the people. Culture forms and expresses ways of life and is made of traditions, customs and laws, governs behaviours and attitudes and is expressed in art, stories, religion, crafts and music<sup>84</sup>. This definition of culture makes us aware of the relationship between the past and the present. Thus culture is transmitted as ancestral treasures that should be sacralised. The religiosity of the Timorese indigenous people is only understood in the context of their cultural environment that everything is sacral. Here we intend to focus on the Timorese ancestral religious practices that are identified as their cultural heritage. This cultural and religious tradition is rooted deeply in their ancestral customs, what their ancestors used to perform throughout the ages. This becomes a lasting memory for the people of all generations. Searching the origin of this tradition brings us back to the pre-historic accounts started with the waves of migration of peoples to all the Southeast Asian and Pacific Regions, including Australia and New Zealand. Looking at the historical background we can understand the root of their beliefs and ritual acts.

They believe that cosmos is *lulik* (sacred/holy/sacral) although they are unable to explain it. This incapacity to do so is part of a common characteristic of all primitive

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>84</sup> [http://www.marymackillopinternational.org.au/easttimor\\_culture](http://www.marymackillopinternational.org.au/easttimor_culture) (visited on February 17, 2015 at 9 pm).

peoples around the world. They are distinguished from the rational and modern peoples especially the Europeans. We may say that these indigenous peoples are characterized as a centripetal and heart oriented people, having a contemplative attitude towards all things in the universe, absorbing them and feeling union with the nature (cosmos). While the rational peoples are a centrifugal and head oriented people, with an attitude that inclines to analyse and rationalize all objects in the universe, including their movements, in order to have a better understanding of them; they discharge and dismantle all things, cosmic elements, for the sake of knowledge. So the latter group has a tendency to divide and unveil all these cosmic elements in the nature/universe, dividing them into fragments in order to analyse them for a better knowledge. They have a divergent attitude towards the cosmos. And the former group has a convergent attitude towards these cosmic elements because they are convinced that these objects are *lulik* (sacred/sacral). These fundamental differences are responsible for the discrepancy in understanding the cosmos.

Contemplating on the cosmic movements is essential. They believe that *Lulik* manifests himself in certain cosmic elements, spaces and times that they observe and in which they live<sup>85</sup>. It is true because the experience is locus for the divine revelation. Faith was arising from the reflection on the religious experience without any intervention of the reason. When the missionaries arrived to the Island with their own cosmological view that the nature should be explored they introduced a new mentality, which was totally different from the autochthonous contemplative mentality. It was an encounter of the two distinct worlds, the native centripetal world and the western centrifugal world. It is very sure that cultural chock was unavoidable at those times. This cultural shock was also responsible for the tension between the missionaries and the indigenous people. Thus exploring this world of *lulik* and converting its people were a big challenge for the missionaries at those times, *in illo tempore* or in the axis of times where the Christian message was starting to flourish in the tiny Timorese world.

### **3.1.2. The primordial cosmological view**

The Timorese cosmological view is based on the concept *lulik* (sacred/holy/sacral). The concept *lulik* has a broader meaning and implies all fundamental aspects of philosophical, religious and moral orientations in the Timorese social life. The Timorese indigenous people share the cosmological visions of the

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. CORREA, Armando Pinto, *Gentio de Timor*, p. 226.

eastern Indonesian and Southeast Asian peoples in general. This group of peoples has a unique view of how the universe came into being (is structured), shapes the behaviour of people in life and can undergo period of total collapse followed by regeneration<sup>86</sup>. Though our focus is on the Timorese context, however, we have to admit that the Timorese primordial world has common affinities with this larger group. The Timorese indigenous people are deeply spiritual and religious. Their lives are inspired and influenced by the convictions of the past (ancestors) full of enchantment and fused with the Christian faith<sup>87</sup>. The Christian faith has enhanced the Timorese primitive faith.

The concept “Timor” generally includes all neighboring islands of Indonesia where they share the common cultural affinities. Here we are not speaking about politics that put peoples into territorial limits. When we speak about the autochthonous culture we cannot deny its relationship with the surrounding neighbors. This primordial view does not mean that it is limited only to the Timor-Leste territorial space. One day an elder, *ketua adat* (in Indonesian language, which means a tribal head) in the West-Timor (Indonesian territory) said that *politic divides and separates us but culture embraces us together and keeps us united*. This indigenous wisdom is telling us something very interesting about the family spirit and revealing a wider sense of unity beyond political boundary. He was fully convinced that all the surrounding nearby islands are parts of the Timorese cultural territory. This means that culturally speaking Timor is bigger than the Island itself because it includes all neighboring islands of the Indonesian territory. That is why the anthropologists have classified Timor Island with the eastern Indonesian cultural setting or Southeast Asian and Pacific setting<sup>88</sup>. The religious convictions of the Timorese indigenous people generally have strong affinities with the convictions of the peoples at that geographical region. The way they see things in cosmos is practically the same. Therefore, the Timorese indigenous beliefs are an ancestral religious tradition that links the tribes together even beyond the political territorial spaces. For the peoples of that region trace their ancestral lines from some common origins of “sea-faring” peoples. That is why when we speak about the Timorese indigenous beliefs means we are speaking in the context of that cultural

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<sup>86</sup> WRIGHT, Robin, “Indigenous Religious Traditions”, in: <http://www.augsburgfortress.org/media/downloads/9780800698799chapter1.pdf> (visited on February 19, 2015 at 10 am).

<sup>87</sup>Cf. [http://www.marymackillopinternational.org.au/easttimor\\_culture](http://www.marymackillopinternational.org.au/easttimor_culture) (visited on February 17, 2015 at 9 pm).

<sup>88</sup> CASTRO, Alberto Fidalgo, *A Religião em Timor-Leste a Partir de uma Perspectiva Histórico-Antropológica*, in: NACHER, Afonso Maria, *Léxico Fataluco-Portugues*, Díli: Gráfica Pátria, 2012, pp. 78-79.

setting. It is in this wider context that we understand the Timorese indigenous cosmological views. However, even though they have this vast link we are limiting ourselves in exploring the particular setting of Timor-Leste.

As we have stated above that the Timorese cosmology is based on the concept *lulik* (sacred), therefore, we intend to explain it (cosmology) under the shadow of *lulik*, not under the metaphysical point of view. The whole cosmos/universe is *lulik* (sacred). They are convinced that everything is alive as if it were having soul. Then all cosmic elements as a whole are sacred (*lulik*). Indeed this is a clear sign of animism<sup>89</sup>. This belief causes confusion with the concept of heterogeneity that not all objects and spaces are *lulik* (sacred). However, we can explain it in a general term and a specific term. In general term the whole universe is sacred (*lulik*) that provides movements and supports life. They believe that *Maromak* (God) is present in this vast universe or everywhere. In a specific term there are only certain cosmic objects and certain spaces that can manifest the divine power, which evokes religious feelings and fervours. These specific objects and places become an axis (*fukun*) of the community or society. The primitive people know how to distinguish things. They are fully aware of the movements and positions of the Sun, the Moon and certain stars in the sky; these reveal certain events, good or bad for life. Thus the cosmos in general is *lulik* for the Timorese indigenous people, like all other primitive peoples believe.

Their religious convictions arise from that cosmological view, which forms their world. All rituals should be performed according to the movements and positions of those celestial objects, especially the Sun and the Moon, the biggest ones that appear to their eyes. They are also using lunar calendar. The ritual sacrifices (*tunu*/oblation) are offered in certain moments periodically depending on the Moon, it is either in the new Moon or full Moon. First thing they should do before cutting a tree for constructions, or for any needs, is to pray over (*hamulak*) and to offer sacrifice (*tunu*) in which they ask permission from the *Lulik*. This ritual sacrifice should be done according to the norms and rules established in the traditional community. Thus they should ask permission from the *Lulik*, as the owner, before using certain cosmic elements otherwise they would get sick or something harmful might happen to them. This ritual sacrifice is rooted in their cosmological view that everything as a whole is *lulik*<sup>90</sup>. They do not say that this owner is *Maromak* (God) but surely they refer to him. Thus everything should

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<sup>89</sup> CORREA, Armando Pinto, *Gentio de Timor*, p. 59.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. CORREIA, Armando Pinto, *Gentio de Timor*, pp. 75-82.



be ritualized before being used or done. There are many other things related to this conviction, however, we only pick up these aspects in line with the scope of our thesis serving as a profile in order to have a clear idea about the Timorese indigenous faith. It is in this context that we should understand their religious motivations in every important activity. The idea *Lulik* is a very important foundation for a real conversion to Christianity and without it they would find difficult to perceive the Christian worship and its message. The alliance between “wife-giver” (*umane*) and “wife-taker” (*fetosan*) follows this rhythm in view of fertility and communion with one another and with the whole cosmos. This is a collective alliance. The crocodile myth (legend) shows an example of the alliance among the “sea-faring” peoples that gave origin to the Timorese people. Respect for the crocodile is exactly a symbol of kindness and alliance as well.

If we intend to do away with their religious practices and customs then we are killing the spirit of the people and leaving them soulless. As a consequence there would be a total rupture with their ancestral immaterial patrimony. The attitude of some missionaries in the past did not contribute to the development of these religious convictions as expressed in the worship of *Lulik* (Sacred) and they even destroyed many sacred spaces like burning the “Uma-luliks” together with sacred objects (*sasan lulik*), which the natives kept inside them (the *Uma-luliks*/shrines). Though the intention of these acts was to prevent and to stop the ritual ceremonies under the *Uma-luliks*, however, they were actually hurting the indigenous people. It is understandable in the context of their primitive and irrational practices that many times had confused the missionaries who were coming from a different world. This attitude became a very big obstacle to the work of evangelization itself.

### **3.2. The Christian Faith**

When we speak about the Christian faith here we are referring to the Catholic faith, although there is also a small group of other Christian denominations (Protestant Churches). We pick up only some characteristics of the Christian faith in relation to the scope of this thesis. We are also truly aware that Christendom is fundamentally different from the indigenous beliefs. The Christian faith is based on the revealed truth in Jesus Christ and rooted in the long Jewish religious tradition: tradition of the chosen and elected people of Yahweh. When we speak about parallelism does not mean equal. Christianity is a rational religion with universal orientation, while the Timorese indigenous religion is just a primitive and local oriented religion. But we do not intend

to discuss their differences. In this section we want to emphasize only some ecclesial dimensions of Christian faith, which serve as a comparison with the Timorese traditional faith.

### **3.2.1. The Church as the context of faith**

The Christian faith is understood in the context of the Church. All definitions about the Christian faith are situated in this ecclesial community. We cannot speak about it independently from the Church, because it is the Church that professes the apostolic faith. It is the faith of the Apostles handed down in the Church that we profess. They passed on (transmitted) to us their faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. We follow this tradition of Apostolic Faith in this community, the Church. So if we remove the faith from this context then it is no longer the Christian faith.

God calls every Christian to form the Church, the Body of Christ. It is in this Body, the Church, that the life of Christ is transmitted and developed<sup>91</sup>. The Holy Spirit confers on every baptized Christian a charisma, a gift of the Spirit, in view of edification of the Church<sup>92</sup>. Christian faith is built upon the Paschal Mystery of Christ. It was Jesus Christ who revealed the truth about God and called all to conversion and to believe in the good news of the Kingdom of God that he proclaimed. This faith was first professed by the Apostles and later became an Apostolic Tradition. We follow this Tradition under the Magisterium (Teaching Office) of the Pope in union with the college of bishops all over the world. To safeguard the link between the edification of *ekklesia* of the baptized disciples and the experience of apostolic relationship with Jesus is an integral part of the ecclesial faith<sup>93</sup>.

The word *ekklesia* means call out, and it is referring to the vocation of every individual Christian to come out of himself/herself in order to reach out to others within the community and without the community in terms of the acts of charity. This means that we are called to partake in a common mission entrusted by Christ to his Apostles in his last message<sup>94</sup>. We do not share the view of the old formula *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* formulated by Cyprian, though we are fully aware that professing the faith in the

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<sup>91</sup> Cf. LG 7.

<sup>92</sup> GAILLARDETZ, Richard R. – CLIFFORD, Catherine E., *As Chaves do Concílio: À Descoberta do Vaticano II*, Águeda: Paulinas, 1990, p. 109.

<sup>93</sup> SEQUERI, Pierangelo, *A Ideia da Fé*, p. 256.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Mt 28:19-20.

Church is fundamental in order to be saved. What we want to underline here is the ecclesial dimension of Christian faith due to the validity of baptism and of other sacraments celebrated in the Church<sup>95</sup>.

### **3.2.2. The Church as a sacrament**

The Church as a sacrament means sign and instrument of the intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind<sup>96</sup>. The word “sacrament or *sacramentum* is translated from the concept of Saint Paul in Greek word *mysterion* or mystery. Mystery refers to something hidden, completely unexplainable and is not grasped by human intelligence<sup>97</sup>. Saint Paul used the word mystery in regard to the universal salvific plan of God revealed by Christ. In his Paschal mystery, Christ revealed the plan of God to unite the whole human community<sup>98</sup>. The mystery that we celebrate in the liturgy of the Church unites us together as participants in this Paschal Mystery of Christ. Here we recall the intensive love of God manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. God is a mystery, therefore, beyond our mind (beyond knowledge). He revealed himself in a small community of people with its cultural and religious traditions. He obeyed these traditions without condemning them while trying to correct some tendencies. From that particular community he chose his disciples to form a new and universal one.

Jesus even explained and clarified the meaning of the prophetic messages and the *Torah* (the Law) to his people. He called them to follow him and to learn with him the mysteries of God hidden in their traditions, which the priests and Pharisees ignored. He invited them to conversion though most of them did not care. Thus it was a call to share the life and mission of that new community in which Christ revealed the Mysteries of God that Moses and the Prophets had foretold.

We are fully convinced that God also reveals his mysteries in and through other cultures as well even in their primitive state. Indeed we all acknowledge that the revelation of God was objectively definitive in Jesus Christ. However, we cannot deny the subjective character of the revelation of God. It is definitive in Jesus Christ and yet progressive in our understanding because God continues to speak to us in various ways and through all ages. That is why we should continue to search for the will of God throughout the history and in all cultures. We have to learn to understand the revelation

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. SEQUERI, Pierangelo, *A Ideia da Fé*, p. 30.

<sup>96</sup> LG 1.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. GAILLARDETZ, Richard R. – CLIFFORD, Catherine E., *As Chaves do Concílio*, p. 90.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 90.

of God in all kinds of cultural and religious traditions. God speaks to both indigenous/primitive and modern/rational peoples. To understand his message we need to dialogue in communicating the Gospel to all peoples with their respective cultures and religious manifestations. In other word, the “inculturation” is essential in evangelizing the people to whom we are sent.

God is a mystery transcending all imaginations and doctrines. We may borrow the formula of the *lógos spermatikós* (λόγος σπερμαρτικός/*verbum seminale*)<sup>99</sup> in order to explain the mystery of the universal salvation of God. The effectiveness of unconditional salvific will of God transcends the history and is capable to penetrate the universe of the temporality<sup>100</sup>. Though we cannot deny the essential role of the Church as a sacrament of salvation for all peoples, we are also convinced that the evangelical values (*verbum seminal*) are capable to scatter all over the world without mediation of the Church. These values had penetrated in all cultural and religious traditions before the arrival of Christianity. Here we can conclude that Christ had arrived in Timor-Leste before the missionaries. His message had already rooted in their religious convictions though these must be purified with the presence of the Church that received the explicit mandate from Jesus Christ. This is precisely the context of “inculturation” essential for the evangelization otherwise we are simply christening the native peoples without evangelizing them like many missionaries did in the mission territories at the beginning of evangelization to all parts in the world. The Christian faith invites us all to enter deeply beyond those visible appearances of the sacraments in order to learn the sacred realities that they signify<sup>101</sup>. We should have an open attitude in our preaching, because we believe that the Word of God is also incarnating in all cultures and at all times. If we ignore this attitude consequently we are unable to touch the life of the people, though we may have good relationship with them.

### **3.2.3. The Church as communion**

Faith in the Christian understanding has two inseparable dimensions, individual and communitarian. Jesus called his disciples to build up a community. They were sent to announce the good news of the Kingdom of God as a community. This community, the Church, was built upon the Paschal Mystery of Christ. The fruit of our participation

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<sup>99</sup> SEQUERI, Pierangelo, *A Ideia da Fé*, p. 32.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33.

<sup>101</sup> GAILLARDETZ, Richard R. – CLIFFORD, Catherine E., *As Chaves do Concílio*, p. 92. Cf. LG 1.

in the Eucharist is the unity, communion with God and with one another. The universal character of Christian faith is obviously expressed in this common union with God<sup>102</sup>. The Christian faith should be understood in its socio-communitarian dimension. This communal character of the Church is fundamental. The word communion includes all elements of the Church. In its invisible reality, it is a communion of every Christian with God the Father, through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. In the earthly Church exists an intimate relationship between the invisible communion and the visible communion in the doctrine of the Apostles, in the sacraments and in the hierarchical order<sup>103</sup>. The biblical images, with which the Council wanted us to begin in contemplating on the mystery of the Church, enlighten the reality of the Church as communion in its inseparable dimensions of the communion of Christians with Christ and the communion among them<sup>104</sup>.

The Christian faith is a memorial of the salvific event of Christ in the axis of time, which generated in the world a new life. This faith has reached us in the memory of others and of witnesses, which have been kept alive in the unique subject of memory that is the Church<sup>105</sup>. As Pope Francis said in his encyclical letter “Lumen Fidei” that faith is an individual option but not an isolated relationship between the believer and God. However, it is an open relationship within the communion of the Church<sup>106</sup>. The unity of the Church in space and time is linked to the unity of faith. Saint Paul underlined this unity in his letter to the Ephesians: *one body and one Spirit, as you were called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all and in all* (Eph. 4. 4-6). The faith that we profess is one that unites us all in one Church. Thus we have to profess this faith in all its purity and integrity. If we reject one element of the faith we will damage all, because it is understood in its wholeness and both dimensions are interrelated. Pope Francis uses the term organism, which was used by Henry Newman, in order to describe the unity and integrity of the faith. The Pope continues saying that experience of love tells us that it is possible to have a common vision precisely in love. The Church received from the Lord the gift of apostolic succession for the service of unity of the faith and its integral transmission. This maintains our link to the origin transmitted to us by the living

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<sup>102</sup> PÉREZ ARANGUENA, José Ramos, *A Igreja: Iniciação à Eclesiologia*, Lisboa: Ed. Diel, 2002, p. 48.

<sup>103</sup> CN 4.

<sup>104</sup> CN 1.

<sup>105</sup> FRANCISCO, *Carta Encíclica «A Luz da Fé»*, Águeda: Paulinas, 2013, p. 49.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*.

persons in the Church<sup>107</sup>. Here we can understand the role of the Magisterium of the Church as a guarantee of the unity in continuity of the memorial events of Christ faithfully.

It is through the Apostolic Tradition, safeguarded in the Church with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, that we can have a living contact with the founder memory<sup>108</sup>. The Eucharistic communion manifests our fraternal table sharing as a living memory of the last supper of Our Lord with his twelve disciples. We keep this memory alive whenever we partake in the Eucharistic communion, in which we commune ourselves with the Lord and with others as a community.

#### **3.2.4. The Church as a space for worship**

“The Lord is a living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him; set ourselves close to him so that we too, the holy priesthood that offers the spiritual sacrifices, which Jesus Christ has made acceptable to God, maybe living stones making a spiritual house”<sup>109</sup>. In this section we tackle the Church as a space, or a building, where we come together to pray and to offer sacrifice. This refers to the building as a place for worship, the visible Temple of God. We are all called to assemble in this Temple to pray, to offer sacrifice and to have a table sharing. This community gathering is essential in showing our common union with God and with one another as we partake in the liturgical celebrations in this sacred space. At the very centre of our social life there must be a presence that evokes the mystery of a Transcendent God. God and man walk together in history, and the role of the Temple is to provide a visible sign of this communion<sup>110</sup>. The message of the bishops of England and Wales is concerning the churches, which are found in our own cities, towns and villages. It is clearly important that the churches are suited for the celebration of mysteries of the liturgy<sup>111</sup>. This memory is exercised and communicated within the sacraments that we celebrate in the liturgy of the Church.

This assembly of the faithful for celebration of the mysteries (sacraments) is basically in view of union with God or eternal salvation. Those who answer the call and accept the invitation for conversion partake in this common union. Communion in the

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 50.

<sup>109</sup> THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND & WALES, *Consecrated for Worship: A Directory on Church Building*, Catholic Truth Society publishers to the Holy See, 2006, p. 9.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*.

Christian understanding is precisely including both invisible and visible realities. The visible temple of God is a manifestation of our inner self, our heart, which is the real temple of God in every Christian. Our heart is the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit, where the Lord comes to reside within us Christians as the living Church.

### **3.3. Parallelism in the Perspectives of Worship and Communion**

Under this section we describe some elements of the Timorese native beliefs, which are parallel with the Christian faith. Here we underline the panorama of worship and communion. For the Timorese indigenous people worship is not only meant to benefit the living like to ensure security and to strengthen unity but also to thank God (*Maromak*) for his blessings of good harvest or health. The *Uma-lulik* (Sacred House) and the Church building share some common qualities and functions. The mystery around sacred objects and spaces is relevant to be compared to the Christian sacramental objects and spaces for worship and the *sacrarium*. A stone, or a tree, is sacred because it reveals something unexplainable and not understandable to human intelligence.

Both faiths are having the same tendency and moving to the same direction though essentially and substantially they are different. We attempt to identify some parallel aspects serving as a common ground for dialogue. All pastoral agents should have to change their mind-set and languages in catechizing and evangelizing the indigenous people. The words “pagan and polytheist” that the missionaries used to associate with the Timorese ancestors sound not acceptable because of having a negative connotation as if they had believed in nothing or had many gods. Looking at their religious traditions we see that they had been very religious and spiritual, they believed in the existence of the Most Sacred One (*Lulik/Lulik-liu-hotu*), known as *Maromak*; the spirits and the souls are serving as mediators and the sacred objects are only a representation. Here we can see the idea of “sacrament”, or mystery, and “sacramental”, which is referring to the sacred objects. These religious elements are serving as a medium to meet God, the Most Holy or Most Sacred (*Lulik-liu-hotu*). They have no direct reference to the Most Sacred, who is known as *Maromak* (Clarity) even we cannot pronounce this name arbitrarily. They believe that *Maromak* is only one and He is *Lulik* in the superlative sense. They are forbidden to mention that name (*Maromak*) without any serious reason. Therefore, the word pagan (gentile) sounds bad

connotation to the Timorese indigenous people, as if they merely believed in the spirits and the souls of their ancestors.

### 3.3.1. Perspective of worship

Here we want to tackle some common characteristics of the traditional Timorese religious worship by showing their parallel elements with the Christian worship. We want to highlight the Timorese religious convictions as expressed in the *fatuk lulik* (sacred stone/rock) and *ai lulik* (sacred tree) and other sacred objects<sup>112</sup>. Again considering the heterogeneity of the Timorese societies we opt to emphasize only some aspects of religious traditional practices that are common in all Timorese traditions. These are precisely tackled under the section of religious worship. The concept *lulik* is the core value or centre of the Timorese world.

#### 3.3.1.1. Understanding the worship

The local environment is the context of their religious worship. The purpose of the religious worship is similar to that of Christian in its mediation, representation, and its aim and to whom it is addressed. Every *hamulak* (prayer) together with *tunu* (holocaust or ritual sacrifice) is meant for thanksgiving and intercession (propitiation). Worship is addressed to *Lulik* (Sacred) or *Maromak* though there is no reference at all to him. He is always in the first and highest category of “luliks” and after him are the spirits and the souls of the ancestors<sup>113</sup>. It is true that in all veneration and ritual sacrifices (*tunu*) there is no reference at all to *Maromak* (God). However, as we have stated above that they are implicitly addressed to him.

Jorge Barros explicitly affirmed that the faith of the Timorese Atauro has a monotheistic orientation because *Maromak* is absolutely invoked in all ritual prayers<sup>114</sup>. We agree with Jorge Barros, Armando Pinto Correia and Jose Rodrigues that the Timorese relationship with *Maromak* is situated in fear (*Tauk*), not in love. It is quite true that they remain in the state of “Mysterium Tremendum” in all religious experiences or experience of the divine manifestation. The Christian image of God as a Loving Father brought some changes to them though they were not fully convinced. This encounter with the Christianity changed their world gradually. They love *Maromak* (God) but still have a strong conviction that God punishes the sinners. According to

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<sup>112</sup> CORREIA, Armando Pinto, *Gentio de Timor*, p. 53.

<sup>113</sup> DUARTE, Jorge Barros, *Timor: Ritos e Mitos Atauros*, p. 282.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 282.



Jorge Barros, the indigenous people believe in *Maromak* as a Personal Being or a kind of “anthropomorphism”<sup>115</sup>. This shows that *Maromak* is an Immanent God. In another part he identified that they also believe in *Maromak* as Supreme Entity who is far away or distant from man and they even have no explicit reference to him in all ritual styles because he is impersonal (incorporate) God<sup>116</sup>. This shows another part of the divine reality of *Maromak* as a Transcendent God.

The reason why *Maromak* is absent in their vocabulary of worship is very difficult to be understood by the peoples outside of this enchanted world. God is so sacred, so they cannot pronounce that name or any other names associated to him, he is a mystery that has no name at all; even they cannot address their *hamulak* (prayer) and *tunu* (ritual sacrifice) to him directly except through the mediation of the lower categories of “*lulik*”. Here we recall the ending of the traditional native prayer (hamulak) *Hato´o ba! hatutan ba! (Inform to! transmit to!)*. This underlines two aspects in the religious cult: mediator and to whom it is addressed. The souls (*klamar/matebian*) of the ancestors have their role as mediators between the people (living) and *Maromak* (God)<sup>117</sup>, while *Maromak* is the highest *Lulik* or a Supreme Entity.

The Timorese people have two terms associated to the soul such as *matebian* and *klamar* (or *mate klamar*). Although the word *matebian* refers to the “spirit of the death”, however, they do not distinguish *matebian* from *mate klamar* or only *klamar*. When they call *matebian* also means *mate klamar* or only *klamar* (soul). They have sacred places like mountains, water springs, and rivers, some forests, where *Lulik* manifests himself or his power and where he resides. This conviction is understood in the context of their cosmological view. The archaic objects and the relics of the ancestors, such as pieces of clothes or any personal objects, are guarded in the *Uma-lulik* and handled with care because they are considered *lulik*.

### 3.3.1.2. Sacred stone and tree (*Fatuk Lulik & Ai Lulik*)<sup>118</sup>

The Timorese indigenous people are convinced that everything is sacred (*lulik*) because God (*Maromak*), the Creator of all things, is Sacred (*Lulik*). It is a very simple logic that God is most Sacred or *Lulik-liu-hotu*; thus everything he has created is also generally *lulik* as well. There is no proper word to express this conviction. Limited

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 280.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 278.

<sup>117</sup> GOMES, José Cânciao da Costa, in: <http://klaak-semanal.blogspot.pt/2008/04/jose-josh-trindade-knaar-kultura-timor.htm> (Tetum version), visited on 2 February 2015 at 9 pm. This was a seminar delivered to the Timorese students in Coimbra in 2008, Portuguese and English versions were not published.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibidem*.

vocabulary many times contributes to the discrepancy in understanding and creates difficulties for the foreign researchers to interpret correctly the deepest religious feelings of the indigenous people. No word can describe God and he is merely attributed to *Lulik* in a superlative way or associated with the highest creatures like the Sun and the Moon. The fear of God is the highest virtue in the Timorese primitive world. They fear *Maromak* above all other *luliks*. Thus they are characterized by their nature as fearful (*taukten*); this probably made the Portuguese to name the Island after the word *temor*, derived from the Latin word *timor*, which means fear (*tauk*). The word *tauk* is translated as afraid and fear. When a Timorese indigenous says *hau tauk*, this can be meant, “I am afraid” or “I respect with fear” (*hamtauk*). The same thing is applied to the word *Lulik* (Sacred/holy/sacral). All things and places that manifest some supernatural powers, or any extraordinary powers, beyond their knowledge are considered *lulik*. We have to understand *lulik* according to their categories otherwise we will misinterpret their intentions. They do not mention God, only attributed to *Lulik* (Sacred), or associated with the Sun and the Moon. They also cannot mention the Sun and the Moon very often, because of such an association with *Maromak* (God). The Makasae people call him (God) *Uru Watu*, the Fataluku people call him *Uru Watsu*, the Waima’a people call him *Lara Wulo* (*Sun Moon*) or *Bo’odai* (supernatural figure) or *Hire Ulatu* (our head)”, and all other places have their own words and concepts associated with God or any other attributions to him.

As we have said that *Maromak* (God) is most Sacred (*Lulik-liu-hotu*), therefore, they cannot pronounce that name but only refer to him indirectly or implicitly. Again the word *Maromak* means clarity, which refers to a supreme divinity<sup>119</sup>. Basically all ritual acts or worships are addressed to *Maromak* without mentioning that name and the souls serve as mediators. Venerating the souls of the ancestors, or of the deceased relatives, is common in Timor-Leste, like in Southeast and Pacific Asian Peoples in general. Again the concept *matebian* (spirit of the dead) also means *klamar/mate klamar* or soul. If we separate both notions then we will misunderstand them. Armando Pinto Correia identified *klamar* (soul) with *iss* (breath) and said that the soul manifests itself in the respiration and disappears in the agony. Here he made a mistake that brought him to a wrong conclusion that *klamar* (soul) is mortal by saying that it disappears once a person dies. This conclusion is contrary to his affirmation in another part. And he said

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<sup>119</sup> CORREIA, Armando Pinto, *O Gêntio de Timor*, p. 230.

that the Timorese indigenous adore certain objects, trees, rivers and places<sup>120</sup>. This interpretation does not touch the essence of the native beliefs. He got confused with the word *klamar* (soul) and *iss* (breath). For the Timorese indigenous people *iss* (breath) is mortal. Once a person does not breathe any more means he is dead or he has no more breath or his breath has gone (disappears). Pinto Correia misunderstood in this point. The Timorese indigenous faith has a strong reference to Monotheism<sup>121</sup> and they believe in the immortality of soul. Although there are some elements of polytheism but their conviction is that there is only one God (*Maromak*), as the Fataluco natives say *Ukane haa* (only One)<sup>122</sup>.

In another part Pinto Correia also affirmed that *matebian*, or *mate klamar* (soul), is immortal, which is contrary to his conclusion, which we mention above. José Bernardino Rodrigues shared this idea in his book “O Rei de Nári” concerning the immortality of soul<sup>123</sup>. He was able to grasp the meaning of the Timorese indigenous ritual practices. They believe in the existence of God, the human soul, the punishment and reward after death<sup>124</sup>. Again we want to emphasize the indigenous traditional prayer ending narrated by a ritual specialist *Hato’o ba! Hatutan ba!* (Inform to! Transmit to!). This short phrase that closes a *hamulak* (prayer) shows two aspects of the Timorese native beliefs as we mention above. It reveals to us the mediation and to whom the prayer is addressed. The souls (*klamar*) serve as mediators between man and *Maromak* (God) who is Most Holy (Sacred) that they cannot pronounce his name and the names of the associated creatures such as the Sun and the Moon.

The next hierarchy of respect is the souls (*klamar/matebian*), particularly of their ancestors. Even they could not mention their names arbitrarily, except there is a need and it should be done in a ritual ceremony, or asking permission first. This ceremony is known as *tunu* (ritual sacrifice). The third hierarchy of respect is the cosmos (nature), which should be preserved and cared. Human being is part of the nature, therefore, bloodshed is forbidden otherwise it would cause fatal destiny, such as curse or plague, in the future up to seventh generation from the direct descendent of the killer. They can only mention the names of all sacred things in these two hierarchies but with conditions

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 226.

<sup>121</sup> DUARTE, Jorge Barros, *Timor: Ritos e Mitos Atauros*, p. 282.

<sup>122</sup> Fr. Alfonso Nacher, a Spanish missionary, affirmed it in a conference for the novices in Fatumaca - Timor-Leste, 25 October 1991.

<sup>123</sup> RODRIGUES, José Bernardino, *O Rei de Nári*, p. 94.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 105.

in the ritual ceremonies. Regarding the first and highest hierarchy is absolutely not pronounced.

These beliefs imply the fear of mountains and water-springs as the dwelling-places of the sacred spirits. These sacred spirits are good and they demand obedience from us. However, there are also bad spirits that cause harm to people. The sacred spirits (good ones) protect us from the bad spirits. There are many traditional shrines (*uma-lulik*) in the mountain slopes and on the hilltops, which are also meant as a watchtower where the good spirits exercise their role as watchmen. God is one with his creation and at the same time He is distinguished from them as an entity beyond our thoughts. Again appear the ideas of transcendence and immanence as Jorge Barros explained in his book *Timor: Ritos e Mitos Atauros*<sup>125</sup>. This hierarchy of respect is regulated by ethical norms and rules. Those who violate the norms and rules will be punished by *Lulik* or by the souls (*matebian*) or by the spirits.

It is with this reason and in this context that we should understand the indigenous faith, expressed in *fatuk-lulik & ai lulik*, which serve as a medium to meet God. If we compare it with the Christian faith in the omnipresence of God (as in heaven, on earth and in everywhere) then it is also true that God is present in these cosmic elements. The omnipresence of God is undeniable in their religious orientation. If we ask them about God, they would simply answer *Lulik* (Sacred) and our mind cannot reach him. If he is *Lulik* then they are forbidden to have any direct access to him in addressing their prayers (*hamulak*) and ritual sacrifices (*tunu*). If you ask them about the names of their ancestors, they would answer the same. The answer is not satisfactory but it tells us a unique attitude of respect (*hamtauk*) and we cannot keep on questioning them anymore because he is *Lulik* (Sacred). Their ancestors are also *lulik* because they can manifest some divine powers. The Timorese *Lulik* can be understood in the context of an unknown God that Paul affirmed in the Athenian Areopagus. *You Athenians, I see that in every respect you are very religious. For as I walked around looking carefully at your shrines, I even discovered an altar inscribed, to an Unknown God. What therefore you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you (Acts 17, 22-23)*. Paul, the great missionary for the gentiles, acknowledged the presence of God in the pagan shrine. We categorize the Timorese *Lulik* as an Unknown God because he has no name and no direct reference to him. But they admit his presence and highly respect and worship him through the mediation of *matebian* or *klamar* and the representation of certain cosmic objects. The

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<sup>125</sup> BARROS, Jorge, *Timor: Ritos e Mitos Atauros*, pp. 280-281.

concept *Maromak* was originally used only in the Tetun Terik context. It refers to a “Luminous God” whom all other indigenous tribes have associated with the Sun<sup>126</sup> or the Moon or any other celestial objects. It is something analogous to Jesus self-revelation as the Light of the world.

*Lulik* is an adjective attributed to the Unnamed or Unknown God. Intentionally they do not really worship the stones/rocks and the trees as such, but their worship, expressed through *hamulak* (prayer) and *tunu* (sacrificial offering), is addressed to *Lulik* himself, who is present in those cosmic elements. This indigenous worship is somehow identical with the expression of Christian veneration to the religious statues/objects, which represent the real images of the Lord and the Saints. They are aware of the supernatural powers present in certain stones/rocks and trees or certain objects. This power of *Lulik* (divine power) can be used for healing, or all other needs, and it is a blessing. It can be also used to exorcise the demon from a house or a possessed person. *Lulik* is also referred to something forbidden bound by the traditional law, putting or hanging up some symbols in a tree as a sign of forbidding to pick up its fruits until certain period of time; *lulik* can be referred to an archaic object. We have to distinguish this *lulik* from *Lulik*. Thus it is a clear example of showing that the Timorese indigenous people have poor concept to distinguish them. However, this *lulik* is understood in relation to the *Lulik* because every act of forbidding is ritualized through *hamulak* (prayer) and *tunu* (ritual sacrifice). The *hamulak* and *tunu* turn an object, or a tree, *lulik* (sacral) because it is overshadowed by the power of *Lulik* (divine power). If it is overshadowed by the divine power, after praying over, then we are automatically forbidden to pick it up and to consume its fruits. Here we come to realize that *Lulik* is really the core value in the Timorese society.

They use signs and symbols to communicate with *Lulik* through words and actions. The objective of such a communication is to worship the Sacred (*Lulik*) for the blessings of good harvest or good health and to implore his protection and other needs. This worship can be performed together with a sacrificial offering (*tunu*), like a goat or a lamb and a chicken or any other animal. Thus *tunu* (immolation/sacrificial offering) has various motives such as begging for the recovery from a sickness, a thanksgiving for the good harvest before consuming the first fruits or for any other profits<sup>127</sup>. The conviction that sickness (illness) caused by the bad spirits should be understood in the

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<sup>126</sup> Cf. CORREIA, Armando Pinto, *Gentio de Timor*, p. 231.

<sup>127</sup> RODRIGUES, José Bernardino, *O Rei de Nári*, p. 93.

context of negative energy. It sounds like a psychological healing. This negative energy should be lifted or removed through a ritual sacrifice (*tunu*). The cause of the detention of a *klamar* (a soul) by the bad spirit, as José Bernardino Rodrigues said<sup>128</sup>, should be understood in the context of purification and liberation (redemption) from a plague/curse as a consequence of any wrongdoing (fault) of their ancestors. Here is something analogous to the idea of original sin. *Tunu* (a sacrificial offering) is actually meant to send away this plague and to heal the past and to restore the brokenness (either broken family or broken heart or broken relationship). The soul is an active principle with which a man lives, moves and exercises all his activities. If it is detained by a bad spirit then loses equilibrium (balance), fundamental for health and wellbeing, and the person falls into the state of imbalance, which means sickness<sup>129</sup>. The person who has bad spirit that causes harm or illness even death to another person is known as *buan*. However, *buan* is not *lulik*. If *buan* does anything harmful to a person then his family should go immediately to consult *Lulik* through *hamulak* or through a *matandok* (a seer) or an “Ema lulik” (a priest/presbyter) or *rain-nain kaer bua-malus*, begging for his intervention<sup>130</sup>. This means that *Lulik* is more powerful than *buan*, or *buan* is afraid of *Lulik*.

Here we conclude that the primordial Timorese faith is also monotheistic: one *Lulik* who is powerful and present in everywhere. He is transcendent and at the same time is immanent; sometimes he is far away but sometimes he is near to us. Thus it is not difficult for them to accept God who manifests himself in the cosmos as he did to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses or to the prophets; as he revealed himself and his power to them through cosmic elements or phenomena like rainbow, rain, cloud, gentle breeze, fire, water, stone and tree, as well as in the form of men like in Mamre (anthropomorphism); and definitively through the great auto-revelation of God in Jesus Christ or the Mystery of Incarnation. We may say that their belief is situated in the context of the biblical people of the Old Testament. Jose Rodrigues discovered some essential affirmations in the indigenous faith such as the immortality of soul<sup>131</sup>, the existence of God, the punishment for bad actions and the reward for the good actions practiced in this life<sup>132</sup>; the heaven as a space of union with the souls of their deceased

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 98.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. CORREIA, Armando Pinto, *Gentio de Timor*, pp. 223-225.

<sup>131</sup> RODRIGUES, José Bernardino, *O Rei de Nári*, p. 94.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 105.

parents and relatives, where there will be no more sickness nor preoccupations; it is an eternal life<sup>133</sup>.

### 3.3.2. The perspective of communion

Under this section is the description about the essence of Timorese socio-cultural-religious identity. Here we describe the *Uma-lulik* (Shrine or Sacred House) as a proper place for the traditional religious ceremonies, more expressive in the table sharing. Of course we cannot compare all aspects of the Eucharist communion with the Timorese ritual table sharing. However, we choose one aspect of the Eucharistic communion and the Timorese indigenous table sharing under the shadow of *Uma-lulik* (Sacred house). Somehow both of them express fraternal communion. The Timorese traditional societies attribute the importance of sacred houses (*uma-lulik*) as a space where they can find equilibrium (balance) between the powers of universe and the human world. The cosmic elements such as the stones/rocks, the trees, the water-springs and the mountains are considered as the origin of spirits and supernatural powers<sup>134</sup>. The Timorese indigenous people believe that the meaning of life guides them toward the direction of the sources of life or to what they believe as the origin of the vital forces attributed to the tree, the stone, the sea, the stars, the water-springs, the mountains, and above all the earth, as far as they have sovereign powers (forces)<sup>135</sup>.

#### 3.3.2.1. *Uma-lulik* (the shrine)<sup>136</sup>

*Uma-lulik* (Sacred house/shrine) can be called *uma fukun*, which means an axis house. It is an axis house that links all families of the same lineage together in harmony. This *uma-lulik*, or *uma-fukun*, is an essential point of reference for tribal union. It is also called “*uma-lisan*” (house of tradition). This house, in the first place, is a symbol of communion among them (the living), with their ancestors (the souls) and with *Lulik* or *Maromak* (God). It is also a place of reunion among the *fetosan* (wife-taker) and *umane/uma-mane* (wife-giver). Gathering under the *uma-lulik* is also understood in its function as *uma-lisan* (house of tradition) where they are obeying the customary traditions (*lisan*). In this gathering they come to keep in touch to one another as having the same origin or the same root. This house is *lulik* because under this house people

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<sup>133</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 106.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. DURAND, Frédéric, *Historia de Timor-Leste*, p. 42.

<sup>135</sup> VAN GENNEP, Arnold, *The Rites of Passage*, London: Psychology Press, 1960, p. 2, *apud*: DUARTE, Jorge Barros, *Timor: Ritos e Mitos Atauros*, p. 101.

<sup>136</sup> GOMES, José Cândia da Costa, in: <http://klaak-semanal.blogspot.pt/2008/04/jose-josh-trindade-knaar-kultura-timor.htm>, visited on 2 February 2015 at 9 pm.

make sacred alliances and covenants to strengthen their relationship and friendship, to celebrate wedding ceremony, and any other religious rites.

Under this roof they recite the *hamulak* (prayer) and offer sacrifice or *tunu*. In other word it is a place where they venerate the souls (*klamar*) of their ancestors, where they keep sacred objects and relics or archaic objects, where they offer sacrifice (*tunu*) and come together for the table sharing, where the spouses make their nuptial promises binding together as husband and wife, where they make peace pacts. Relics and all other archaic objects in this house are basically serving as a memorial of those who have already passed away, especially the ancestors of the clans and tribes that are related to them. Thus *uma-lulik* also serves as *uma-fukun*, which is an axis house for the Timorese communities. Even the Parliament House is also called *Uma-Fukun*. Therefore, *Uma-lulik* has multi functions.

It is a symbol of the native cultural unity where they exercise memory. Afonso Nacher adopted the term *le teinu* (sacred house) of the Fataluco word to chapel/church, the Christian place of worship<sup>137</sup>. However, some missionaries in the late 1930 condemned the *uma-lulik* as a place where the autochthonous worship the devil or idols. Ezequiel Pascoal, for example, was one of those who had offensive attitude towards the indigenous people by condemning the cult of *Lulik*. The objects in the *uma-lulik* had no value and meaningless at all for him. He even wrote a letter to his bishop in Macao in which he accused the indigenous people as worshipers of the devil in the *Uma-lulik*<sup>138</sup>. Afonso Nacher refuted him and treated them prudently. In reality there is nothing to do with the devil in the *Uma-lulik* (shrine/sacred house) as he said. This negative attitude turned into a violent action against the faith of the people. Those missionaries did not only suspect the ritual practices under the *uma-luliks* but they also had the catechists and some Timorese converts to burn them and to destroy all sacred objects guarded within them. This brutal action provoked the indignation of Mgr. Jose da Costa Nunes, bishop of Macau-Timor, as expressed in his letter saying that:

“The religion was always, for all peoples, the stronghold, where they find their most delicate feelings of the spiritual life. Pretending to attack directly this stronghold and the worst thing is using in the attack weapons, which are harming and revolting, is hardening most the promotion of the Gospel. The missionary that begins his apostolic life, hurting the religious feelings of the people that he intends to evangelize, will soon see them close all doors to the gospel

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<sup>137</sup> ROSA, Frederico Delgado, *Uruvatju e Tjiapu: Genealogia invisíveis da Etnografia Missionaria em Timor-Leste*, in: NACHER, Afonso Maria, *Léxico Fataluco-Portugues*, Díli: Gráfica Pátria, 2012, p. 17.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 21.



proclamation. It will be graver if he is imprudent in practicing whatever irreverent and violent act against, for example, the idols, the religious buildings, the sacred objects of the pagans<sup>139</sup>.”

They have also *ema lulik* or traditional elder (priest). This person is considered as a man who acquires certain supernatural power and authority and is also known for certain zones as *rai-nain kaer bua-malus*, which Alberto Fidalgo Castro identifies in a case study of the Mambae setting<sup>140</sup>. This *rai-nain* has several meanings. It can be meant as the spirit of the earth, or landowner, or the devil, or *Lulik* itself. The job of *ema-lulik* (the priest) is to pray over (*hamulak*) and to offer sacrifice (*tunu*) to *Lulik* mediated by *matebian* or *klamar*. This can cause a mistake in understanding the ritual sacrifice properly, because we all agree that a ritual sacrifice is addressed to God alone without any mediation. The presbyter (*ema-lulik*) does all in the name of the community of the same *uma-fukun*. Only in this context we can understand that their ritual sacrifice (*tunu*) is addressed to *Maromak* (God) although they do it without mentioning his name, except the *matebian* whose mediation is to transmit all ritual messages to God (*Maromak*).

Thus the sacred house (*uma-lulik*) is functioning as a house of prayer and a place of gathering for ritual meal of a particular community whose members are having the same origin (s) and common ancestors. It is a golden opportunity to meet and to know one another. Such a ceremony under the shadow *uma-lulik* happens only once a year, or periodically, or depending on the needs. The *Uma lulik* also becomes a place for the rite of reconciliation. The reconciliation is bound by blood, either human blood or animal blood, in order to reintegrate and to reunite both sides. With a needle they extract the blood of all persons involved mixing with a cup of water and offer to be drunk by both sides. Even any violation of norms or rules needs reconciliation by confessing their faults (sins) in the shadow of *uma lulik*. This ritual pact bound by blood, known as *hemu ran*, is very common in Timor-Leste as collective alliances in view of strengthening the relationship between *Fetosan* and *Uma-mane/umane* (wife-taker and wife-giver)<sup>141</sup>. This covenantal act is performed in *hamulak* and table sharing under the shadow of *uma-lulik*. That is why we call it a shrine, which is analogous to the church. Between an *uma-lulik* and a Church building there is no contradiction because both of them share

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibidem* p. 18 (cited the statement of the Bishop of Macau, José da Costa Nunes, 1934).

<sup>140</sup> CASTRO, Alberto Fidalgo, *A Religião em Timor-Leste a Partir de uma Perspectiva Histórico-Antropológica*, pp. 92-96.

<sup>141</sup> CORREIA, Armando Pinto, *Gentio de Timor*, pp. 196-197.

the same idea and goal: to promote communion by insisting justice, peace and harmony. They express a visible communion of the community with God.

#### 3.3.2.2. A memorial space

An *uma-lulik* (shrine) is basically not only a place to worship *Lulik* but it is also a place to exercise the memory of their ancestors from ages even untold. Again any kind of worship is absolutely addressed to *Maromak* (God), and the souls of ancestors are serving as a bridge, or mediator, though they do not mention him explicitly. They have done this in an implicit way throughout generations.

All ritual styles they perform in this shrine are traditions of their ancestors that cannot be ignored. It is the role of the elders to maintain alive those traditions and the presbyter (*lia nain*) somehow should come from the traditional priestly clan like the Levite in the Old Testament. They believe that death is just a transformation, though they have no concept for resurrection. The living and the dead are one as expressed in all ritual prayers and sacrifices. They should have the idea of sin. That is why their *tunu* (ritual sacrifice) also serves as expiatory rite<sup>142</sup> in order to redeem us from our own faults or the faults of our parents or of our ancestors. The concept of sin is *sala/salan* and to wash away the sin is *kasu salan* (redemption). The Church also appropriates these indigenous ritual terms.

We can somehow categorize those beliefs as an animism, which believes that all things are alive as if they were having souls, however, there is a Supreme Being known as *Maromak*, or identified with *Lara-Wulo and Uru Watu*, that overpowers all other natural forces. The sacred objects in the traditional religion is just representation of the invisible and unknown God. These objects are, in a certain sense, sacraments that signify a hidden reality. It is somehow parallel with the Catholic symbolic representation of God and the Saints such as blessed statues, or religious objects. Therefore, the *uma-lulik* (shrine) is a memorial space where they maintain alive traditions and keep in touch with their ancestors through the archaic objects (relics) and the ceremonies. It is a place to exercise memory. They are afraid of the ancestral sanctions; if they do not obey their ancestral *Lulik* the sanctions will strike the society in the form of conflict and disaster, be it natural, social or political<sup>143</sup>.

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<sup>142</sup> Cf. DUARTE, Jorge Barros, *Timor: Ritos e Mitos Atauros*, p. 274.

<sup>143</sup> TRINDADE, Jose Josh, in <http://kraudikur.blogspot.pt/2012/04/lulik-core-of-timorese-values.html> visited on February 11, 2015 at 10 pm.

## CHAPTER 4: CRITICAL ANALYSES

In this last chapter we would like to present some relevant critical analyses. First of all we point out some ethical-moral impacts of the Timorese indigenous beliefs on the society. We do not intend to use the term syncretism here to describe the overlapping elements of the faiths. Although many Timorese Catholics are still keeping on practicing their ancestral religious traditions, we do not consider this phenomenon as a syncretism. We prefer to use the terms *inculturation* and *appropriation* to describe these overlapping elements. The interaction of both faiths does not create any new one rather they become mutually enriched and integrated in certain aspects. It is important to underline the notions *inculturation* of the Gospel and *appropriation* of various indigenous concepts and symbols.

Secondly, based on the above descriptions we also identify some reasons for slowing down the process of Christianization in Timor-Leste during the first contact of the missionaries with the indigenous people in 16<sup>th</sup> century until 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 4.1. The Ethical-Moral Impacts of the Timorese Indigenous Faith

In the ethical-moral sense the cult of *Lulik* has its main objective to ensure peace and harmony for society as a whole. Jose Trindade, a Timorese native, interpreted well that peace and harmony are achieved through the proper balance between differing and opposing elements, like male and female. *Lulik* is believed to be the root of life, against *Lulik* means against life itself<sup>144</sup>. In our interpretation *Lulik* is attributed to God (*Maromak*), who is the origin of life. Though Jose Trindade described *Maromak* as a female goddess, it is not a question for us because God has no gender at all; He can be both male and female. However, this can be used to emphasize the female side of the Christian God. The Mystery of Incarnation, God made-man, not woman, and the revelation of God as a Father should be understood in the context of Jewish patriarchal society. The essence of the revelation of Jesus Christ was to evoke faith in him as the promised Messiah, sent by God who has authority as a Father. If he had revealed himself as a woman and God as a Mother then his message of salvation would become estrange to men of his time because it was out of their context or out of their world. This patriarchal mentality is shared by most of the human societies, which put men ahead of women.

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibidem*.

The primitive Timorese societies highly respect women and revere them for their fertility, and life is centred around woman<sup>145</sup>. This respect is relatively evident. Equality of men and women is emphasized by the indigenous people but in a relative way. We say it relative because it is hard to say that all Timorese societies share the same view, for they are not homogenous. Their ancestors were weaving together from different races and waves of migration in those ancient times, or in the language of Eliade *in illo tempore*.

We agree with Trindade that *Lulik* regulates people to people relationship and people to Nature relationship<sup>146</sup>. It regulates the rights and obligations among the Timorese. Indeed *Lulik* regulates how people should interact with the nature in order to support life. *Lulik* demands that nature should be respected, such as land, water, trees and rocks/stones. The reason for them to realize ritual ceremonies after harvest is exactly showing gratitude (thanksgiving) and valuing the fertility of the land. In other word they show their respect towards the land.

Also in the ecological context it is enlightening to affirm the respect towards animals, such as crocodiles and pythons, and objects, like stones/rocks and trees, and all other cosmic elements. They can use and explore the nature, however, they should do it with responsibility according to the rules and regulations. First thing they should do is asking permission through the *hamulak* (prayer) and *tunu* (ritual sacrifice). Some cosmic elements should be preserved as symbols of life. In the context of respect to neighbours we attempt to present three ethical-moral duties, which bound them together<sup>147</sup>:

- 1) The role of kings (*liurai*), or we may call it the royal ethics: reign over the people with full authority and dignity;
- 2) The role of ordinary people (free men and women): loyal to the demands and decrees of the kings faithfully;
- 3) The role of slaves: serve and highly respect their masters/mistresses (normally the noble families) with great humility.

We have to understand this mentality in the context of a theological society as in the European middle age. The impacts on the society are peace and harmony due to the moral and ethical rules and obligations of every social status. *Lulik* will act as a judge.

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<sup>145</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>147</sup> GOMES, José Cânciao da Costa, in <http://klaak-semanal.blogspot.pt/jose-josh-trindade-knaar-kultura-timor.htm> visited on 2 February 2015 at 9 pm.

The demands of respect towards the nature and neighbours (including their properties) are emphasized in this enchanted world. People are afraid of the punishment from *Lulik* either in this life or in the life to come. Somehow the tribal leaders (kings) at those times (*in illo tempore*) were exempted from the sanctions due to their role as representatives of God (*Maromak*), *Lulik*; this condition provided more spaces for the abuse of power. In respect to the nature, there are ethical rules and norms that prevent any arbitrary act, which might destroy the ecosystem and bring calamity to the whole society. The raining season at those times was regular because of such a harmony in the nature; unlike today it is very irregular. Although this must be understood as a global phenomenon, however, they interpret it as a punishment from *Lulik*. Today the indigenous people are still blaming the new generation as responsible for this irregularity, because this younger generation does not respect the nature; they cut trees arbitrarily and burn grasses and destroy the environment. Comparing the theological society with the industrial society we have to admit that the latter is responsible for the global warming today. Certainly it is a conflict between two societies, the theological-military society and the industrial-scientific society<sup>148</sup>. In other word, it as a conflict between two worlds: primitive and modern.

In general we absolutely agree with their ecological visions although we may not agree with them in certain convictions. Contact with the Catholic Church brought some positive changes to the people and affirmed those evangelical values rooted deeply in their culture. Thus conversion to Christian faith purified certain cultural and religious practices and enhanced social life. Changes have been going on since the Christian message started flourishing in the Timorese *Loro-sae* territory.

#### **4.2. The Process of Christianization**

Christianization for the Timorese natives had been very slow since the beginning of missioning the territory in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In those times the missionaries had been christening the people but less evangelizing. The native people were baptized because their tribal kings (*liurai/raja*) had already been baptized. Proper evangelization and catechetical instructions happened only lately in the 20<sup>th</sup> century especially in 1920s and beyond. The process was very slow because of several factors. First, the missionaries were very few because of the decadence of the Dominicans in the Timorese soil in 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> ARON, Raymond, *As Etapas do Pensamento Sociológico*, 9ª edição, Alfragide: Dom Quixote, 2010, p. 84.

century; second, the political situation in Portugal during two centuries (1750s to 1910) had not been favourable to the missionary activities, starting with Marques de Pombal (1750-1777) throughout the period of liberalism in 19<sup>th</sup> century (1820 and beyond) and reinforced by the Republican regime in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (1910)<sup>149</sup>; third, the proper negative attitude of some missionaries towards the “cult of *Lulik*”; fourth, the language barriers and the geographical distance. According to the record of 1834-1874 the number of Catholics in Timor-Leste was not beyond 6124, with 4 priests (3 Portuguese Indians and 1 Timorese native)<sup>150</sup>. In 1882 (after 14 years of reorganizing the mission in Timor under the diocese of Macau) the number of the Catholics was increasing to 23142 of the 301900 populations<sup>151</sup>. And in 1906 the number was decreasing to 14708 Catholics, 22 priests (19 diocesans and 4 Jesuits) and 20 nuns (the Canossians)<sup>152</sup>.

The hostile attitude in Portugal towards the Church and the decadency of the Dominican missionaries indeed caused the stagnancy in christening the Timorese indigenous people. The effort of laicization created a strong sentiment of anticlericalism in Portuguese societies backed by the liberals and the Masonry. Such a situation did not promote the evangelization in all Portuguese colonies. Tension between the Portuguese Monarchy and the Holy See ended up with the expulsion of the Jesuits from Portugal in 1759 and the State (Monarchy) controlled over the clerics with their pastoral activities. That situation became prejudicial to the evangelization in the missions, particularly in the far away colony like Timor. Also the influence of the enlightenment in Europe affected the missionary activities of the Church in evangelizing the indigenous peoples in the mission territories. The Pombal policy suppressed the Church activities either in Portugal or in its colonies. The situation became worst with the triumph of liberalism in 1820 and the implantation of the Republican regime in 1910.<sup>153</sup>

The reorganization and reawakening of the missionary activities in Timor-Leste initiated by the bishop of Macau, Mgr. Jose da Costa Nunes, in 1920s was a big impulse for the missionary activities in the territory. The project was challenged by the resistance of some missionaries towards the indigenous beliefs, like Father Ezequiel and Father Abilio in 1930s. However, the Church was gradually able to penetrate deeply into the Timorese world under the umbrella of the Portuguese Crown. We can say that it

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<sup>149</sup> ALMEIDA, A. Roque de, *Para ler A História da Igreja em Portugal*, Porto: Editorial Perpétuo Socorro, 1996, pp. 115-191.

<sup>150</sup> BELO, Carlos Filipe Ximenes, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, p. 311.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 352.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 388.

<sup>153</sup> ALMEIDA, A. Roque de, *Para ler A História da Igreja em Portugal*, pp. 115-191.

was the Church that brought changes to the Timorese societies; the Portuguese Monarchy and its Republican regime only imitated what the Church did in education and human promotion. It was also the same Christian message that brought changes to the European societies and promoted their civilization to the world. Though it had been done with great difficulty confronted by the resistance of secular powers in controlling the world, however, the Church kept on moving slowly but certainly.

Thus in the beginning of the Christianization, about two centuries (1562-1759), there were very few missionaries as we have stated above. After that period onward the political situation was not in favour of evangelizing the people. Indeed this political situation had created a growing sentiment of anticlericalism climaxed in the expulsion of the religious orders from Timor-Leste in 1910. The negative attitude of certain missionaries towards the Timorese cultural religious traditions was evident until 1930s. They condemned the native believers as worshipers of demons, or idols, under the *Uma-lulik* (shrines). Those *Uma-luliks* were judged as places for the cult of devil (demons). The worst thing was the destruction of these sacred houses (shrines). This contributed to the attitude of resistance from the part of the Timorese indigenous people that suspected the Christendom, especially the Catholicism. The strategy of the missionaries at the early times was first to convert the kings (*liurai*) and then through these tribal leaders they could baptize more people. Thus those natives were externally Christians but internally not at all.

Some cases in the districts of Bobonaro and Suai presented by Frederico Delgado Rosa serve as examples that christening had prevailed evangelizing. The people at those places kept on worshipping the sacred objects in the *Uma-lulik* without knowing that among those objects were a statue of Our Lady of Rosary and some other catholic objects<sup>154</sup>. It was the Christian faith, which their ancestors had professed, that they kept in the *Uma-lulik*. This gives us a clue that their ancestors in other times long ago had been baptized but did not narrate to them about those catholic objects. We conclude that at those times they might have been ignorant about the faith imposed by the missionaries through the baptized tribal leaders (*liurai*). They had no knowledge about their new faith because they did not have any catechetical instruction yet. There was also a Portuguese letter dated back to 1790, which narrated that the missions in Rai-Mea

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<sup>154</sup> ROSA, Frederico Delgado, *Uruvatju e Tjiapu: Genealogia invisíveis da Etnografia Missionaria em Timor-Leste*, p. 25.

of Suai district had existed in the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>155</sup>. The indigenous people kept the archaic objects in the *Uma-lulik* because they believed that those objects were sacred (*lulik*) but some missionaries were condemning them as pagan objects<sup>156</sup>. Another example was a case in the district of Viqueque, the later missionaries in 20<sup>th</sup> century found a space where had been a chapel before. Later on the indigenous people turned it into a place of *Lulik* (sacred) together with other catholic objects probably belonged to the Dominicans. These are signs of ignorance from the part of the ancestors of other times and lack of information for these late missionaries. They had been baptized like today we baptize babies or children while they know nothing about the faith and the meaning of the rite itself. These are evidences of ignorance of both sides (the later missionaries and the Timorese indigenous) because of lack of the information.

In our opinion, the word “pagan” is supposedly improper to be applied to the non-baptized Timorese because it somehow sounds bad connotation, as if they had not believed in God or any divinity<sup>157</sup>. We are convinced that tensions between the missionaries and the Timorese indigenous people (primitives) had always existed throughout the whole process of Christianization. There had been suspicions from both parts. The missionaries kept on suspecting the native cult of *Lulik* as adoring the devil (demons) while the Timorese natives were suspecting them as enemies of their *Lulik*. This situation was not favourable for a real conversion and showing the lack of sensibility from the part of the mission agents.

### **4.3. Inculturation of the Gospel**

*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish, but to fulfil (Mt. 5, 17).* Everything written in the Law and the Prophets is all about Jewish Cultural Tradition, which was resulted from the reflection of their own religious experience. Evangelization is not meant to abolish traditions and cultures of peoples but to bring them to perfection. The incarnation of God himself in the person of Jesus Christ is an act of “inculturation”. To inculturate the Gospel and its values into a particular culture is essential in the process of evangelization. The mystery of incarnation of Jesus Christ must become the fundamental basis for all missionary

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<sup>155</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. CASTRO, Alberto Fidalgo, *A Religião em Timor-Leste a Partir de uma Perspectiva Histórico-Antropológica*. See also in: <http://ruc.udc.es//dspace/bitstream> (visited on 04 October 2014 at 8am).



activities. The technical term of “inculturation” refers to the effort of evangelizing the cultures. It is a term used by the theologians to denote a process of engagement between the Gospel and a particular culture. It is intended conceptually both to safeguard the integrity of the Gospel and to encourage sensitivity to various cultural contexts. It was promoted in the Second Vatican Council and emphasized by John Paul II in his project of the new evangelization as expressed in the encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990). The process is meant to incarnate the message of the Gospel into the cultural settings of every people<sup>158</sup>. Thus culture is the context of the revelation of God and experience (history) is the locus of that revelation. The way Jesus approached his people and observed their traditions and customary practices was intended to save them. He came not to condemn the people but to save them.

In the above descriptions, we come to be fully aware that the Timorese indigenous beliefs and religious practices have obviously shown some aspects of the Gospel values that should be developed as well. Those evangelical values inherited in all cultures are considered as the *Verbum Seminale* (the seeds of the Word of God). They have existed in the indigenous cultures naturally without mediation of the Church. It means that their existence in the cultures was ahead of the arrival of the Church. Those human and religious values, as expressed in worship and life, are no other than what Jesus taught. We consider them as the fruits of a “natural revelation” in all particular cultures anticipating the Gospel. Evangelization was just to enrich the cultures and purify certain defects, or contradicted elements they contain. To evangelize the people means to evangelize the culture, for it is integrally part of a human person. Indeed the Christian message had already been rooted in the life of the Timorese indigenous people before the Christendom. The Catholic Church came just to enrich their cultural traditions and expressions.

Conversion does not mean to leave our own cultural traditions and practices behind. It means that turning to Christian faith in order to enrich and enlighten our culture with its expressions while purifying certain defects. Because to convert means to change our direction in order to attain the final goal of our human realization in God through Jesus Christ. In other word, calling to conversion as implied in the evangelization is to bring us to perfection and to illumine our world of darkness. Conversion also does not mean a change of our identity, or not a substantial change. We take the burning bush as an example. The flaming fire appeared to Moses in the desert

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<sup>158</sup> RM, no. 52-54.

did not change anything substantial in the bush. The manifestation of Yahweh made the bush shining so brightly but it remained as such with its new beauty that attracted Moses in the desert<sup>159</sup>. In our opinion, the cult of *Lulik* should be situated in the context of burning bush as well. For the Timorese, *Lulik* is attributed to *Maromak* (God) who has no name. They believe that there is a Divine Entity (*Lulik*) who controls all things and chooses to manifest himself in certain places and objects. We understand that such places and objects become sacred/sacral because of the presence of *Lulik*.

These traditional religious convictions and practices are integrally part of their culture transmitted faithfully as a memorial of their ancestors, which they must not ignore otherwise they would be punished. That is why the people in the isolated places, like in the rural and mountains, find difficult to leave their traditional religious worship as expressed in the ritual acts performed over the stones/rocks and under the trees, in the water-springs, the rivers and in front of the archaic objects guarded in the *uma-lulik*. All missionary agents should deal with them (beliefs/convictions) carefully and prudently. It needs a continuous dialogue between the Catholic beliefs and the indigenous beliefs. We may call it an inter-faiths dialogue or dialogue between Christian faith and the indigenous faith. Somehow in a wider sense we may call it an inter-religious dialogue.

To be fully converted is very difficult for the primordial people because of the cultural questions and limited dialogue (communication). One fundamental question is lack of a proper language that could provide better understanding for both the Timorese indigenous and the missionaries who came from a different world. Many peoples around the globe, like Asians, Africans, Latin Americans, and Pacific islanders, who have a strong sense of religiosity linked to their ancestral traditions, had/have been suspecting the conversion to Christianity because of the same reasons. Therefore, we need to study these traditional beliefs carefully and to analyse them with precision. The mission agents should keep on promoting dialogue between the Gospel and the culture. It is true that we cannot change our cultural identity, which is also our ancestral heritage, because if we change it then we would lose it or could destroy and damage it; and it is neither the purpose of the Gospel. To save all cultures is an integral part of the universal salvation plan of God. Christ came to save all peoples by revealing himself in and through the Jewish culture. He intended to promote the culture towards perfection although most of the Jews rejected his message. Thus salvation should be understood in the cultural context.

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<sup>159</sup> Ex 3: 1-3.

We have to acknowledge that there are some fruits of “inculturation” of the Gospel in Timor-Leste. The first act of “inculturation” was appropriating the native term *Maromak* for the Christian God (Deus). The notion *Maromak*, which means clarity/illumination, is no doubt influenced by the cult of the Sun, which was very common in the Southeast Asia and Pacific Islands. The Church made use of the “all souls day” in order to enter into contact with the native people who have strong devotion to the *matebian/klamar* (souls) of their ancestors and deceased relatives. Instead of putting animal sacrifices over the tombs the Church promoted flowers to be scattered over the tombs. Instead of praying for their own benefits the Church promoted praying for the salvation of these souls. The Church also adopted architectural style of the *uma-lulik or uma-lisan* in church buildings. Adopting the *uma-lulik* architecture is a great act done by the Catholic Church. The Church adopted the concept *Maromak* in prayers and in all liturgical celebrations. The use of the Timorese language (Tetun) in the liturgical celebrations, according to the instruction of the Second Vatican Council, is part of the “inculturation” in the liturgy. While the Holy Bible is gradually translated into *Tetun* (Timorese national language), the Missal and the Lectionary were already translated into the language that unites all tribes. The Church also accepted liturgical songs with the Timorese lyrics and traditional dances accompanied by the native musical instruments, which had been considered by the missionaries before as pagan objects kept in the *uma-lulik*. The Catholic Church also adopted the notion *Lulik* to *amu-lulik/na'i lulik* (the priest) and the notion *Maromak* (clarity/illumination) to name God in order to deliver its message to the people. The word *Maromak* is absolutely the original Timorese concept applied to God. The Catholic Church adopted the term *Maromak* consistent with its adoption of “Sunday” from the pagan origin<sup>160</sup>.

#### **4.4. Conversion and Cultural Transformation**

A new hope to reawaken the Christendom in the Portuguese Timor, after the stagnancy during some long periods, happened in the years 1920s initiated by the bishop of Macau, Mgr. Jose da Costa Nunes. The intention of the bishop was to have

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<sup>160</sup> BACCHIOCCHI, Samuel, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity*, see in: [http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/books/sabbath\\_to\\_sunday/8.htm](http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/books/sabbath_to_sunday/8.htm) (visited on February 20, 2015 at 6:30 pm).

the native priests that could evangelize their fellow natives.<sup>161</sup> The project was inspired by the missiology at that time, which anticipated the Second Vatican Council, and reinforced by the first Portuguese Plenary Council in 1926. It is undeniable that the influence of the Church brought big changes to the people and the societies through the education and human promotion. After a long journey in evangelizing the people of that tiny country finally the Church finds a home in Timor-Leste. The strategy of Mgr. Jose da Costa Nunes in building the seminary for the natives and schools for the catechist teachers, colleges for boys and for girls (run by the Canossian Sisters), became the point of departure for the great transformation in the Timorese societies. It was really a new beginning for the people and for the Church after several centuries of missioning with great difficulties and challenges. We may say that the real evangelization began at that time. Unlike four centuries before the missionaries had had strategy of christening but less evangelizing. Although the attitude of some missionaries at this new age was still suspecting the Timorese indigenous beliefs, however, the ray of hope was blooming gradually with the ordination of more native priests that could help the people to understand better the message of the Gospel.

Thus the bishop started in promoting the culture through education and formation of the natives in the schools of arts and colleges run by the religious men and women like the Jesuits and the Canossian nuns, recent returners to that tiny Portuguese colony after the expulsion in 1910, and later came the Salesians. Another school that had directly involved in the evangelization and catechesis was a school that prepared the catechist teachers founded in 1924. Then in 1936 started Minor Seminary of “Nossa Senhora de Fátima” (Our Lady of Fatima Minor Seminary) under the initiative of Father Jaime Garcia Goulart (future bishop then)<sup>162</sup>. Thus Mgr. Jose da Costa Nunes, bishop of Macau, gave a big impulse to the development of missions and missionary centres with the help of new priests formed in Portugal, Goa, and Macau<sup>163</sup>. Promotion of missiology in the Vatican gave very much impulse to the bishop in reorganizing the missions. Most of the politicians in Timor-Leste nowadays are fruits of education and formation in the seminaries, schools and colleges of the Catholic institutions.

The increase number of literary activities helped the Timorese people to come out from their analphabetic world gradually. These efforts were advancing progressively

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<sup>161</sup> ROSA, Frederico Delgado, *Uruvatju e Tjiapu: Genealogia invisíveis da Etnografia Missionaria em Timor-Leste*, p. 15.

<sup>162</sup> BELO, Carlos Filipe Ximenes, *História da Igreja em Timor-Leste*, p. 442.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibidem*.

with the increase number of the native priests and consecrated women and men. Later on the Second Vatican Council opened the door wider to the evangelization of the natives. The campaign for the new evangelization promoted by the Vatican Council raised a greater awareness of the importance of inculturation in the mission territories.

Thus the influences of Christian message are great in the process of civilization of the people as usual in other parts of the world. The profile of the Church was becoming higher. Even though most of the Timorese natives were not yet baptized at those times but they respected the missionaries and the native priests and nuns. The Church had the role in promoting human rights, justice and peace. The rights of women began to be protected and in some places reintroduced and emphasized; polygamy was reduced and in some parts was abolished; the dowry was gradually controlled and reduced. The Church has enriched the Timorese culture and purifies certain elements, including superstitions that have caused harm and prejudicial to others, particularly the suspected men or women as *buan* (witchcraft) and black magic, etc. Today the Christian message is touching the Timorese realities. The Church is making all efforts to help the people in all aspects of social life and human promotion. Therefore, there is a kind of integration of both Christian faith and Timorese indigenous beliefs. In the cultural point of view we may say that this integration is a symbiosis though we do not intend to use this term. In the Christian point of view it is an inculturated Christian faith and in the Timorese point of view it is an evangelized culture.

The Indonesian occupation was another point of departure in advancing the Timorese self-affirmation as a catholic territory in the giant Muslim Country together with the Flores Island, which had been part of the Portuguese colony and missionary activities for sometimes. The number of Catholics was raised drastically from about 20% to 98% of the total population<sup>164</sup>. The political situation contributed to the development of Christianity as well. Although there were options for all Indonesian citizens to choose one of the five religions acknowledged by the law, however, the Timorese indigenous people opted to become Catholics rather than Moslems. They did so because they were aware of the presence of the Catholic Church that defended and supported their right for freedom. It sounds not good but the Church took advantage of such a situation to organize itself by promoting catechesis in preparation for the baptism of adults, the first communion, and the confirmation all over the territory. These efforts

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<sup>164</sup> This number was delivered by the Bishop of Baucau, Mgr. Basilio do Nascimento, to the priests in a gathering in the diocese of Baucau on 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2006.

helped the people to grow in faith. Vocations to religious life and priesthood have been increasing very rapidly. Even today the religious and priestly vocations are still increasing quantitatively. Every Sunday the churches are full of the faithful attending the Masses and confessions regularly. Public manifestation of the faith maintains too high. The Church continues to help the Timorese people to keep on fighting for their future. We also cannot deny that today the Timorese people are still deeply marked by the bane (disgrace/lost) under the Indonesian military regime. Experience of suffering, persecutions and death of so many brothers and sisters, during the occupation made the soil fertile for the adherence to the Christian faith while keeping their ancestral religious convictions. Until now we are unable to convince the people to leave their ancestral religious ritual practices. This is precisely a big challenge for the Church today.

In our opinion, the Timorese natives gradually accepted the Christian religion, particularly the Catholic religion, because of several reasons. First, the communication of the Christian message gradually became clearer to them and touched their lives. Second, they became progressively aware of the catholic religious objects as representations of their *Lulik* either *Maromak* (God) whom they believed and still believe as *Lulik liu hotu* (Most Holy) or *matebian* (souls). Third, the witnesses of the missionaries, or the change of attitude from their part, they started to promote a more welcoming attitude. Through a difficult and long process finally the Church is flourishing and finding a home in Timor-Leste. The Timorese indigenous people have accepted the Catholic religion as their own religion and no longer a religion of the *malae* (foreigners/Europeans), as they used to say before, which was imposed on them and opposing to their *Lulik*. The change of attitude of the missionaries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century prompted by the strategy and policy of the bishop of Macau was a big impulse for the people to have a greater acceptance and conversion to the Christian faith.

The Indonesian occupation was not merely a bane for the people but also a boon for the development of Evangelization and Catechesis. The conversion of the Timorese reached the highest point during the war against the Indonesian troops that had invaded and occupied the territory. During this period, more than two decades, there had been a major religious public manifestation of Christian faith. In our opinion, they became Christians and worshiped the Lord not just because of the political repression that every citizen should have a religion but also precisely because of the witnesses of missionaries in words and actions. The growing in number of the Christian and priestly and religious vocation in Timor-Leste is a sign of the genuine intentions and not merely of the

political repression as some people have thought. The Timorese people had received missionaries in the past but now they are sending missionaries to the mission territories even to Europe. The Christian message, reinforced by the testimonies of the religious men and women and the priests together with the bishop, maintained their hope for freedom alive in the dark history. Again we want to reaffirm that most of the Timorese politicians and academicians today are the fruits of the catholic education in schools, colleges and seminaries. They are fruits of the pastoral activities of the Church.

Thus there were two main factors that had contributed to the rapid growth of Christians (Catholics) in East-Timor at that time: the Indonesian political system obliged all citizens to have a religion among the five formally recognized religions under the Indonesian Law; and the testimonies of the Church hierarchy together with the consecrated men and women in helping those who had been persecuted by the Indonesian military regime. In other word, they were obliged by the law and persecuted by the regime, but welcomed by the love in the Church. However, we cannot deny a small step in the 1920s that resulted big changes in the Timorese future then. The conversion and transformation are the fruits of the change of pastoral strategy of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time it is also the fruit of their suffering. These analyses are based on our own interpretations of the realities in which we have taken part.

Therefore, we all hope that there would have a more engagement in dialogue between the Church and the Timorese indigenous people. We are fully aware that it is important to make this academic work in order to clarify ourselves to the world and at the same time to defend a healthy interaction between the Christian faith and the Timorese indigenous faith and to arouse the interest of all pastoral agents in the Country to propose a well-organized manual for catechesis. We should not ignore the religious manifestations of the people rooted deeply in the cultural heritage of our ancestors. Indeed the Catholic Church had slowly been able to “inculturate” the Gospel message to the core values of the Timorese people. From the above illustrations we conclude that it was the Church who conquered the Timorese hearts. It is important to highlight that the Church adopted the notion *Lulik* in order to explain the holiness (sacredness) of Christian message. *Lulik* is the unknown God who governs the Timorese societies and who is revealing himself to them through the mediation of the Catholic Church.

## CONCLUSIONS

We take into consideration the religiosity of Timorese indigenous people as a foundation for the advent of Christian proclamation of the Gospel. To understand the indigenous religious beliefs is important not only to enlighten and to enrich our knowledge but also above all to promote and to foster dialogue between the Catholic Church and the autochthonous community for the sake of a peaceful and harmonious mutual relationship. This is also a contribution to an inculturated theological reflection. As an ancestral cultural heritage, the indigenous beliefs should be safeguarded, developed and purified in the light of the Christian message, the Gospel, accepted by the majority of the people. This requires more efforts from the part of the Timorese Catholics to explain who they really are in relation to the world and to God, and to identify the parallel perspectives between the indigenous faith and the Catholic faith, which they profess. We hope that there would be more interests towards the theological truths flourishing in Timor-Leste. We encourage all the pastoral agents and the seminarians in the country to find out the opportunity to learn and to study the real goals and purposes of the native religious practices in order to articulate some pastoral policies. It is very important to identify the common goals and objectives of the reality studied in the light of the Gospel for further theological reflection and catechesis.

We have to admit that no one knows the Timorese world better than the Timorese people. It is important to interpret and to articulate properly the religious phenomena in Timor-Leste. Lack of knowledge, or ignorance, about the indigenous religious feelings causes obstacles to conversion. That was the fundamental reason for the unfair judgment that ended up in burning many *uma-luliks* (shrines) and condemning their guardians as pagans. For the mission agents at those times, conversion meant leaving behind all indigenous religious practices. Of course, their unwelcome attitude caused resistance from the part of the Timorese natives then; even today some are still suspecting the Church because of the ignorance. Again we recall this passage: *Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I came not to abolish but to fulfill*<sup>165</sup>. It is not equivocal to apply this message to all cultural traditions. Thus the thesis is also challenging all Timorese pastoral agents to explain themselves as Timorese natives and Catholics.

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<sup>165</sup> Mt 5:17.



This academic work is attempting to explain the more sensitive aspects of the Timorese indigenous world that are parallel with the Christian faith. It is a contribution for a deeper understanding of the Timorese people with their core values. There are many academic works about this object of study but all of them are under the discipline of anthropology or ethnographical studies. We do not find yet any of them under the category of theology. Therefore, this serves as an answer to fill up such a lacuna of theological analysis about the Timorese indigenous beliefs in comparison with the Christian faith.

We would like to motivate all pastoral agents in Timor-Leste to organize contextualized catechesis connecting to the real world. We cannot present Christ to the Timorese people while neglecting *Verbum seminale* scattered all over the Timorese soil. Conversion becomes real if we are speaking to the real people with real images and symbols. We should try to understand the religious sentiment of the people as expressed in their religious manifestations. Jesus Christ did not come to abolish the cultural traditions of humankind, but he came to penetrate deeply into these traditions in order to transform them from within. He did not communicate to the Jewish people with strange languages from God. Rather he delivered his message of the Kingdom in their own language and with images and symbols that were familiar and known to them. Thus they were to grasp the meaning of his message. As his disciples we should follow his footsteps, the way he treated the people at his time.

We acknowledge that there are some defects that should be purified but not by way of attacking the values of the people. The message of the Kingdom should be addressed to the people through humanly approach in order to encounter good soils in human hearts, otherwise it would cause harm and encounter only rocky and thorny soils that provide little hope. It is important to know the messages transmitted in the *uma-lulik* and in various acts of the indigenous worship in comparison with those of Christian, especially the Catholic perspectives of worship and communion. In order to help others to understand the concept *Lulik* we recommend all pastoral agents in Timor-Leste to have a better knowledge about its categories. There are elements that serve as a common ground of understanding for both the Church and the indigenous people. The ritual acts performed over the rocks, under the trees and the “*uma-lulik*”, are only meaningful for us if we try to understand them in the context of the biblical world of the Old Testament from which the Church has its root. The indigenous people can easily understand the religious objects in the Church because of this parallelism.

Veneration towards the souls is calling to mind the idea of mediation, which is essential for basic grounds of understanding in a fruitful dialogue. It is indeed an interesting aspect that we intentionally emphasize; the mediatory role of the *matebian/klamar* (spirits of the death or souls) helps the indigenous to understand the Christian conviction of the intercessions of Saints. We are attempting to bring out the religious sentiments of our people, which is not an easy job. Everything that ensures peace and harmony is evangelical. It is a living Gospel of the people that had deeply rooted in the soil of the Timorese hearts before its formal announcement done by the Church.

We hope this work would serve as an enlightenment to arouse all efforts to make contextualized manuals for the evangelization and catechesis. Most of the manuals for catechesis in Timor-Leste are translated from foreign languages that reflected foreign contexts. This is because of the lack of theological reflection based on the Timorese cultural context. We pretend to import Christ from outside but we forget the real Christ in the Timorese world.

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