

GLIMPSES OF THE COLONIAL ECONOMY

The colonial bazaar in ‘Portuguese Timor’: the taming of the ‘savage marketers’

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Abstract

This paper discusses the instrumental role assigned to bazaars by the colonial authorities in Portuguese Timor in the late 19th century until 1930, when Portuguese colonial power was established throughout the territory. We propose that the bazaars were objectified by the colonial authorities as part of the process of imposing the colonial order, a device to implement the effective occupation of the territory, subjugating and incorporating the reluctant Timorese population and other dissidents, such as Chinese merchants who moved almost freely through the territory. This political enterprise was an active tool to control indigenous power structures, standardise the mobility of populations and define the use of space and time in an orderly administrative way.

Keywords: Portuguese Timor; bazaars; colonial power; colonial order

Introduction: on bazaars¹

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the words *basar* and *mercado* were used interchangeably in Portuguese official records, like the *Boletim Oficial de Timor* (BOT), in Portuguese Timor.² In time, *mercado*, the Portuguese word for market, would win official status; however, ‘bazaar’ (Tetum: *basar*) remained widely applied in the literature and daily life.

The term *mercado* is commonly associated with the marketplace, whereas bazaar refers as much to the site as to the event, either the daily market or the major weekly market.³ According to Menezes ([1968] 2006, 157), a distinction is drawn between these two events in terms of scope and time: the daily bazaar is known in Tetum as *basar kiik* (the small bazaar) and the weekly event is recognised as *basar boot* (the big bazaar). The daily bazaar is socially and economically restricted to local residents, but the weekly bazaar is a regional multicultural hub, with different regional ethno-linguistic groups attending from nearby villages and regions.

As places, markets/bazaars refer to concrete locations, fixed in space, usually at the centre of villages and generally surrounded by local grocery stores. Commonly, even nowadays, the daily market is at the heart of the 'bazaar', usually located in a building with a tin roof, or a square, with stores surrounding it. In some cases, the bazaar is on the main road or main intersection at the centre of the town. The weekly bazaar stretches from this minor epicentre and occupies the surrounding area, either the square or streets, providing a degree of plasticity to the space. The relationship between the stores and the market is of major significance and, in some cases, it is difficult to distinguish between them.⁴ Historically and economically, the existence of stores around the bazaar (most of which are Chinese-owned) is important because there is an interaction between them and the bazaar, especially the weekly one as these stores provide the products to owners of the smaller, peripheric, shops or stalls from neighbourhoods and surrounding small villages.

The bazaar was also, and still is, a parameter of time. Corrêa ([1935] 2009) commented that, in Manatuto, one way of counting the time was according to the days of the bazaar: *basar Maubisse* (for Wednesday), *basar Turiscain* (for Tuesday). The month was accounted for by calculating the weeks since the last bazaar. Today, the routine of the weekly bazaar is still central to the socio-economic life of small and major communities (see Chapter 2, this volume).

Regardless of the name, the *mercado/basar* remains a resilient setting for economic and social interactions between vendors, buyers and onlookers. However, other spheres of social life play a role associated with attending a bazaar. One such dimension is the ludic one, related to the practice of games, the most relevant being the cockfight, a pivotal melodrama depicted by Geertz (1980). The social relevance of the marketplace is expressed by David Hicks (2012, 55): "The space occupied by the weekly emporium offered a forum in which ethnicity, social hierarchy, gender, a pastime (cockfighting), and religious affiliation visually played themselves out and presented a physical replication of social distinctions that defined the character of the town and the sub-district it served."

As Thomaz (1973, 22) declared, the bazaar is a social event. In the colonial context, bazaars were not only an economic activity but also a tool to survey and control economic, political and social actors (Yang 1998). Thus, they can be classified as an instrument of empire—part of the essential tools of colonial imposition and control of an administration and economy (Headrick 1981). As such, they are subject to objectivation, in which the native model is transformed into an object of colonial manipulation. These manipulative purposes subject local social processes to colonial ordering, measurement and standardisation to allow control and order by colonial authorities. Nevertheless, subjectivation can deviate from this process, as different actors can, from within, develop and perform new ideas and roles to counteract the imposition made by outsiders.

This chapter analyses how bazaars were incorporated by Portuguese colonial authorities at the beginning of the twentieth century as, first, a tool of colonial rule to control the native population and the flow of economic exchanges in the territory and, second, to curb and control interactions between the local population and potentially dangerous foreign wanderers. These processes and their long-term effects—including the imposition of the use of cash, replacement of barter with commodity exchange and commodification of certain pervasive assets such as *tais* (local handwoven fabric, used as cloths)—have generated an opportunity to scrutinise colonial power in practice, providing a theatre for the performance of norms by colonial social actors.

The research is based on documentary and archival sources, a literature review as well as ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Timor-Leste.⁵

The chapter has three parts: the first explores the 'native market' and the practices of 'savage marketers' in the nineteenth century, the second analyses the ways these 'savage' practices were tamed by Portuguese colonial authorities through the establishment of *comandos* and the third explores the performance of colonial norms in the bazaars.

The 'savage marketers' at the end of the nineteenth century

The second half of the nineteenth century, up until the first decade of the twentieth century, witnessed a period of recurrent revolts against the Portuguese colonial presence (Pélissier 2007; Kammen 2015) in Timor. During this time of war, it was expected that trade and exchange would be hampered, yet the trade of weapons was among one of the major menaces to Portuguese colonialism. Very little is known about this trade and, particularly, the role of local bazaars in the colony of Portuguese Timor. Castro (1867) and França (1891) hardly comment on them, mentioning only the existence of an economy of exchange between the interior and the coast, with the main action revolving around Dili, that was based on a reduced and limited exchange of goods, particularly those motivated by the needs of war (Castro 1867) or the preparation of weddings (França 1891).

Nevertheless, two little-known eyewitness accounts from the nineteenth century reveal much about the dynamics of bazaars. The naturalist Henry Forbes (1885, 461) visited Portuguese Timor in 1882–1883 and, while travelling in the interior, came across a 'native market' near 'Bibiçuçu' that comprised 'a wild and savage-like crowd':⁶

There were between two and three hundred people congregated—a wild and savage—like crowd. The men were dressed in little more than the ordinary T-bandage or hakpoliké of native make, about their loins; some, but not all, of them, had a kerchief girt about the

head, while their hair was twisted into a knot on the top or back of the head, or combed out into a crimped or semi-frizzled mop. Every man wore suspended over his shoulder a tait or plaid, which differed in ornamentation and excellence of manufacture according to the district in which it had been made. From his shoulder-knob depended his coī, or wallet, the cords for whose opening and closing were elaborately strung with circular disks of shells alternating with dice—like beads of bone richly carved. In this is carried a store of betel-leaves and pinang-nut, with tobacco and other chewing necessities, and the universal bamboo drinking-cup in case in his travels he should meet some friend or acquaintance who has a supply of palm-wine (laru) or of kanipa, as they name the coarse gin imported by thousands of cases every month into the country.

Every man was armed with a spear and a long knife, and if he had not a long Tower flint-lock over his shoulder, he grasped a bow and a handful of arrows, light shafts made of the tall canes that grow everywhere in the island, tipped with poisoned bamboo barbs. Many of them carried besides a buffalo-hide shield to ward off the stones which, suddenly enraged, they are in the habit of discharging—and with wonderful power and accuracy—at each other. Most of the men had round the waist ammunition pouches of thick buffalo-hide, in form much like European cartridge-belts, with compartments for the small bamboo cylinders in which they keep gunpowder, shot, flints, balls of lead or of ruby crystals gathered out of the river beds...

The women wear very few ornaments—a few arm-bands of silver or horn, and occasionally earrings, and, transfixing the knot in which their hair was gathered behind, a high semi-circular comb, elaborately carved in beautiful and complex patterns. These are said to be given by the youths to their sweethearts, and possibly represent a sort of engagement token. Their dress was a simple tunic, the taitfeta, hung from the waist or from the armpits to the knees.

The women did all the selling and buying, while the men strutted about exchanging with each other drinks of palm-wine—to which they are inordinately given. Besides the different food stuffs, there were exposed for sale on the ground, piles of those beautiful cloths, entirely spun and woven by themselves, in which both between themselves and among the surrounding islands a large trade is done, and cigarette and tobacco holders exquisitely woven out of thin shreds of palm-leaf, on which are worked in additional fibres most artistic coloured designs ... I was told that rarely a month passed without once, or oftener, the market being suddenly broken up by a drunken brawl, as few of the men ever leave it sober. (Forbes 1885, 461-464)

Forbes's description of the market and the 'savage marketers' is worth highlighting. The market had a regional dimension, as expressed by the use of the different garments, and its location seems to have been outside the main village, in an open space. The timing is also pertinent as it is mentioned that it took place weekly. The author pays great attention to the attendants' attire, and particularly to the

men's weapons, a detail that indicates that Portuguese authority was probably absent. Importantly, he describes the role that men and women performed at the market. Women played the major role in trading—selling and buying—while the men seemed merely to attend, showing their weapons around. The role ascribed to women is similar to the one observed today, and may shed some light on the role of women in managing not only the household economy but also the circulation of goods, both locally and regionally (see Chapters 5 and 8, this volume).

The products mentioned by Forbes (1885, 463), besides food, included “beautiful clothes” and cigarette and tobacco holders displayed on the ground. Reference to an inter-island trade of local garments is significant, as it reveals an autonomous flow of goods in a regional context, uncontrolled by the Portuguese. Also, worth mentioning are Forbes's comments regarding the recurrence of conflicts in the market. These indicate that markets were much more than places of product exchange; they were places of contact between different ethno-linguistic groups from different regions and realms—that is, places of diverse linguistic profiles—and, thus, intercultural arenas of local pride.

José Silva, a Portuguese doctor, provides another account of a bazaar at Bibicusso (probably the same marketplace). The bazaar he witnessed occurred on a Sunday near the border between three local kingdoms.⁷ Local residents attended weekly to barter food and other goods. According to Silva (1892, 27), “it's frequent in these agglomerations, with the rally of armed people and neighbour's kingdoms, that serious disorders erupted by a futile pretext”. He recorded that he and his missionary colleagues were the only *malais* (foreigners) present. While he was there, an incident arose between parties of the kingdoms of Allas and Bibicusso. As in Forbes's description, both parties had weapons at hand, which would suggest that no Portuguese authorities were present. Silva managed to solve the problem by sending one of the parties away and postponing resolution of the incident to the near future, when no *malai* would be present.

The taming of the 'savage marketers'

The idea that, at the end of the nineteenth century, bazaars took place regularly in relatively isolated parts of Timor without any ostensible control by Portuguese authorities is important because, at the turn of the century, the opposite was purposefully promoted. This fact is inseparable from the process of effective occupation of the territory instigated by Governor José Celestino da Silva (1894-1908). An all new market paradigm would be developed following the establishment of a military-style administrative network called *comandos*—a stronghold of colonial presence with a military outpost.⁸ The implementation of these centres followed the



Figure 1.1: A Timorese market (date unknown). Image credit: Source: © Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. Accessed 22 December 2020. actd.iict.pt/view/actd:AHUD27175.

‘pacification’ campaigns that, finally, allowed Portuguese authorities to overturn local resistances and claim authority over the territory (Roque 2010; Sousa 2016). The relocation of the site, reconfiguration of place and concentration in settlements controlled by Portuguese were political tools for colonial authorities to assert their power over the population in general, as well as particular groups like wandering Chinese and other foreign merchants, deemed responsible for stemming rebellions as they provided guns to the interior (Figueiredo 2011).

In 1896, Celestino da Silva, in his “Instructions to the military commanders of the district of Timor”, affirmed his intention that each *comando* would be a major commercial centre, with regular markets or bazaars. As part of their administrative duties, the commanders should: “i) Propose to the government secretariat the establishment of fairs, markets or bazaars that they deem necessary, and the suppression of others” (Silva 1898, 99). On the subject of ‘Relations with the indigenous’, the idea of the *comando* as a commercial centre was paramount: “m) To seek by all means to transform the headquarters of the military commander into a commercial centre, establishing periodic markets, making traders establish there and closely watching them not only for the contraband of opium and war material, but preventing them from practicing excesses or steal[ing] from indigenous people and abusing their ignorance” (ibid., 104).

As Figueiredo (2011) explains, these measures were implemented to regulate trade and to ensure the rights of the state. Besides the advantages already mentioned, the governor thought that forcing the 'indigenes' to attend markets would contribute to the abandonment of their, in Forbes's words, 'savage' habits. Thus, markets were imagined as serving multiple enculturation roles, providing for commercial, financial, police and 'civilizational interests' (Figueiredo 2011).

In 1901, Silva complained about the frequency of bazaars, declaring that they did not contribute to economic and commercial development, as they kept the 'indigenes' from their work. Therefore, he scheduled the bazaars, concentrating them on Thursdays and Sundays.⁹ In this way, the colonial rule organised the space and time of bazaars, creating new *habitus* that could be spread by edicts or, as there were called locally, *bandos* at the headquarters of the *comandos* (BOT 10 May 1901, 165). The role of the commander-in-chief at each *comando* was crucial: "... he is military, he is a territorial judge, he directs the telephonic-postal service, that of customs posts, collects taxes, watches over trade and markets, opens roads, supervises coffee-growing and agriculture in general, oversees forests and streams, lists the population, pursues loafing and crime, duplicates himself, quadruples himself, appears everywhere, takes care of everything" (quoted in Boavida 2014, 233).

As Silva (1906, 12) remarked: "It was necessary to do everything again, to organise everything, to open roads, to establish markets, to make relations between people's cordial, to give development and security to trade, to encourage progress in agriculture".

Contemporary accounts of these changes can be gleaned. In *Flores de Coral*, published in 1909, Osório de Castro commented that the '*baçar*' or '*feira*'—a Portuguese term for fair—took place at the *comandos* and in 'traditional places', showing the transition that was taking place: "In the military commands, in traditional places, there are periodical fairs, called *baçar* or fair, and to which contributes all the people of surrounding area, usually making up the trade on exchange ..." (Castro 1909, 179).

It is noticeable that the monetarisation of the bazaar was still ongoing. That commerce was mostly by exchange of goods rather than money was also noted by J. G. Montalvão Silva (1910, 38), who explained that coins were valued for other uses: "... this is known and appreciated as material to be used in the manufacture of varied jewellery or used on the combs and belts that bind the hair and the women's flounces."

In 1911, attempts were made to organise 'regional markets' where indigenous goods that could be exported were sold (BOT 16 December 1911, 389-390).¹⁰ The purpose was twofold: 1) to control maverick itinerant merchants (mostly Chinese) who acquired indigenous goods in villages by direct exchange via the imposition of heavy taxes that forced such transactions to be made with cash; 2) to oblige the movement of 'natives' to the administrative headquarters, thereby promoting the development of those villages and "a more regular contact with the Authorities of

the province” (BOT 16 December 1911, 389). This last sentence reveals that authorities had a political agenda at work.

Such attempts to control economic activity did not stop clandestine practices, as Anselmo de Lima, a lieutenant and the local commander of Oecussi, observed in 1918:

I had a complaint that in Nuno-Eno there was a clandestine bazaar every 3rd Tuesday and, having sent the régulo accompanied by two cavalry soldiers and two Europeans, the amanuensis and the soldier posted here, to check what was really going on, they verified that the complaint was true and they arrested some of the people who were in the said bazaar to which this command imposed a 15-day prison sentence and a fine of 10 coconuts to each one and to the chiefs in whose lands the bazaar was held, and which was already coming for some time, a fine of 50 coconuts each, for being the first time, and they declare that they did it for ignoring that it was forbidden, which I do not believe, but I pretended that I conformed to the excuse, and two corporals that were there, I applied a fine of 100 coconuts to them each, because they are the ones who are the guard and police of the sucos, therefore having the obligation to report all the occurrences. (*Boletim do Comércio, Agricultura e Fomento* 1918, 278)

Still, in 1929, the process of sedentarisation of stranded mavericks was far from complete, as Major Lima (1929, 23-24) reports:

Viewed only from the commercial point of view, it is even more important to adopt the method of concentration of the chinás in the administrative seats. The wandering life they lead today, settling here today, tomorrow there ... is incompatible with the constitution of important settlements, with a definitive character, in the interior ... It is necessary to get out of this primitive phase, which consists in the trader walking with the tent behind the producer, to move to the normal state of establishment and progressive consolidation of the population centres placed in the main lines of trade. ... In conclusion: For political and commercial reasons, the Chinese living in the colony, who almost all dedicate themselves to trade, should be forced to establish themselves at the administrative headquarters of the commandos and constituencies.

As bazaars were a focal point in local society, they were also an index of the political situation. Inso (1939, 24) explained that, in 1911, on the eve of the revolt of Dom Boaventura Sottomayor, “in the Same headquarters, in the *Manufai* kingdom, it was noticeable that many natives abstain themselves to attend the bazaars ...”. And, in fact, the Manufahi revolt started on a bazaar day. “Early morning, when the *mora-dores* were walking around the bazaar, the commander felt the uproar, and as he was still in bed, he got up to see what was going on. A mob invaded the house; they wound him with a spear, he wanted to close the windows and he could not” (Inso 1939, 25).

In 1911, there were 19 recognised regional markets in the 11 *comandos*, as shown in Table 1.1.¹¹

Table 1.1: Regional markets in 1911

<i>Comandos</i>	Markets	Day
Mothael	Ermera	Sunday
	Remexio	Saturday
	Aileu	Thursday
Liquiça	Aipêlo	Sunday
	Boibau	Thursday
	Maubara	Sunday
Hato-Lia	Hato-Lia	Sunday
Batugadé	Balibó	Sunday
Lamakitos	Bobonaro	Sunday
	Suai	Thursday
Manufahi	Same	Sunday
Manatuto	Manatuto	Sunday
	Laclubar	Thursday
Baucau	Baucau	Sunday
	Viqueque	Thursday
Lautém	Lautém	Sunday
	Loré	Thursday
Okusse	Pant Makassar	Sunday
Dilly (county)	Dilly	Sunday

Following the 1911-1912 revolt of Manufahi, the proliferation of policies on bazaars stalled. Nevertheless, the association of markets with the *comandos* was re-established. In 1915, the military administrator of the Lautém district wrote that: “The change of the marketplace near to the *tranqueira* is done, this change brought an increase in the revenue because the number of market stalls on bazaar days are much more than in the old place”¹² (*Boletim do Comércio, Agricultura e Fomento* 1915, 627).

As Felgas (1956, 270) explained, it was thought that markets would “contribute to turning the indigenes more sociable and civilised by the contact with more developed natives and with the Europeans”. Thus, the bazaar, like other institutions of colonial rule, became a symbol of development: “In the villages appears schools, infirmaries, and the bazaar buildings” (Braga 1936, 34).

Regional markets continued to be opened until the onset of World War II, including the “Fair or Annual Market of Timor”, in Dili in 1925, which displayed “Timorese possibilities” and included representatives from the whole territory (BOT, 18 April 1925, 167-168).¹³

In nearby West Timor, the same politics had been implemented by Dutch authorities since the beginning of the century: “Captain Franssen Herderschee became a *Civiel Gezaghebber* (Civil Administrator) ... [and] was ordered to introduce new regulations designed to bring rust en orde to the district.¹⁴ These included: abolition of headhunting and slave trading; a prohibition on the possession of firearms; registration of the people; assignation of fixed dwelling places; a pass system for Chinese and other foreigners who wished to enter the interior; establishment of *pasars* (markets) to introduce competitive trading and end the Chinese-run monopoly barter system ...” (Farram n.d., 106).

Such intercolonial mimicry is not surprising, as it reflects the mirrored political economy and interests of both colonial powers, as well as the global colonial enterprise in general.

The image of a manipulative Chinese tradesman and a passive/indolent ‘native’ must be reconsidered. In fact, the Timorese had their own economic strategies that often prevailed, as the military commander of Lamaquitos, Cândido Bernardo, observed in 1918: “Some indigenous people bring sandalwood to the market, taking it home again because the price doesn’t suit them” (*Boletim do Comércio, Agricultura e Fomento* 1918, 313).¹⁵

By the end of the 1930s, the bazaar had become a centrepiece of colonial life: “Old bucolic theme of the lands of Timor, symphony of colors and customs, which anesthetises in its strong exoticism, the Timorese indigenous and that has passionate Europeans, the feathers of writers and the eyes of tourists” (Leite 1938, 6).

In the 1940s, in the economic sphere, the outcome of the “protective” measures taken by Portuguese authorities seemed to reflect well on them: “... determining that the transactions take place in daylight, in the regional bazaars, under the protective supervision of the authorities—thus, avoiding the classic exchanges ‘en nature’ in the nooks and crannies of the Chinese shops under the effects of the *tuaca* ... The money really came into the hands of the natives” (Magro 1947, 25-26).

The colonial performance at the bazaar

Drawing on the lived experience of Portuguese narrators, in this section we analyse how the political measures materialising at bazaars demonstrate different interests, both economic and mundane.

The martial apparatus

The weekly bazaar enabled a display of colonial power via ritualisation and the symbolic use of signs of Portuguese colonial order, namely military attire and the Portuguese flag. On bazaar days people arrived early: "They sit. On his heels, waiting for the commander of the post or the district administrator to signal the opening of the market. And when the signal resounds in the touch of tambour of the *moradores*, a joyful shout rises of the crowd." (Braga 1936, 34)

Trading started after the post-commander or administrator gave a signal; this could be the raising of the Portuguese flag or the playing of drums by the *moradores* (local militia) or the *cipaios* (native police).

This martial performance was also performed at *postos*, lower administrative units in isolated places. For example, at Bazar-Tête:

At the front of the post, on the square and next to a banyan tree, there is a mast. On Thursdays, as soon as the sun rises, the corporal of the *moradores* gathers a dozen and a half subordinates in service. He puts simulated rifles in their hands, like those made by children. Then he tells them to march in place, do turn right and left, evolve and march. The drums rumble loudly. And the regiment of Bazar-Tête, with their wooden rifles and lipas, reminding boys playing and remembering Scottish soldiers, goes down the street of the village, to the bottom, turns around and returns to the post. The *lábarac* and the children of the *chinas* march in great steps, laughing, with their eyes very open. One cock, two roosters, twenty, thirty roosters, they crow. And the *moradores* line up facing the mast. Then the corporal orders the gun salute. The national flag rises slowly. Hundreds of indigenous rise on their heels and shout. The roosters keep singing.

The bazaar is open, the market. (Braga, n.d., 33-34)

The association between the post or mast and the banyan tree (*ingondoeiro*) juxtaposes the colonial order (post/mast) with the indigenous order (banyan tree): ancient sacred trees where the heads of defeated enemies had been placed.

Bazaar days also provided an opportunity to communicate and receive official information. According to Duarte (1930, 387), the presence of chiefs at bazaars provided an opportunity for authorities to give orders, such as those related to planting, and to receive information about the outcome of rice crops.

The socio-economic dynamics of the bazaar

In addition to the martial rites that opened the bazaar, Braga (1936) vividly described it as a place to see and be seen. For Europeans, according to Braga (1936, 11), it was

mostly a place to gaze: “the streets of Dili and the bazaars are like those of Aurea and Augusta streets, Carmo and Garrett, like the Bennard, the Tivoli, the S. Luiz”.¹⁶

The bazaar was a mixed index of development and joy: “At the headquarters of the command, the bazaars have buildings, some monumental. At the *postos*, they take place around banyan trees in a glade in the forest or near a mast where the national flag is swayed, raised on market days. But whether it is the shade of the tin roofs, or in the incidence of strong and aggressive sun, the bazaars are the most typical manifestation of Timorese life, immersed in color and motion.” (Braga 1936, 34)

This dual role—economics and ‘enjoyment’—is revealed in the former head of the administrative post of Bobonaro, Viriato Vale’s (1953, 372) account: “Going to the bazaars (markets) is at the same time work and enjoyment. On horseback and on their backs they take their products to sell to the Europeans and the Chinese, or exchange with other Timorese.”

Menezes ([1968] 2006) argues that the bazaar is a “lusotropical institution”, due to the products traded and the gathering of a unique intercultural assemblage. However, considering the power relations present, this is something of a benevolent vision.

The motivation for attending bazaars was more than purely economic, as portrayed by Fontoura (1942, 23): “The Timorese are curious to enjoy the bazaars on Sundays, in large towns, where they perform cockfighting, both of his predilection.”

The walk to the bazaar demonstrated also the hierarchy of the social order, as depicted by Ribeiro (1939, 104): “We, Europeans, stood at the front, followed by the nona and, at the end, the servants. The auxiliaries had already left, on foot, by impervious shortcuts and only known to them.”

Clothing also revealed the social standing or category of the wearers: “Me and two or three other comrades were wearing the classic colonial helmet on our heads, but some were in hair. We all wore khaki shirts and white pants. The nona wore their best and most showy cabaia and dressing gowns... The servants wore lipas and coats and rolled up their heads in the manner of turbans, large, red handkerchiefs” (Ribeiro 1939, 104).

The bazaar facilitated the spread and use of money in the Timorese economy, particularly after the introduction of a head tax in 1908 (Hicks 2012). According to Martinho (1943, 154), the products regularly sold were small baskets of peanuts, areca, rice, sweet potatoes, fruits, salt, tobacco, betel, cotton and small pieces of meat. When tax payments were due, other goods were also traded, such as cloths, jewels, horses, pigs, goats, buffaloes and larger quantities of rice and corn.¹⁷

In 1947 the need to gather local commodities like coffee, rubber, sisal, copra, beeswax and areca in larger amounts for export led to the creation of ‘indigenous markets’ in Dili and all the circumscription headquarters (the new administrative organisation). A new ordinance (BOT 1 March 1947, 73-74) stipulated that these bazaars would take place in distinct locations near the coast a couple of weeks before the arrival of certain ships to the territory.¹⁸

The spatial organisation of products in the bazaar was also a focus of control. Each type of product would be organised in lots, "very tidy, extended in rows to the eyes of buyers, the varied fruits and vegetables, which in Timor exist in abundance" (Leite 1938, 8), and would be displayed either in the open air or inside new buildings. We do not have much data on the interior of these constructions. From the outset, some of the major *comandos* had special buildings for the bazaar, an example of colonial development or '*fomento*'. The best-known is the Mercado of Baucau, considered the "best building in Timor" constructed in the 1930s (Corrêa 1944).

The production of colonial hierarchies notwithstanding, the bazaar was also a levelling moment (in contradiction of its rules), a unique moment of gathering and a reproduction of (part of the) empire. As Paulo Braga observed (1936, 35): "In the bazaar, people are eloquent, animated. Alongside the European, there is the Indian, the Arab, the Chinese, the Timor. The hierarchies disappear. The white, starched suit of the European is mixed with the Chinese persimmons, the kimono or pajamas of the slanted-eyed sloths, the balandraus, and the white flocks of the Arabs, the Cambatis and the Javanese huts and Timores, or, still, with the dusky skin of the Firracos the dark skin of the Mozambicans and Angolans."

The nona and the cockfight: symbolic violence at the bazaar

The bazaar was also an arena of tension in which violence acquired a symbolic dimension (Bourdieu 2012) in two distinct ways: first, in the way it subordinated Timorese women in the mainframe of the 'nona' system; second, in the cockfighting ritual that can be seen, subjectively, as a response by Timorese to the Portuguese colonial control of their mores.

The bazaar was a trading place for the manifestation of desires. Europeans sought more than goods to purchase; they also wanted to look for women. Some young women, hoping to get married, sought to *barlake* with Portuguese and Chinese men.¹⁹ It was for these young women that "Europeans attend the bazaar", Braga (1936, 36) claimed. In Portuguese Timor, many of these women were known as '*nona*' (lover or concubine). This term was used for women who had intercourse with or lived with Portuguese or Chinese men (Costa 2000, 272). In the novel *Caiúru* by Grácio Ribeiro, a relationship between a Portuguese man and a Timorese woman is portrayed. Initially, the main character goes to a bazaar in order to 'acquire' a woman.

"I bring with me all my fortune—fifty patacas—to acquire the most beautiful girl that appears in the bazaar!"

"With that money you can even afford to get two!"

"No, I can't. One will do" (Ribeiro 1939, 104–106).

In the end, the protagonist did not ‘acquire’ a woman, but a horse. He eventually found the woman he wanted. Although, according to Braga (1936, 35), the ‘hierarchies disappear[ed]’ in such relationships, gender and sexual relations were instrumentalised. The protagonist in Ribeiro’s novel obtained a ‘nona’ after participating in a simulacrum of a feast with her relatives—a corrupt use of a *barlake* practice. The relationship eventually finished when he returned to Portugal. Although there were cases of actual marriages between Portuguese men and Timorese women, most relationships appear to have been based on the *nona* system, particularly for soldiers.

After a morning of economic activity and woman gazing, the bazaar took on a different form at noon, when the spectacle of cockfighting began:

The bazaar gradually falls apart and the shops of the chinás are filled. Mugs of brandy, of rice alcohol, of cannipa and tuaka are drunk painfully. Bets for cockfights begin to appear and challenges are directed among the different groups of aficionados ... But suddenly the crowd, hallucinating, runs to the square or to the road. They scream, jump, push themselves into an unspeakable enthusiasm. It forms a circle. And the silence then becomes heavy ... And two roosters, hitherto kept at a distance from each other, meet in the middle of the circle. They hit their wings, they dig the ground, they lengthened their necks, with the bristling fuzz. Then they jump, hit each other, stick their beaks and sharp spurs into meat. ... until one of the cock’s faints and falls into gasp. Then, in the crowd there are only two expressions: that of those who have won bets and that of those who have lost. The first ones laugh, insult the losing cock, grab it, cut it still throbbing. The second ones walk away, defeated ... The barbarous spectacle ends, the unique barbarous custom that the authorities have not yet been able to forbid and which, with the payment of a license for its realization, is a major source of revenue. (Braga 1936, 38-39)

Here we see the Portuguese authorities’ ambiguous position regarding this ‘barbaric’ practice from which they obtained dividends through taxes. The cockfight and its associated interactions had social and economic relevance for the individuals involved, and these also had structural and symbolic dimensions, as Geertz (1980, 185) stated. Oliveira (1971) claimed that the midday cockfight was functionally equivalent to the economic exchanges that took place in the morning, being a major event at which the community manifested great intensity in an economic and ludic sense: the “set bazaar-cockfight” can be seen as a “unified all and the sign of exchange” (1971, 67). Although incorporated in the tax system, the cockfight constituted a passion—a social drama and performance of life (Geertz 1980), or, as Oliveira (1971, 66) put it, a “a total universe that comes to settle in the relative of everyday life”.

As the bazaar started, it also had an end: this was marked by the removal of the Portuguese flag from its pole by the military and the return to home.

The bazaar of the 1930s portrays very different men and women from those depicted by Forbes in 1885.

The timorese, lean and earthy, squatted around a mound of potatoes or onions that the buyers would pick up. The women gazed at the chickens that surrounded them, trapped by strings, or sold, from time to time, areca or *doet lima* of coarse tobacco.²⁰ Some carried small pigs on their backs or large bunches of bananas. The Europeans, followed by the *nona* and the servants, discussed and bought everything they needed for the week's expenses. The Chinese, stuck in their kimonos, managed to attract the indigenous people to their shops and there they tricked them with exchanges, almost always disadvantageous to them (Ribeiro 1939, 107).

Ribeiro highlighted the exploitation of the Timorese by the Chinese; however, this position would not have been exclusive. As Ribeiro (1939, 145) acknowledged, many of his Portuguese 'comrades' forced the natives to sell the products to them for an arbitrary and imposed price and many bought horses or had *nonas*, using violence and extortion.

Conclusion

The bazaar is a paramount institution in Timor-Leste. Further research is needed to understand its dynamics in the nineteenth century, a period in which local economies were still controlled indirectly by Portuguese colonial authorities concentrated on the coast, while the interior, often depicted as rebellious, was run by 'proxy' allies—local kingdoms responsible for the collection of indirect taxes.

The effective occupation of the territory and establishment of regional outposts with permanent garrisons (the *comandos*) allowed for the direct taxation of the Timorese. The *comandos* became administrative and economic centres that promoted networks all over the territory, controlling traders and the establishment of marketplaces. The control of transactions and revenues via taxes was associated with the perceived need to 'civilise' the indigenous population and put them in close contact with the colonial authorities, "socialising" them, thereby promoting their integration into the colonial society.

The Portuguese authorities objectified the bazaar and turned it into a mechanism of colonial control by creating routines for acting in a place, like a theatre, and instructing socio-economic relations between the Timorese, the Chinese, and the colonial authorities. A drama was promoted and performed using symbols and signs of colonial authority and power to enhance order so that habit of attendance and participation would be instilled, transforming the 'savage markets' into

properly submissive actors. It is worth noting that this practice continued into the 1960s. Commenting on the bazaar at Same, Martins (2008) observed that the ceremony of the flag took place at the headquarters of the administration and that: “The occasion was used to give news, information or to transmit guidance emanated from the Government and to evaluate the state of the plantations or the progress of the harvests” (71).

This was done in the presence of the *liurai* and other chiefs of *suku* who were ‘dressed with traditional clothes’ (Martins 2008, 169). Martins continued: ‘Above the good order the *cipaios* ruled and the business only started after the authorization of the administrator or his substitute’ (ibid.).

Further research is needed to understand the dynamics of the bazaar from the perspective of the Timorese and how it evolved during the Portuguese colonial period. The roles of non-economic occurrences such as cockfights and sexual interaction, both charged with highly symbolic violence, as well as the ever present ‘violence and extortion’ of colonial rule, deserve particular attention.²¹ Were these recurrent features across all Timorese social strata or just the poorest ones?

The bazaar should also be analysed as a space for interaction and resistance, not only during the Portuguese colonial period, but also, and particularly, during the period of Indonesian occupation. Among those who arrived on the eve of the bazaar, the exchange of narratives, histories and memories sounds an alternative voice for the Timorese—beyond the colonial one: “The Timorese gathers, huddles in the bazaar, and gives rein to his innate collectivism, smokes with his pipe, tells stories of eras, where there were untamed warriors who cut heads through the mysterious night, queens whom the peoples obey and wonderful hunts through the unexplored jungle. It is a whole world of fantasies arising in his mind that encompasses his unconsciousness” (Leite 1938, 8).

During the Indonesian occupation (1975-1999), the market/bazaar remained an important economic event and also served a social function as a ‘meeting place for local people’ (Mubyarto et al. 1991, 22). It is possible to argue that bazaars also played a major role in Timorese resistance during this time, as traders arrived from Celebes with the transmigration program. In 1987 a ‘mysterious event’ occurred that set the Dili market on fire (Arquivo & Museu da Resistência Timorense 2020a, File: 06454.026), and the mobility of some sellers who were also shop owners facilitated the activities of a clandestine front (pers. comm.).²² So, the bazaar was also a much watched place by authorities with armed personnel (Arquivo & Museu da Resistência Timorense 2020b, File: 05733.036.002).

In contemporary literature, the bazaar or market is associated with notions of local development—roads and marketplaces—as Bicca (2011) shows in his work. Nevertheless, the relationship between local aspirations and state directives can be difficult to manage, reinforcing the need for community involvement in the

management of the marketplace. Bicca (2011, 123-125) explains how the marketplace was built, against the advice of local habitants, on a windy site at the intersection of several *suku* (so that it could benefit all), but it was left unattended, while the old marketplace was used.

Bazaars were a focus of tension and places of struggle and control during the violence of 2006, as I witnessed in Dili (Lusa 2006) and Maliana. More recently, they have become places of tension between Timorese and non-Timorese, with locals complaining about foreign traders. As noted, it is felt that the bazaars should be for the East Timorese, and foreigners should be limited to trade in the shops.²³ Hence, the bazaar remains a total social phenomenon, continuing to move beyond its economic dimension.

Notes

- ¹ A preliminary version of this text was presented at the International Symposium on Economic Dynamics and Social Change in the Making of Contemporary Timor-Leste organised by the Institute of Social Studies, which took place at the University of Brasília in 2018, and was published in 2019 in the journal *Plural Pluriel* 19: 138-155. Accessed 21 February 2020. www.pluralpluriel.org/index.php/revue/article/view/184 I am very grateful for the comments and suggestions made by reviewers.
- ² I use the term 'Portuguese Timor' as expressed by Gunn (1999, 213).
- ³ There are also small market stalls, daily, along main roads in the countryside that are sometimes associated with small street restaurants. In some cases, when the main road crosses the village, these are also the venues of the weekly bazaar (e.g., Atabae in Bobonaro district).
- ⁴ During the weekly bazaar, shop owners use the veranda or front space of the shop to display products.
- ⁵ This includes working as a teacher in Maliana and Bobonaro between 2000 and 2002; Ph.D. fieldwork in August 2003, August 2004 and from September 2005 to August 2006 undertaken with the support of the Calouste Foundation Gulbenkian and the Fundação Oriente; short fieldwork terms in 2010 for the project 'Translation as Culture' (Project FC—PTDC/ANT/81065/2006), in 2012 and 2013 for the project 'The Sciences of Anthropological Classification in "Portuguese Timor" (1894-1975)' (Project FCT—HC/0089/2009) and in 2014 as a consultant for *Sítios & Formas* in a local market project.
- ⁶ Located in today's Manufahi district, sub-district of Fatuberliu.
- ⁷ The concept of bazaars on the 'border' or at crossroads of different kingdoms is relevant because it may be seen as a focal point for interaction and communication, verbal and non-verbal, in the multicultural Timorese society.
- ⁸ Linked by the main roads and telegraph wire.
- ⁹ It is arguable that Sundays were chosen as a way of leading people to attend the morning mass (Hicks 2012).
- ¹⁰ See: Portaria 257.
- ¹¹ In 1912, a new 'regional market' was allowed in Viqueque on Sundays (BOT 26 October 1912, 221).
- ¹² In Portuguese, *tranqueira* means a wooden fence to fortify. Nevertheless, it is also commonly applied to the stone walls that surround the military headquarters of the *comandos*.

- ¹³ See: 1916, Tualo, Viqueque commando (BOT 22 July 1918, 200); Leto-Fó (Letefo), Hatolia Comando (BOT 22 June 1918, 212); Báâ-Guia (Bagia), Baucau Comando (BOT 13 July 1918, 247); Cova, Batugade Military Command (BOT 12 July 1919, 441); Determination that the Dili bazaar should be held on Wednesdays and Sundays (BOT 18 October 1920, 354); Reorganisation of the days of the market of the regional markets (bazaars) of Hato-Lia, Leto-Fó and Atsabe (BOT 17 April 1920, 85); Fatu-Maquerec, Manatuto (BOT, no. 16, 17 April 1921, 86); Bazar-Tete, Aipelo Civil Post (BOT 13 August 1928, 266); Extinction of the regional market of Fato-Russa (BOT 2 June, 128).
- ¹⁴ *Rust en orde* means peace and order, in Dutch.
- ¹⁵ See: 'Boletim do Comércio'.
- ¹⁶ Lisbon streets.
- ¹⁷ Particularly in the dry season, a period when socio-ritualistic activities, like marriages, house reconstructions and village rites, occur.
- ¹⁸ It is difficult to analyse the extent of the success of this measure because of the forthcoming war. The retail trade was practised by local shops, mainly Chinese (Martinho 1943, 154).
- ¹⁹ *Barlake* is the Tetum term for a marriage contract in which the man's family provides certain goods while the woman's family corresponds with others.
- ²⁰ *Doet* lima means *cinco avos*, five 'avos', old currency used in Portuguese Timor.
- ²¹ Some testimonies are critical for certain sexual practices. See: (Carlos. n.d.).
- ²² Timorese friend and trader who took part in the clandestine front.
- ²³ See: Vendedores timorenses tristes pela enorme presença de comerciantes estrangeiros no mercado. 08 de Abril de 2013, 19:07. noticias.sapo.pt/portugues/info/artigo/1310135.html (site discontinued).

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