



FLOWERS IN THE WALL
Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste,
Indonesia, and Melanesia
by David Webster

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Conclusion: Seeking Truth about Truth-seeking

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A tool developed for post-conflict zones in the global South, truth commissions have now come north—to Canada, where they have attempted to deal with the impact of colonial policies on Indigenous peoples, and to parts of Europe, where they have addressed the legacies of communism. Truth knows no borders. Increasingly, neither do truth commissions.

Truth commissions are at times thought to offer healing and reconciliation, allowing societies to “put the past behind them.” The cases examined in *Flowers in the Wall* suggest that a valuable contribution of truth commissions is to unsettle dominant narratives, to tell new stories by drawing on new voices that disrupt and make transformation possible. Truth commissions emerge as vehicles for the mobilization of civil society, not just transient bodies reporting to governments and then closing their doors.

This book has sought, through a close look at aspects of the tricky truth and reconciliation experiences of Timor-Leste, Indonesia, and Melanesia, to contribute to global debates on truth commissions and transitional justice more broadly. Too often, as noted in chapter 2, truth commissions follow “strict forms and narratives” and base themselves on a global template in which Western knowledge is read as universal. Increasingly, analysts of truth commissions stress the importance of the local, of Indigenous traditions, of different ways of plotting stories. We use examples

from the islands of Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific to add to the multiple locally driven studies that seek to “provincialize Europe” rather than seeing European-derived models and ways of constructing narratives as universal.¹

The Timor-Leste section of *Flowers in the Wall* notes that the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) placed a high value on traditional ways of resolving conflict in Timorese communities. In chapter 4, Pat Walsh stresses the importance placed on community reconciliation processes, which rolled out “the big mat” and used local forms to seek a rapprochement between low-level offenders and their neighbours.² Though they are not of course identical from place to place, customary practices in the Indonesian archipelago tend to be lumped under the phrase *adat* (tradition). Lia Kent and Rizki Affiat explain in chapter 13 how the Timorese CAVR experience informed the creation of the new truth commission in Aceh. The effort to include a very different form of Indigenous Melanesian *kastom* (custom) in Solomon Islands is touched on by Terry Brown in chapter 18 and Betty Lina Gigisi in chapter 19. It is not impossible to combine the global truth commission template with Indigenous forms, something that both Timor-Leste’s CAVR and the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SITRC) tried to do, and something that is among the goals of Aceh’s new Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR). But it is a challenge.

On the other hand, omitting local factors seems to doom reconciliation processes to failure. In chapter 14, Arianto Sangadji calls top-down, government-led reconciliation processes in Poso district a failure. An illustration of the same problem comes in chapter 15, where Todd Biderman and Jenny Munro describe the shortcomings of Indonesian state reconciliation efforts in Indigenous Papuan communities. Where Sangadji calls for more attention to class than religious differences, Biderman and Munro note the omission of Indigenous perspectives, especially with regard to land tenure and environmental awareness. They conclude that an effective truth and reconciliation commission in Tanah Papua (the Land of Papua) must integrate these perspectives if it is to succeed. This is a point made very clearly in Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, of course, as Maggie Helwig explores in chapter 20. In Canada’s TRC report, Canadian Indigenous elder Stephen Augustin has suggested that the other dimensions of human experience, our relationship to the earth and all human beings, are

also relevant in working towards reconciliation. Elder Reg Crowshoe similarly noted that reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, from an Aboriginal perspective, requires reconciliation with the natural world.³ It is worth adding that conflict in both Poso, Indonesia (chapter 14) and Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands (chapter 18), were in many ways conflicts over land alienation. Economic “development” can also be ecological destruction, as Ed McWilliams notes when writing in chapter 17 about the giant Freeport mine in Tanah Papua.

Truth commissions are not accustomed to examining economic factors. They turn on issues of individual civil and political rights first and foremost, with collective social and cultural rights noted at times and economic rights often omitted. When economics drives conflict, as it often does, this is a major gap in the work of post-conflict transitional justice. The central areas of Indonesia first experienced the economic changes brought about by integration into global trade and capitalism during Dutch colonial rule. But outlying regions of Indonesia, and areas later invaded by the Indonesian state, like Timor-Leste, were more peripheral to colonial capitalism. The blow of rapid economic change and growing economic inequality often came later. Aceh, Tanah Papua, and Poso each felt the blows of industrial resource extraction (mining, oil and gas) later on, at the hands of multinational companies and an Indonesian state that was, as Baskara Wardaya points out in chapter 10, hungry for foreign investment. This, too, fuelled conflict. The swift rivers that run with gold in Tanah Papua, described by Julian Smythe in chapter 16, were also desired by Western profit-seekers. These included Freeport and other mining companies who entered Tanah Papua with sometimes devastating effects—an entire mountain, sacred to the Amungme people, was transformed into an open-pit mine that now extends far below the ground. Should truth processes therefore include those companies and consider their impact, their role in fuelling conflict, and their responsibility for reconciliation?

Pat Walsh notes in chapter 4 the efforts to include economic rights in the Timorese CAVR’s catalogue of human rights violations under Indonesian rule. In chapter 8, Fernanda Borges makes a similar point about the need for Timor-Leste to integrate “second-generation” economic, social, and cultural rights into its strong embrace of “first-generation” civil and political rights. This is something the CAVR attempted to do. The sections on economic rights may not be the strongest part of the CAVR report,

but the commission's efforts to include economic rights are nonetheless pioneering. The SITRC makes a similar point in citing the uneven distribution of development assistance (centred on the capital, Honiara) and the effects of the 1990s financial crisis as contributing factors to "the tensions" in Solomon Islands. Truth commissions in other countries might usefully follow this direction of integrating economic rights in their larger analysis of human rights.

There is a negative lesson regarding economic factors from Timor-Leste's experience, too. In chapter 6, Laurentina Barreto Soares analyzes the post-independence development plan and is critical of its lack of attention to what came before. There was no effort even to review the development plan put through in the year 2000, let alone consider the scars of two and a half decades of occupation and attendant human rights violations and post-occupation trauma. Timorese development, it seems, was to be done without memory. It was as if the past was forgotten.

This sort of "official forgetting" looms as a serious problem for those who hope to see truth and reconciliation commission reports become blueprints for action rather than static documents left unpublished or quietly shelved in libraries. Rather than pushing against impunity for major human rights violators, the Timorese leadership has preferred good relations with Indonesia and consequently downplayed calls for justice. This means releasing indicted perpetrators and even repeating the excuses once used by the Indonesian government for non-action, as Geoffrey Robinson writes in chapter 3. But when a government denies the past in whole or in part, it does not heal wounds. It leaves them open.

Still, Timor-Leste has done far more on this aspect of memory than many others. In Solomon Islands, a five-volume truth commission report was as impressive in its way as the CAVR's own five volumes, now printed in handsome editions in Indonesian, Portuguese, and English (though not yet in the country's own language, Tetun). The SITRC report was not just shelved—it was never published in the first place. For its part, the Indonesian government has often promised truth commissions, but has not yet delivered on any of these promises. A truth commission into the mass killings of 1965 was promised in 2004, but went by the wayside in 2006. Though the pledge was revived in 2015, to date it has not been acted upon. The Indonesian government also promised a truth commission for Tanah Papua as part of the 2001 Special Autonomy Law, but the promise has not

yet been kept. The 2006 Aceh peace deal also included a clause mandating a truth commission, but the Indonesian government failed to implement the commitment. This is not an impressive record: truth is dangled as a promise, but never delivered. The official forgetting of the New Order years continues, hampering a full post-dictatorship reform process.

This promise unkept in Aceh, however, has led to the interesting creation of a truth commission (the KKR) operating with a provincial government mandate. This limits the commission, since the central Indonesian government is not required to co-operate. In this, Aceh faces the same problem as Timor-Leste: the main perpetrators being beyond its reach, the commission is highly constrained in its work. In the CAVR case, this may have had benefits in forcing a focus on historical narrative and on community-level reconciliation. Time will tell whether or not the same can be said for Aceh.

Reliance on a local rather than national government mandate, however, need not be a barrier to success. A precedent exists in Jeju, South Korea.⁴ During and after the Korean War, the island of Jeju was host to a severe conflict in which leftist political forces were attacked and—as a subsequent truth commission reported—14,028 people were killed. After extensive campaigning for historical justice, Jeju created a provincial truth commission that reported in 1995. Contested memories of the Jeju events became entangled in South Korea's national democratic transition. Still, the existence of a provincial truth commission and the findings of its final report helped spur the creation of a national truth commission into historical human rights violations in Jeju, mandated by the South Korean parliament in 1999. Four years later, that commission's report led to an apology from the president and other measures. A broader South Korean truth commission, with a mandate covering the entire country rather than just Jeju, followed in 2005. Changes at the national government level prevented it from finishing its work. Still, a provincial truth commission had led to national movement on truth and reconciliation. It is at least possible that Aceh's provincial truth commission, the first within Indonesia's borders, will spur movement on truth processes elsewhere in the country.

Aceh's KKR is also innovative, as Kent and Affiat indicate, in its permanence. Scholars of truth and reconciliation have seen weaknesses in the "episodic" truth commission model, starting with a government mandate and ending with a final report.⁵ Timor-Leste's robust follow-up institutions

to the CAVR are perhaps some of the best examples to date of trying to avoid this trouble. The “burying” of the Solomon Islands TRC report, meanwhile, provides one of the best examples of the lack of follow-up. Aceh has picked up on the suggestion for a permanent commission that carries on its work with interim deadlines but no final closing date. This frees it of a measure of dependence on government renewals of the mandate (even if it remains dependent on the provincial legislature for funding). It also frees it of the pressure to finish the job. Truth and reconciliation become process, not merely event.

In the introduction to this volume, we proposed considering truth and reconciliation as a process in which the convening and work of a truth commission was merely the middle phase of a three-phase process. The Timorese experience illustrates how there have also been a pre-truth commission phase of mobilizing for accountability, victim healing, and truth-seeking, as well as a post-truth commission phase of “socialization” in which the report’s findings are disseminated and a popular sense of ownership and commitment to action are developed. In chapter 9, Manuela Leong Pereira describes the work in the post-truth commission phase of ACbit, the Timorese affiliate of the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), which works closely with Asian Justice and Rights (AJAR), the Indonesian NGO most active in upholding the rights of victims of past conflicts.⁶ These NGOs’ work of “socializing” the CAVR report will be aided considerably by the new Centro Nacional *Chega! Da Memória à Esperança* (*Chega! National Centre: Though Memory to Hope*) established in 2017. Timor-Leste’s work in continuity of truth and reconciliation processes, it seems, has been picked up and expanded upon in Aceh in ways that, if the KKR meets its promise, could transcend the idea of phases. It shifts understandings of transitional justice towards processes rather than a “tool kit” approach, as Kent and Affiat write. It also has the potential to shift the narrative form of truth commission reports from finished documents to works in continual process. Aceh’s experience will bear watching.

It is worth underlining that while truth commissions are mandated by and report to governments, the mobilizing phase beforehand and the socialization phase afterwards both rely on civil-society organizations. If there is no popular demand for truth and reconciliation, there is not likely to be a truth process. The SITRC would not have been formed without the work of NGOs led by the Solomon Islands Christian Association. The issue

of truth in Tanah Papua would not exist without the calls for “straightening” history issuing from NGOs, church groups, and Indigenous networks. The KKR in Aceh exists only because NGO voices pushed for it and drew on Timorese and other advice from outside.

Similarly, the energy in advocating for official action on the CAVR report’s recommendations came more from the NGO side than from inside the post-CAVR Technical Secretariat, which lost momentum due to lack of oversight and parliamentary inaction on the CAVR report. Without civil-society pressure, the CAVR report might have been shelved with much less action—and certainly non-government voices lobbying the Timorese government were vital to the Centro *Chega!* being approved. These same voices are working hard to socialize the CAVR’s findings in Indonesia and internationally. Within Timor-Leste, the slogan “*Chega!* for Us” is not just the name of a group, but also an assertion that civil society, not government, “owns” the report. Without this socialization phase, implementation of truth commission reports seems much less likely. Certainly, despite the work of AJAR and other Indonesian NGOs in the face of official Indonesian resistance, there has been less work to socialize the CAVR report and the Timorese-Indonesian joint truth commission in Indonesia, leading to little follow-up action. Much the same is true in Solomon Islands, a situation that has left relatively little pressure on government to implement the SITRC’s findings.

In all three countries examined, women are a distinct minority in government positions. Truth commission hearings have at times helped to open up more space for women’s voices.⁷ In the civil-society sector, women are far more visible, and are working in many cases to build border-crossing networks of shared experience. As Burma (Myanmar) entered a phase of democratic transition around its first free post-dictatorship elections in 2015, a group of women from that country travelled to Timor-Leste to learn from the work of Timorese women’s victims groups. The trip was hosted by ACbit and funded by the Indonesian transitional justice group AJAR—another ICTJ affiliate. It is one example of the sort of transnational women’s networks that have emerged in the spaces between more formal government-centred transitional justice work.⁸

Women emerge as “signs of disorder,” Jacqueline Aquino Siapno writes in chapter 5. As Gigisi recounts in chapter 19, women have had to work to have their voices heard in truth and reconciliation processes. Yet

in Tanah Papua, in Timor-Leste, in Solomon Islands and elsewhere, women are an important part of peacemaking processes.⁹ The contributions in this book suggest that more disorder, more pressure, may help to make more successful commissions by including a more gendered awareness of reconciliation.

The case studies in *Flowers in the Wall* are mostly from majority-Christian societies, with civil-society groups often linked to religious institutions. This is truest in Solomon Islands, a country whose people are 98 per cent Christian. It is also true in heavily Catholic Timor-Leste, as Jess Agustin points out in chapter 7. Indeed, truth commissions often seem tied to the Christian faith and to Christian understandings of reconciliation.¹⁰ The emergence of truth commissions in Muslim-majority countries is most evident in Morocco and, more recently, in Tunisia and Aceh. In each case, there are interesting divergences from the TRC model that emerged in South Africa and Latin America, such as a stress on reparation for harm done.¹¹

What of the places in Indonesia that are still in *pre-truth* commission phases, that have been promised but denied truth and reconciliation processes, that are still home to civil-society organizations struggling for historical justice and accountability for human rights violations? We have already highlighted the need to take account of Indigenous rights and Indigenous perspectives, of relationships to the land, and of economic factors. These matter in local places under Indonesian rule, all the way from Sabang (in Aceh) to Merauke (in Tanah Papua), to once again evoke that Indonesian nationalist slogan. Then there are the “1965 events,” the memory of a mass killing that remains unaddressed by government even while it is spoken about more and more in film, literature, and the conversations of non-governmental gatherings, as Wardaya describes in Chapter 10.¹² In Indonesia, it is now possible to publish individual stories of suffering like that of Gatot Lestario, which forms chapter 12 of this book. Now more than half a century old, the memories of 1965 will need to look more to historical justice than contemporary violations, as Bernd Schaefer writes in chapter 11. In Tanah Papua, too, “history needs healing and recognition,” to borrow the words of the Papuan multi-faith “Land of Peace” initiative discussed in chapter 15. *Pelurusan sejarah*—setting straight the history, challenging the dominant state narrative that does violence to people’s

sense of who they are and what has happened in the past—is needed in order to permit healing and the resolution of conflict.

Historians have grappled with issues of memory and history, and the way memories of colonial rule have shaped post-colonial events.¹³ Dialogue between different historical “master narratives” has been advanced as a tool to resolve conflict.¹⁴ In many parts of Indonesia, clashing historical narratives, diametrically opposed versions of the past, are contributing factors to conflict. To resolve that conflict, it is necessary to attempt a dialogue between clashing narratives, for each side to at least acknowledge that the other side has a different history that shares its identity and its aspirations. Yet the Papuan call for historical dialogue, in the 2001 special autonomy package, became a commission empowered to “provide clarification of Papua’s history in order to strengthen the people’s unity in the State of the Republic of Indonesia.”¹⁵ Even that promise remains unkept. A 2005 protest in Papua could still demand the end to state violence committed against people “merely because they have a different understanding of history.”¹⁶ In the words of Muridan Widjojo:

History should not be treated as a fixed position involving absolute truth and determining collective identity. Rather, history should be treated as a negotiable construction involving acceptance and compromise, and providing benefits for both parties rather than being the monopoly of just one side. Otherwise, history in Papua will perpetuate an endless cycle of violence.¹⁷

In the dialogue that achieved a peace deal in Aceh in 2005, both sides agreed to set aside their historical grievances and start fresh.¹⁸ This helped achieve peace. But the continued struggles for truth-telling and accountability, mainly within civil society, continued for a decade. Not all was resolved: many people in Aceh still sought historical justice.

“Official forgetting,” then, does not seem to end civil-society campaigning. The same may be true on the Indonesian national stage. While chapter 10 describes continued campaigning inside Indonesia, chapter 11 promotes the idea of a careful and document-driven historical commission. This recalls such earlier efforts to centre history and systems of oppression as Guatemala’s Historical Clarification Commission. Indeed,

the concept of historical clarification may be making a comeback. It is included in Papuan campaigning demands. It also lies at the centre of the truth commission into the history of slavery on the island of Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean. That country's Truth and Justice Commission had the longest historical sweep to investigate of any commission yet—370 years of slavery under Dutch, French, and finally British rule, with the goal of redressing poverty and other negative effects of slavery on the descendants of slaves and revealing, in the prime minister of the day's words, "the true history" of a dark colonial period.¹⁹ More recently, the idea is moving north. It is the thread that ties together the Canadian TRC, which delved into the hidden history of "Indian residential schools" that separated children from their families and communities in an effort to assimilate them into settler society. Similarly, the concept of historical clarification animated Germany's "Commission of Inquiry for the Assessment of History and Consequences of the SED Dictatorship in [East] Germany." This truth commission aimed, at least in theory, to reveal the crimes of the East German communist government and thereby help heal a divided Germany.²⁰

The latter examples imply a move towards looking at the effect of systems of oppression, from slavery to colonialism to an assimilationist model of residential schools that amounted, in the words of the Canadian TRC, to "cultural genocide."²¹ Here there may be a global move, including from some of the cases examined in this book, away from the focus on individual rights. The South African TRC model remains powerful. The CAVR in Timor-Leste and the KKR in Aceh echo its name, as have commissions from Chile to Congo to Canada. Desmond Tutu wrote a foreword for the CAVR's report.²² The Solomon Islands TRC very much drew on the South African model, from its name to Tutu's presence at its launch, creating what one author called "a performance of reconciliation in the theatre of post-conflict peacebuilding."²³ But from Papuan demands for a more connected understanding to Timorese efforts to include economic oppression in a truth commission report, the focus may be shifting a little towards groups and systemic violations of human rights.

At the same time, commissions are trying to remain victim-centred. For instance, the SITRC wanted to "restore the human dignity of victims and promote reconciliation by allowing victims to tell their stories about the violations and abuses suffered and providing for perpetrators to relate their experiences, creating a climate fostering constructive exchange

between victim and perpetrator.”²⁴ CAVR’s “central principle,” in the words of Isabel Guterres, one of its commissioners, was “to listen to and honour those who had suffered” and place “victims of violations at the centre of the national story of Timor-Leste.”²⁵ The wording here is very much along the lines of global thinking about the value for victims of telling their stories, an assumption that is increasingly being challenged. But the commissions do appear, at least, to be trying to make something of the compiled stories. The CAVR effort to use victim voices to write the first history of Timor-Leste driven by Timor-Leste is one example. CAVR chief commissioner Aniceto Guterres Lopes analyzes the testimonies as a collective effort to “write the past for the sake of the future.”²⁶

The category of “victim” is fluid, as chapter 13 points out.²⁷ Yet in many cases groups that identify as victims form the core of campaigns for truth-seeking. Chapter 10 describes some of the groups of victims of the 1965 events and their supporters and their truth-seeking efforts to break down walls of silence. If Timor-Leste needed two truth commissions—the CAVR and the bilateral Timorese-Indonesian Commission on Truth and Friendship—it is perhaps because the first was victim-centred in its mandate and work, while the second was decidedly government-centred, designed in part to undermine civil-society campaigns against the impunity of perpetrators still at large in Indonesia. The CTF was designed to settle things. The CAVR and its post-truth commission socializers aimed instead to *un-settle*.

This “unsettling” may be among the key contributions that the Timorese experience of truth and reconciliation has to offer. Reconciliation can’t simply ask those who have suffered to forgive their oppressors. The CTF had value in prompting an official Indonesian government acknowledgement of massive human rights violations during 1999, the final year of the country’s occupation of Timor-Leste. But it also had “too much friendship, not enough truth,” as Siapno writes above, and thus risked burying the very real ongoing legacy of those human rights violations. It tried in some ways to put reconciliation back in the shadows by placing the blame on anonymous institutions rather than the individuals with command responsibility, thereby frustrating the rights of victims and allowing impunity to continue. Problems with the CTF are compounded by its very limited distribution.

More broadly, there are dangers of a new official forgetting about crimes against humanity in East Timor. Official denials and official forgetting allow “non-truth” to flourish in Indonesia.²⁸ Equally worrying, they undercut interesting steps such as the CAVR effort to move towards “reparative justice”—justice that repairs the damage of conflict and human rights violations, rather than concentrating on accountability for perpetrators (retributive justice) or healing the wounds to society (restorative justice, the realm of most truth commission work).²⁹ CAVR attempted reparative justice by providing recognition, symbolic memorialization, and, in some cases, compensation to survivors. The SITRC also proposed a comprehensive reparation plan, mostly non-monetary measures such as apologies and educational assistance to conflict survivors and displaced people.

None of these measures are purely academic. They affect survivors, and they also affect the future of nations. In chapter 8 Borges argues that respect for human rights has become central to Timorese national identity. This is one legacy of the long fight for independence. Another is what Siapno calls, in chapter 5, clandestinity. Activists had to fight for freedom from the shadows, using secret names and secret identities, she writes. But how useful is this in independent Timor-Leste? Does it risk undermining the stability of democracy? Does it, perhaps, even threaten to undermine Timor-Leste’s identity as a rights-respecting country?

Clandestine activism, in Siapno’s account, often required leaving no written record, no trace that could be discovered. Truth-seeking requires opening up the archives and acknowledging the stories of survivors, letting them grow like flowers through the crumbling walls of official narratives.

So, stories and archives. Personal stories rely on memory and may be, as Zwierzchowski notes in her review of the field, an ineffective path to objective truth. But this is perhaps the point. Stories are messier than a single agreed-upon narrative, but they may get us closer to truths. They are told in the hopes of gaining a result—repentance from the perpetrator, reparations from the state, some other redress, or simply recognition. Stories are not always redemptive, as Kent and Affiat write. They do not always heal.³⁰ Yet they may allow new and more complex national narratives to emerge in place of the stories of “rainbow nations,” heroic armed struggle against foreign rule, or redemption through suffering, to cite narratives on offer in South Africa and Timor-Leste. The new national narratives are important in overturning former colonial narratives that erased local

understandings, but they too can become dominant master narratives that erase as much as they “nation build.”

As for archival sources, these tend to be international. All the more so when local archives and other repositories of memory are themselves victims of violence. Guatemala’s truth commission was able to draw on US archives. On his last visit to Argentina, President Barack Obama agreed to open up some US archival sources on Argentina’s US-backed “dirty war” in the 1970s and ‘80s.³¹ But more often than not, relevant archives are closed, making it hard to find the truth about past events. Among the exceptions, Timor-Leste again leads the way. Its truth commission was able to access some very revealing official records from Australia and the United States. This was due to tireless and vocal campaigning by Australian solidarity groups hoping to open the secrets of Australian government support for Indonesia’s rule. In the United States, it was possible through the work of a remarkable non-governmental organization, the National Security Archive.³² International civil-society groups backed up local civil-society campaigns. An effective Indonesian truth commission would need similar work to throw open archives, as Bernd Schaefer explains in chapter 11.

International linkages must mean more than the Indonesian-Timorese CTF, though that commission did provide a useful precedent for border-crossing truth commissions not linked to one government alone. In chapter 3 Geoffrey Robinson notes the selective compassion of the international community, which pressed hard for judicial mechanisms of retributive justice in Yugoslavia but discouraged anything similar in Timor-Leste or Indonesia. Holding Indonesian generals accountable had a much higher political cost than arresting militia leaders and politicians in the former Yugoslavia. More importantly, it would have exposed Western government complicity and active involvement in genocidal events in Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

The CAVR’s final report included recommendations to the international community, including a call for reparations to be paid by the governments that backed, bankrolled, and armed the Indonesian army, thereby enabling mass atrocities in Timor-Leste. Western governments named in the report chose to ignore its record of their role, and the recommendations addressed to them. CAVR’s recommendations to the international community therefore remain buried. The Timorese government, running a small country with a small population and reliant on good relations with

its neighbours and with the great powers, is unlikely to take the lead in challenging this silence. Nevertheless, there are lessons from CAVR and from truth-seeking campaigns in the region. Truth processes must cross borders if they are to reveal the whole story and provide effective reconciliation. And again, that reconciliation must require action from the powerful, not just forgiveness from victims. Truth-seeking should lead to action, not to closure.

Notes

- 1 The phrase comes from Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007). See also Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (London: Zed Books, 2012) and Joyce Green, ed., *Indivisible: Indigenous Human Rights* (Halifax, NS: Fernwood, 2014).
- 2 Dionísio Babo-Soares, “Nahe Biti: The Philosophy and Process of Grassroots Reconciliation (and Justice) in East Timor,” *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 5, no. 1 (2004):15–33. For a more critical view of the problems in the district around Maubara, see Douglas Kammen, *Three Centuries of Conflict in East Timor* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2015).
- 3 *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future. Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg, MB: TRC Canada, 2015), 17.
- 4 Hunjoon Kim, “Seeking Truth After 50 years: The National Committee for Investigation of the Truth about the Jeju 4.3 Events,” *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 3, no. 3 (2009): 406–23.
- 5 Ray Nickson and John Braithwaite, “Deeper, Broader, Longer Transitional Justice,” *European Journal of Criminology* 11, no. 4 (2014): 445–63.
- 6 On the ICTJ, see “About Us,” <https://www.ictj.org/about> (accessed 21 May 2017).
- 7 Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, *Timor-Leste: Women and the Conflict* (Dili, TL: CAVR, 2005).
- 8 ACbit, “Burmese Women Activists Exchange Visit to Timor-Leste,” ACbit report, 29 October 2015, <http://chegabaita.org/en/2015/10/29/burmese-women-activists-exchange-visit-to-timor-leste/> (accessed 21 May 2017). On transnational women’s networks more generally, see Pascale Dufour, Dominique Masson, and Dominique Caouette, eds., *Solidarities Beyond Borders: Transnationalizing Women’s Movements* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010).
- 9 Lia Kent, “After the Truth Commission: Gender and Citizenship in Timor-Leste,” *Human Rights Review* 17, no. 1 (2016): 51–70; Martha M. Wospakrik with Christy Reed, “‘The Woman Who Loves’: Women as Guardians of Peace and Weavers of Life in Biak, Papua,” in *Creating the Third Force: Indigenous Processes of Peacemaking*, ed. Hamdesa Tusso and Maureen P. Flaherty (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2016); Jan Haaken et al.,

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