

# Chinese in East Timor

## Identity, society and economy

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“Nowhere are there to be found people richer than the Chinese” (Ibn Battuta’s *Travels*, Itinerary 1332-1346).

### Introductory remarks

The Chinese, coming to the coastal regions of Timor Island in the fourteenth century, were among the first who took an interest in trading the rich sandalwood from Timor. In Dili, more than five centuries later, the *Guandi* Pagoda and the Chinese Cemetery (*Cina Rate* in Tetum) in the Audian suburb stand as reminders of the long history of the Hakka Chinese in East Timor.

The Hakka of Timor currently identify themselves as Timorese Chinese or simply “Timorese”. Language is an important part of the culture of any individual and of his/her identity. The Timorese Chinese speak several languages: Hakka, Mandarin, Tetum – the national language – and *Bahasa Indonesia*. Many of them also speak Portuguese, the official language. All languages are useful, but the Constitution of East Timor rules that Tetum and Portuguese are the official languages. The evolution of education in East Timor is important for the Timorese Chinese. Until the 1980s the Chinese Secondary School of Dili was active in this field.

The Timorese Chinese culture is distinguished from the Timorese culture in many ways. Courage is highly prized among the Timorese which is reflected in their attitudes to others. The Chinese feel obliged to do business with their friends, classmates, and partners first. The Timorese have friends but their relationships with others are different.

This article briefly presents my research on the Hakka Chinese of East Timor – mainly from eastern Guangdong Province – and other Han Chinese. I also look at post-independence newcomers; after the year 2000, many Chinese came to East Timor (officially named Timor Lorosae) to develop their entrepreneurial talent.

### The Chinese in Southeast Asia and Timor

During the Ming Dynasty and later, Chinese traders interested in sandalwood arrived on Timor Island. The first Hakka 客家 (*Kejia*) probably came from Macau and Guangdong

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*The Island of Timor. Image by Mats Halldin (GFDL, CC-BY, PD)*

Province at a time before the seventeenth century. Like Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) and Lee Kwan Yew (1923-2015), the great majority of the Chinese in East Timor before the proclamation of independence in 2002 were Hakka. This Hakka-dominant homogeneity in East Timor and Kupang stands in sharp contrast with the diversity of the Chinese in Indonesia; “Chineseness in Medan, for instance, is different from Chineseness in Jakarta, Pontianak, Bangka, Semarang, Sukabumi or Malang” (Hoon 2008: 4).

Chinese people from Fujian and Guangdong provinces are numerous in Southeast Asia. In 1830, 1 million Chinese were residents of Southeast Asia, i.e. 3 per cent of the population. In the 1930s the number had grown to 3 million, but represented a significantly smaller percentage. At present, Overseas Chinese are probably 2 per cent of the total resident population of Southeast Asia.

We may survey the numbers of Chinese in Southeast Asia (with percentage of population within parentheses): 1) 6 million in Malaysia (34 percent); 2) 6 million in Indonesia (3 per cent); 3) 6 million in Thailand (14 percent); 4) 2 million in Singapore (76 percent); 5) 1 million in Vietnam (2 percent); 6) 600,000 in the Philippines (1 percent); 7) 300,000 in Cambodia (4 percent); 8) 25,000 in Laos (0.8 percent). These numbers do not always reflect the full extent of Chinese presence. Partially assimilated Chinese are often not counted as Chinese (CSEA and Purcell).

Because of their resilience Hakka people were sent to West Borneo between 1740 and 1745, and also used to colonize Bangka, Billiton and East Sumatra (Purcell 1980: 5).

Movement of population between Macau and Timor occurred mainly in the eighteenth century. Based on the author's long fieldwork in East Timor, the present article studies the Hakka of Timor Island as being a group with unique features. It deals with their languages, identity, the importance of networks and 'face', sociology and economy.

The economic aspect is important to understand the current position of this group. Since 2000, many Chinese have come to East Timor in order to develop their entrepreneurial talent. Here I make the parallel between the slow economic development of a new country, on one hand, and East Timor's attraction for Chinese entrepreneurs and specialists on the other. For U.S. firms, Chinese merchants selling consumer goods are probably the major competitors (DBTL 2013).

Currently, there are Chinese residing in East Timor who work as computer, factory and supermarket entrepreneurs, and as cell phone sellers and repairers; people who want to take a calculated risk and travel 'globally' in the new world of the twenty-first century. This is matched by the official relations with mainland China. After the independence of East Timor in 2002, the Embassy of China became one of the most active diplomatic representations in the country.

Since the proclamation of independence in 2002, the influence of China in East Timor has been remarkable and multifaceted. Standing between Asia and the Pacific, the geopolitical position of East Timor attracts the interest of many countries. A newly independent country, it has around fifteen years of gas and oil off-shore reserves. Its national currency, the US\$, is backed by the USA and its own central bank. In 2001 and mainly in the post-2008 years, East Timor attracted many Chinese, both from China, and overseas, who established many small enterprises. Chinese businessmen have been particularly helpful in developing this new country, where 37% of its 1.2 million inhabitants population live on less than 1 US\$ a day.<sup>2</sup>

## History

*Dade Nanhai zhi* 大德南海志 ('Spratly's Chronicle') mentions that the Chinese sailed to Timor via the Banggai Islands, east of Sulawesi, in the quest for sandalwood in the fourteenth century (Ptak 1992: 31, 49; Gunn 1999: 54-56). Around 1515, Portuguese colonization started in the Western part of the Island of Timor, in Lifau, Oecussi.

It may be of interest to give some details about the Hakka before their migration to Timor. "There is much speculation concerning the historical roots of the Hakka. Some claim that they were the first Chinese people to arrive in China. Others claim that the Hakka are the descendants of the Xiongnu tribe. This much is agreed upon: At various stages between the fourth and thirteenth centuries AD, large numbers of people were forced to flee their homes in the war-torn Yellow River valley to seek refuge in Southern China... (Guangdong, Jiangxi, Guangxi, Sichuan, Hunan and Fujian)"... These war refugees came to be known as *Kejia*... meaning "guests". When the Mongol swept across China in the thirteenth century, many Hakka fled to the south (History n.d.).

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Non Governmental Organization Lao Hamutuk (April 2012), Dili.

In the eighteenth century, many Hakka Chinese arrived from Macau. It seems that they first settled first in Lifau in the Portuguese colony of Timor. In 1769, Dili replaced Oecussi as the capital of Portuguese Timor. Subsequently, Hakka Chinese from Guangdong Province moved to Dili in 1769 and in the following years. Dili became a larger city by 1864, so an important Chinese immigration took place after that date.

The *Guandi* Pagoda and the Chinese Cemetery of Dili (*Cina Rate* in Tetum) demonstrate the long history of the Hakka Chinese in East Timor. They still practice ancestor worship, but the author thinks that they may have changed the main social event for remembrance of their ancestors after their migration to Australia, through their powerful associations. However, magnificent tombs in Audian cemetery attest the long economic prosperity of the Timorese Chinese community.

Timor lacked direct communication with the outside world: Goa (which was returned to India in 1967) and Macau had played an important role during the previous five centuries. The Portuguese Governor of Macau eventually came to control Timor for a period during the early twentieth century. The political relationship between China and Macau influenced the Portuguese Colony of Timor. During the 1960s, Felipe Barata, the Governor of Timor from 1959 to 1963, recognized the beneficial influence of the Chinese Timorese community (Barata 1961). Its helpful presence has continued into the present. Language is important. The Atoni of Oecussi speak the same language as the Atoni of Kefamenanu and Kupang, *Uab Meto*.<sup>3</sup> Oecussi is an enclave inside the western part of Timor Island, situated in the East Nusa Tenggara province, NTT (*Nusa Tenggara Timur*) of Indonesia. Many Timorese Chinese of Oecussi speak perfectly Meto and Indonesian. Some of them speak also Tetum.

One may note that Portuguese Timor and “Timor Timur” (Tim Tim under Indonesian rule) follow Wang Gungwu’s (1976) pattern, namely an “absence of relation with China”, meaning lack of relationship with the People’s Republic of China. Just before December 1975, and just after, many left Portuguese Timor, mainly to Australia. Out of an estimated population of 25,000 Hakka, around 700 Hakka were killed in 1975. Hakka Timorese Chinese live mainly in Darwin, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

Between 1976 and 1999, on the other hand, Indonesian Chinese businessmen were present in Dili and Baucau. However, Jakarta did not accept influences from the Chinese homeland in East Timor during that time. During these years, the former cultural link with Taiwan came to an end.

As in Macau, where the Chinese God of War is popular, the *Guandi* Pagoda stood in the center of Dili in 1999 as a conclusive proof of the widespread acceptance of the Chinese on the island of Timor. In the month of September, many buildings were charred all over the country, but this pagoda and another one in Liquiça were spared.

In 2000, the United Nations, under the name UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor), assumed the sovereignty and the government of East

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3 Meto is called Dawan in West Timor and Baikeno by the Portuguese.

Timor. Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysian Chinese established service enterprises and other types of companies in partnership with Australian entrepreneurs. Around 2006, Resende Hotel and Hello Mister, two non-Chinese buildings were torched.

On 20 May 2002, East Timor became independent. Slowly, many Mainland and Overseas Chinese entrepreneurs came to the capital Dili.

In the 2010s, the Hakka association in the country registered approximately 2,400 remaining Hakka which constitutes some 400 families (Hakka 2015). Two Timorese Chinese politicians in East Timor emerged: Pedro Lay, first Chinese Cabinet Minister, 2007-2015, and Francisco Kalbuadi Lay, elected to the National Parliament in Dili, 2002-2005; he is currently Minister of Tourism.

## Identity

The “Hakka-speaking Timorese-Chinese” identify themselves as Timorese Chinese or simply “Timorese” (Wise 2006: 148-150). The last term identifies these Chinese as sons-of-their-land, namely of East Timor, but to be Hakka is also a source of pride for them.

Following Wang Gungwu’s (1976) thesis of uniqueness, I am inclined to believe that Timorese Chinese are unique. First, because they are homogeneous, since they are ethnically Hakka. Elsewhere in Southeast Asia we find Fujianese (mainly Hokkien) as well as other groups such as Chaozhou or Teochew, for example in Thailand. Secondly, because Hakka are resilient and had the courage to go to Portuguese Timor and stay there, even if they were sometimes compelled by the Portuguese colonial system. The Jesuits for example found that Timor’s climate was too risky, so their arrival to the island occurred late. The earliest record of the presence of the Jesuits in Timor - Leste is from the end of the nineteenth century, “A Missão de Soibada” was established near Manatuto in 1897.

Before 1975, the majority of the Timorese Chinese would have been schooled in the Portuguese system of education. Before 1975 their relation was therefore closer to Portugal in a certain way. Previously some may have valued their “Portugueseness” (Wise *ibid.*: 124), but times are changing. More than ten years after the Independence of East Timor, the new generation of Timorese Chinese is modern, and the colonial past is behind them.

The Indonesian process of reconstructing “identity”, “Chineseness” and “Indonesianness” after 1998 (Hoon 2008: 177) is related to the reconstruction of the identity of the Timorese majority between 1976 and 1999. It seems that it was more difficult to assimilate the Timorese who are very nationalistic.

However, the uniqueness the Timorese Chinese helped them, and continues to favor them to be closer to the local Timorese than other Han Chinese. The ‘flexibility’ of the Hakka of Timor has to be clearly mentioned; in Macau this quality is also attributed to the local Eurasians called Macanese. For Hoon it is a question of the “urban and global force of modernity” which “reconnects” with the majority. For the Timorese Chinese the matter is more complex, and the harmonious relations between them and the Timorese majority is based on centuries of relationship.

The importance of the local god 土神 *Tushen* or *Tudishen* in the Chinese Cemetery of Dili is remarkable and reflects the integration of the Timorese Hakka with their native country, East Timor. The family name Lay 黎 (Li in *Putonghua*) is common among Chinese Timorese. So it is not surprising that this name is also common in this cemetery.

In 1922 the Hakka Christians in China numbered 30,000. Today, most of the estimated 150,000 Hakka Christians in China are located in southern Guangdong. It is therefore not surprising to note that most of Hakka in Timor are Catholic.

Having more “monotheistic tendencies” has contributed to the fact that relatively larger numbers of the Hakka converted to Christianity than did other Han Chinese.<sup>4</sup> With the replacement of the Taiwanese influence in East Timor by that of Mainland China since 1976, the Timorese Chinese are probably less religiously oriented. This study does point to a systematic new religious trend. Additional research is necessary in Dili and in Australia.

The Hakka diet in East Timor is “a combination of Chinese and Portuguese food”. It is interesting to note that among the Chinese of Macau the importance of Portuguese bread as a daily food has diminished between 1999 and 2015. However, in East Timor Portuguese bread is still a staple food and many Hakka families in Dili bake and sell this bread.

Timorese Chinese who left Timor Island in 1975 did not return to their land before 2000. They established rich and powerful Timorese Chinese associations in Australia, in particular in Sydney and Victoria 维省帝汶华人联谊会 (*weisheng diwen huaren lianyihui*). Since 2000 many have traveled back from Australia to Dili. Some of them, being well educated, currently own companies and enterprises in both East Timor and Australia. To better understand the identity of Timorese Chinese, social behavior and other Chinese way of life are useful to point out.

### Social behavior. Timorese Chinese networks and ‘face’

It is may be a quality of all Chinese, but it seems useful to mention the Hakka networks or relationship system called *guanxi* (connection, relationships) which is a main difference with other Timorese. The Chinese feel obligated to do business with their friends, classmate, and partners first. There are risks with this system as well. When something goes wrong, the relationships are challenged, and friendships or partners quickly disappear. The Timorese also have classmates on whom they rely, but the risk to lose them if you fail is greater for the Hakka.

Although the statement may not appear to be scientific, the Timorese are very courageous. The Cuban professors who trained 500 graduated medical doctors of East Timor realized that no other people could be compared to them (author’s interviews in Cuba, Dili, Baucau and Oecussi between 2002 and 2012).

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4 <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Hakka-Religion-and-Expressive-Culture.html> (accessed 23 July 2015).

The Chinese culture is distinguished from the Timorese culture in many ways. An example of Timorese courage – which could certainly be criticized – is the story of Major Alfredo Reinado who became a hero for the youth of Timor before his death in 2008. Reinado was captured by the Indonesian military (TNI) in 1975, and served as a porter for TNI in Sulawesi in particular. He eventually escaped in 1995 and managed to reach Australia. He became a leading officer of the Timorese Armed Forces. In 2006 he refused to shoot petitioners, namely a group of petitioning soldiers, involving charges of discrimination within the national army. This was the central trigger for the crisis in Timor-Leste in 2006. Reinado was briefly arrested but escaped from prison. Reinado was then on the run between 2006 and 2008. He was finally killed in February 2008, but the youth admired him.

The Timorese are thus very courageous. Questions of courage are however not the main point for Timorese Chinese; more important is “politeness in order to avoid or minimize face-threatening activities” or respect, showing trustworthiness. The Timorese Chinese are inclined to deal politely in business. What is polite to a Timorese Chinese is the relative status and social distance “claimed and granted in the faces which have been accredited in the encounter” (Downes 1998: 293; Goffman 1955). What is more important is the ritual nature to interpret the complexity of social and economic activities. For Bourdieu (1977; Hall 2002: 37) the Hakka politeness could be interpreted as *habitus*, “a set off bodily dispositions acquired through engagement in your everyday activities that dispose us to act in certain ways”.

Timorese Chinese are well integrated in the Timorese society. In 2012, when the United Nations departed and a certain decline of the economy set in, some critics who were not inclined toward their Timorese Chinese compatriots, appeared among the Timorese: “Organize yourselves, meet and speak together, otherwise the Chinese will rise...” (CM). The Timorese Chinese and other Mainland or Overseas Chinese in East Timor are a prosperous community, but their hard work and business capacity is sometimes not well estimated by the local Timorese. Education and languages are useful to understand better the Timorese Chinese.

### Education and language skills of the Timorese Chinese

In Southeast Asia, Chinese is taught in a number of countries as for example Myanmar (Burma). However, the Chinese language is not taught anymore in East Timor. In the 1970s, the Chinese School of Dili had 8 Chinese teachers and around 100 students. In other 12 Chinese primary schools all over the island, including Liquiça, west of Dili on the northern coast, and Lospalos at the eastern end of Timor, 1000 students were registered (CS). Except the School of Dili which survived longer, these Chinese schools were partly closed with the departure of the pro-Taiwan Chinese in the 1970s and have not yet restarted.

The Chinese School of Dili was active up to the 1980s. In 2000, during the slow re-opening of education, this school was one of the first to have students, but it was not a place where one could study Chinese anymore. To try to improve this current lack of Chinese schools, an estimated 1,200 Timorese have studied in China between 2003 and 2014, but very few of them were registered and graduated in universities. As a comparison, Cuba's education of 800 medical students should be mentioned. More than 500 are graduated and actively work in hospitals and clinics as M.D. in their home country.

Timorese Chinese speak many languages. Language is important to define the identity. Evidently, the Hakka of East Timor first speak their own mother tongue Hakka. It is interesting to note that in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, for example, new generations sometimes lose their own Hakka Chinese dialect which is replaced by Cantonese. Similarly the Australian Hakka Chinese and their children are certainly less fluent in Hakka, or may have lost their mother tongue after studying English in Australia. Those who stayed in Timor between 1976 and 2000 and their descendants continue to speak Hakka at home. But while many continue to speak Hakka, all Timorese Chinese do not automatically speak Mandarin fluently. The younger Timorese Chinese in East Timor generally speak Hakka, Tetum, and are more proficient in English than Indonesian.

The level of education of the Chinese in East Timor is superior to the general level of education. The Portuguese largely left educational activities in the hands of the Catholic Church which also educated the Timorese Chinese. "With regard to literacy, school enrollment, and educational attainment" under Indonesian rule between 1976 and 1999 there was a rapid improvement over time (Jones 2000: 43).

Timorese Chinese are proficient in Tetum and often speak another of the 14 East Timorese languages, besides Portuguese. Chinese *Mestiços* are numerous, and some of them speak Chinese. "The 'hybridity' of Timorese Chinese operates as a sort of passport, smoothing the transition between cultural spaces" (Wise 2006). Chinese Timorese businessmen and traders spoke Portuguese before 1976 and at present speak English and often *Bahasa Indonesia*. Those who stayed in East Timor between 1976 and 1999, speak fluently Indonesian.

English – the second language of many mainland Chinese going overseas – is not yet commonly spoken in East Timor. Fortunately the Timorese youth want to study English; however there is a noticeable lack of English teachers in the country, despite the efforts of too few Australian teachers. The country is limited by its constitution, which gives priority to two official languages, Tetum (used in primary schools) and Portuguese.

Considering the importance of English for business in Dili and the flexibility of the Chinese businessmen who speak English, or may have interpreters who can speak Tetum fluently, it is surprising to find an article mentioning that "too many Chinese businessmen are the cause of the Timorese unemployment".<sup>5</sup> Unemployment is certainly

5 'Negosiantes Chineza nakonu, hamosu dezempregu' (Chinese businessmen are 'rich', we are jobless) (4 April 2012) in *Suara Timor Lorosae*, p. 3.

critical among youth in the country, but this dire unemployment has nothing to do with the Chinese. Chinese usefully fill the gap and try to create more service companies; they run internet cafés, supermarkets, and shops with inexpensive products useful for the local economy.

In order to improve the Sino-Timorese relationship and try to introduce education in Chinese, the Embassy of China coordinates the distribution of scholarships for Timorese students to join schools and more rarely universities in China since 2003. It is too early to measure its impact on the Timorese people and the local economy.

## Society and Economy

The Portuguese colonial administration recognized the beneficial influence of the Chinese. Just after World War II, it would have been impossible without the Timorese Chinese to distribute the Portuguese aid in clothes and other essential items to reconstruct the island after the ambiguous Japanese occupation (1942-1945).

Chinese culture and business tradition rely on relationships and associations. The main Chinese business association in the capital Dili is called *Zhonghua Shanghui* 中华商会. The first known Chinese tycoon in the mid-twentieth century to 1975 is the late founder of the Company Lay 黎公司, Lay San Ying, born in Manatuto (CT). He was associated to the famous tycoon of Macau, Dr Stanley Ho, for the construction of the Hotel Makhota, the main hotel of Dili restructured and improved under its current name, Hotel Timor. In 2000, this family rebuilt its company and opened a new hotel in Dili. The remarkable point is that starting in the late 1950s Lay San Ying, like no other Timorese businessmen at that time, traveled far and wide to Mozambique, Hong Kong, and Australia to develop business and trade. The Lay company had the monopoly for all construction work in Timor. This monopoly is at present shared between many Timorese, Chinese and Australian companies. However, among other branches of the company, the Toko Lay Hardware Store, dating from 1959, continues to be owned by this extended family which has survived every major rupture from Portuguese colonialism to 2015.

After the independence of the country, the Timorese Chinese <sup>6</sup>, Mainland Chinese and Chinese from Indonesia became an essential part of the economic development of East Timor. They invested actively in businesses after 2002. They own all sort of small business concerning mobile phones and computers. Maintenance is mainly done by Mainland Chinese using Timorese staff. Chinese hotels, cyber cafés and all sort of Chinese retail companies are common in Dili. China is active in new major constructions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the first lift ever in the country, and the Presidential palace. Other Chinese companies are also involved in construction and even the production of construction material such are sand.

Since many decades the Timorese Chinese are running groceries and bakeries which are essential for the daily life. In the 2000s, Chinese started opening supermarkets, res-

<sup>6</sup> H.E. Francisco Kalbuadi, was born in East Timor as a Timorese Chinese, was a well-known politician after the independence of the country, he became Minister of Tourism, Art and Culture in 2015.

taurants, and hotels. However the departure of the United Nations in December 2012 has initially reduced the economy by around 25 percent.

As an economic case study, one may mention Weng Enterprise in Dili, Beduku 北都古, conducted by mainlanders and Southeast Asian Overseas Chinese in East Timor. The Chinese enterprise Weng 翁氏企业集团公司 from Fuzhou and Fuqing city in Fujian demonstrates a high degree of entrepreneurship which was exported to Dili. It sells washed sand (0.1-0.5 mm), gravel (0.5-0.8 mm heavy-duty adjustable gravel and lumber), powder, aggregate, crushed stone and other construction materials. There are just a few companies, such as a Timorese-owned company called EDS, which are able to rival Weng concerning construction materials.

In a remote place of Dili surrounded by hills, on the sandy bank of the River Comoro, this grinding mill and aggregate production company started to operate in 2009 in a no man's land and began its operation at the end of 2011. The declared investment is one million US\$. Most of the materials used to produce the construction materials are collected along the Comoro River (Mota Comoro in Tetum).

This company has recruited 30 fully-trained and well-paid Timorese workers. Four Chinese staff ran this company during my research. A Chinese secretary was in charge of the registration of all the trucks going outside to deliver construction materials. The company owns crawler excavators, digging machines, a huge grinding machine, carpet-conveyors, diesel track machines and trucks to transport the sand and aggregates to construction companies. Sand and gravel is being processed and washed according to modern technology for construction materials.

Another interesting company is called Kmanek. Its manager, a Chaozhou from Singapore, invested five million US\$ between 2001 and 2012. His company is one of the most successful and popular supermarkets. The mother company of this supermarket is a trading company of Singapore. The departure of the United Nations UNMIT at the end of the year 2012 slightly reduced the activities of this prosperous company.

The following vision for Timorese farmers was developed by the Chinese Company of Singapore, Kmanek Co.

“Linking farmers to markets via the private sector involvement seems to be an effective model for improving farmers' income. Participating in the initiative reduced the risks faced by farmers in terms of having a clear market for their produce. This model removes the burden on individual farmers of finding the market for their product themselves... to reach markets directly” (Correia c. 2010). Following this model helped the farmers to create incentives to adopt more advanced solutions to increase production.

In 2010 and 2011, the construction of a greenhouse and an investment of quality seeds to Timorese peasants, was studied by the author in Aileu and in surrounding villages. The vegetables produced were sold with success during two years by Kmanek Company. However, the intensive production of capsicum which valued four times the price of tomatoes—not well reported to the Chinese company by the Timorese—ruined the project. A drastic disease of tomatoe plants finally forced a halt of this exemplary coo-

peration between a dynamic Chinese company and Timorese farmers. In 2015, it is hoped that new investment will help to secure a new management scheme with Timorese farmers.

## Conclusion

Chinese presence in Timor has a long history. The Chinese mainlanders and Overseas Chinese who are currently residents in East Timor, have interpreters in Tetum, rarely in Portuguese, and use English to communicate. The Timorese Chinese are interested in learning Tetum, not to mention the numerous other languages of East Timor. So, the Timorese prefer their historical and harmonious relations with Timorese Chinese. This paper has been looking at language and identity, showing that politeness and excellent relationship with the Timorese are the cultural markers that highlight the unique identity of these Hakka.

During five hundred years of Portuguese colonization, the initial center was situated in Goa in India and was rather tolerant. However, education was not a priority, except for Dominicans such as Antonio Taveira who established a mission in Lifao (Lifau), Oecussi, which became permanent in 1702, and Jesuits from Goa in 1897.

Twenty-four years of Indonesian education cannot be forgotten either. For the Timorese Chinese and the other Timorese, all languages are useful in the country, in particular English and Indonesian. Tetum is the national language and Portuguese is the unique official language.

The facts are important to set out here: In 1981 a university was established in Dili by Indonesia. By 2015, Tetum is not yet a language of secondary education; thus Indonesian television programs are currently watched and popular in East Timor. It is not expensive to join an Indonesian University to upgrade education for many youth Timorese.

The departure of the United Nations in December 2012 affected Chinese business in East Timor less severely. The Timorese Chinese continue to adapt themselves. Those who have an Australian nationality may stay more often in Australia than in East Timor. In some fifteen years East Timor may not have enough oil and gas reserve to continue to be rich. However, the Chinese interest for trade has developed all sort of modern business activities in East Timor from construction to electronic products and computers.

Chinese trade networks from China paralleling Indonesian trade links—including Overseas Indonesian Chinese—are currently powerful in the capital Dili. Timorese Chinese are extremely useful, their Timorese linguistic skill is extraordinary, and they perfectly know the local Timorese ways of doing things. East Timor still needs Timorese Chinese, Overseas Chinese and Mainlanders for its development. China is an economic giant in Southeast Asia, and has geopolitical interest in independent Timor. China clearly extends its presence into strategic areas. The current bilateral relations of China and East Timor continue to be excellent.

China, and in particular Singapore, are essential to gain the acceptance among the ten member nations, to enable East Timor to become a member of ASEAN. For the country,

the Timorese Chinese, and other Chinese businessmen, this would be an important future socio-political achievement.

## Appendix: Chronology

- 28 November 1515: Portuguese occupied Oecussi
- 1653: Dutch in Kupang. Hakka Chinese in the Island of Timor
- 1769: Dili Portuguese colonial capital
- 7 December 1975: Indonesian occupation
- In mid-1999: President B.J. Habibie announces UN-administered referendum
- 30 August 1999: 80% vote for independence
- 20 May 2002 Independence: Mari Alkatiri Prime Minister & Xanana Gusmao President
- 5th Constitutional Government of East Timor, 6 August 2012: Minister for Transportation and Telecommunication: Pedro Lay and Minister of Tourism Francisco KALBUADI Lay (both Hakka Timorese Chinese).

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