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**Introduction**

In the late 1970s, eastern Indonesia became a stage for Cold War intrigue. Nearly fifty years after the US covertly provided military air support to anti-Indonesian rebels in the "outer islands," the full scope of one of these divided movements, Fretilin, a freely chosen to fight.<sup>1</sup> This movement was led by an indigenous army officer, Lieutenant Colonel Saizal, who was based in Sucoai, gaining sympathizers in surrounding schools. Viewed retrospectively from the vantage point of the Eisenhower

## Violence and 'being in history' in East Timor: Local articulations of colonial rebellion

### Summary:

This is a study of the "local" memory of a failed uprising against colonial authority in Portuguese Timor in 1959 which is often described as an event provoked and played out by external actors: Portuguese, assimilated, elite Timorese, and foreigners. In fact in the isolated region where the Viqueque Rebellion occurred, contemporary narratives and attempts to make sense of the violence give little importance to external causes of violence, instead pointing to the experience of power and violence at a local level. Archival sources and interviews are employed to demonstrate that a fragile two-tiered hierarchy between colonial agents and elites, and elites and commoners, created the volatile conditions for communal violence. For their non-linearity, emphasis on the arbitrary nature of power and the intimacy of violence, local narratives of this colonial rebellion suggest a particular experience of history in eastern Timor.

**Key words:** conflict, history, East Timor, colonialism

### Resumo:

Este é um estudo da memória local de uma rebelião fracassada contra as autoridades coloniais no Timor Português em 1959, um acontecimento frequentemente descrito como tendo sido provocado e levado a cabo por agentes externos: portugueses, "elites" timorenses assimiladas e estrangeiros. Na verdade, na região isolada onde ocorreu a Rebelião de Viqueque, as narrativas contemporâneas e tentativas de explicar a violência desconsideram a importância das causas externas da violência e apontam, ao invés disso, para a experiência do poder e da violência a nível local. São utilizadas fontes de arquivo e entrevistas para demonstrar que uma frágil hierarquia com dois níveis, entre agentes coloniais e elites e entre elites e plebeus, criou as condições voláteis que propiciaram a violência coletiva. Na sua falta de linearidade, ênfase na natureza arbitrária do poder e intimidade da violência, as narrativas desta rebelião colonial apontam para uma experiência particular da História no leste de Timor.

**Palavras-chave:** conflito, história, Timor Leste, colonialismo

