

The Day Hope and History Rhymed in East Timor and Other East Timor Stories

by Pat Walsh (KPG Gramedia, Jakarta, 2019)

Some excerpts:

The day hope and history rhymed in East Timor

“The result of the vote was announced on Saturday, 4 September 1999. It was decisive.... A UN police officer, Wayne Sievers, heard it announced on the BBC: ‘There was silence for a minute or so over Dili’, he said. ‘Gradually, however, I heard wild cheering break out all over the city.’ Thirty minutes later he heard gunfire. It intensified until Interfet arrived in Dili on 20 September then continued to sputter, though lethally in places like Oecusse.” p. 21

My favourite walk

“Walking past the runway on my way home, I am treated to a sight others have spoken of but I have not witnessed till this point. The sun and moon sit opposite each other at the same altitude in the evening sky, one to the west over Indonesia, the other to the east over Timor-Leste. The symbolism is too much. As the Indonesian sun retreats in a display of angry red, the soft yellow moon rises in the eastern sky to smile gently on a land once scorched by its opposite number.” p. 145

The cat with only six lives

“Busa the cat, to give him a Timorese name, lived only six of a cat’s allotted span of nine lives. But, though his origins were obscure and humble, he distinguished himself by living his lives fully and creatively.... What makes his story even more remarkable is that he was a companion to celebrities and, though he was denied freedom himself, he contributed to the liberation cause of others, albeit in an unassuming, moggie way”. pp. 100-101

Jhon’s taxi

“Jhon didn’t show up in the morning. Maxi did instead. Wearing thongs and riding the clutch something terrible he drove me slowly into town changing gears to get up even the slightest rise. It suited me just fine. Relaxed in the back seat I had time to savour the vision splendid of the early morning sun spilling across Dili bay.” p. 36

Courtroom 600

“A Costa Rican, Sonia Picado’s presence was a contrast to the Nuremberg trial which, Sands writes in *East West Street*, was ‘an intensely male’ affair. She was also welcome for another reason. She made a strongly worded reference to Timor-Leste, the only one to do so, apart from me in a workshop. When I introduced myself and thanked her for mentioning Timor, she asked what was happening in Timor one year after the 2006 crisis and said: ‘Tell them to get rid of the army’.” p. 48

Rosa’s garden

“Flowers grow beautifully in Timor-Leste and sometimes in just the right places. Whoever thought to build a garden in the middle of Dili’s busiest intersection deserves a medal. On my way to work each day, the sight of its bushes loaded with flowers boosted my mood like a morning latte.” p. 188

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