



Three Centuries of Conflict in East Timor (Genocide, Political Violence, Human Rights)

Douglas Kammen

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One of the most troubling but least studied features of mass political violence is why violence often recurs in the same place over long periods of time. Douglas Kammen explores this pattern in *Three Centuries of Conflict in East Timor*, studying that region's tragic past, focusing on the small district of Maubara.

Once a small but powerful kingdom embedded in long-distance networks of trade, over the course of three centuries the people of Maubara experienced benevolent but precarious Dutch suzerainty, Portuguese colonialism punctuated by multiple uprisings and destructive campaigns of pacification, Japanese military rule, and years of brutal Indonesian occupation. In 1999 Maubara was the site of particularly severe violence before and after the UN-sponsored referendum that finally led to the restoration of East Timor's independence. Beginning with the mystery of paired murders during East Timor's failed decolonization in 1975 and the final flurry of state-sponsored violence in 1999, Kammen combines an archival trail and rich oral interviews to reconstruct the history of the leading families of Maubara from 1712 until 2012.

Kammen illuminates how recurrent episodes of mass violence shaped alliances and enmities within Maubara as well as with supra-local actors, and how those legacies have influenced efforts to address human rights violations, post-conflict reconstruction, and the relationship between local experience and the identification with the East Timorese nation. The questions posed in *Three Centuries of Conflict in East Timor* about recurring violence and local narratives apply to many other places besides East Timor—from the Caucasus to central Africa, and from the Balkans to China—where mass violence keeps recurring.



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