

Story from a book - writer's name not known

I was born in Viqueque and I always thought that was where my family had come from. I didn't know much about my grandfather but I remembered my grandmother and heard from my father that she was born and raised and lived in Viqueque.

Oddly a few years ago I went to Aileu for the first time on a field placement for my uni studies. We were visiting a coffee plantation and I was interested in how coffee farmers worked together. It's a tough trade, coffee farming. Hard work, back breaking labour and very small returns for your efforts. When I arrived in Aileu I had the odd feeling of deja vu, like I had been there before, like it was familiar. I felt like I belonged there. But I went back to my home in Dili and forgot about it.

You can imagine how surprised I was when a couple of years later my father came to me saying that he had just discovered that his father had been born in Aileu. He had left the area when he was 10 or 11 and gone to live in Watalari in Viqueque, grew up there, married my grandmother and so on. Viqueque is far from Aileu and a very different community. My father made the connection with his Aileu family and suggested that I and my brothers and sisters went to Aileu to meet them. I was not sure how I felt but was excited to go. I heard that the family or clan's uma lulik / sacred house was there.

The Aileu family were so excited and happy to meet us again. We joined in ceremonies for three days in the uma lulik and the old stories were told and re-told. Some of these I understood a bit about but mostly I did not really understand. Lulik stories are not straight forward, they are kind of secret, mysterious.

I am really glad to have reconnected to my family past. This kind of reconnection is not particular to Timor, it happens the world over. It's precious!

Photo of Uma Lulik from Aileu or coffee planting or people if found.