

The Legend of Timor Leste: The Crocodile Story

Many years ago, before East Timor existed, a small crocodile lived in a swamp in a faraway place. He dreamed of becoming a big crocodile but, as the food was scarce, he became weak and grew sadder and sadder.

He left for the open sea, to find food and realize his dream, but the day became increasingly hot and he was still far from the seashore. The little crocodile – rapidly drying out and now in desperation – lay down to die.

A small boy took pity on the stranded crocodile and carried him to the sea. The crocodile, instantly revived, was grateful. “Little boy”, he said, “You have saved my life. If I can ever help you in any way, please call me. I will be at your command.”

A few years later, the boy called the crocodile, who was now big and strong. “Brother Crocodile”, he said, “I too have a dream. I want to see the world.” “Climb on my back,” said the crocodile, “and tell me, which way do you want to go?” “Follow the sun”, said the boy.

The crocodile set off for the east, and they travelled the oceans for years, until one day the crocodile said to the boy, “Brother, we have travelled for a long time. But now the time has come for me to die. In memory of your kindness, I will turn myself into a beautiful island, where you and your children can live until the sun sinks in the sea.”

As the crocodile died, he grew and grew, and his rigid back became the mountains and his scales the hills of Timor. Now when the people of East Timor swim in the ocean, they enter the water saying “Don’t eat me crocodile, I am your relative.”

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