



Crocodile Island

(Timor Leste)

Once upon a time in Makassar, there lived a very old crocodile, so old that it could not manage anymore to catch fish in the river. One day it was hoping to catch a stray pig on the riverbank. The crocodile hunted the whole day under the heat of the sun, but it did not find any pig.

The old crocodile was exhausted and said, "Oh my, I'm so tired and hungry; I do not have any strength to go back in the water."

A boy heard the crocodile. "Don't worry, old crocodile, I am here to help you. I am strong enough to bring you back to the river." So the boy gently pushed the crocodile towards the water.

"Thank you, dear boy. You have been very kind to me. I would have perished without you," said the crocodile. "Now hop on my back and I will take you anywhere you want to go." The boy was very happy to ride on the crocodile. From that day on they would frequently travel together. The boy always enjoyed being carried around on the crocodile's back as they explored the river.

In spite of their close friendship, the crocodile was often tempted to eat the boy whenever it was hungry. The crocodile asked his friend the eagle for advice one day. "Eagle, I sometimes feel like eating the boy who saved my life," the crocodile confessed. "What do you think should I do?"

"What? You plan to eat the one who saved you? What terrible ingratitude!"



the eagle exclaimed in disgust and flew away, never to return again.

The crocodile then asked his friend the boar the same question. The boar replied, "What? You plan to eat the one who saved you? How ungrateful!" He then left never to return again.

The crocodile then asked his friend the kingfisher the same question. The kingfisher replied, "What? You plan to eat the one who saved you? You cannot be trusted! How disloyal you are!" He then flew away, never to return again.

Finally, the crocodile asked his oldest friend the turtle the same question. The wise turtle replied, "What? You plan to eat the one who saved you? You owe your life to the boy and he is a trusted companion. Without the boy you would not be alive today and if you eat him now, believe me, you will not be alive tomorrow as your spirit will have died." The wise turtle did not abandon the crocodile but waited patiently to see if his advice was to be heeded.

Ashamed and feeling guilty of his thoughts, the crocodile travelled far away to begin a new life in a place where no one knew him. However, he soon got very lonely without the boy, who really was his only true friend.

One day he visited the boy. "Come with me to search for the golden plate



floating on the waves,” the crocodile invited the boy. “We can find it near the place where the sun was born and there we will be happy forever.”

“I will go with you, my friend,” said the boy. “We shall travel far and wide to find that place!”

Once again, the boy and the old crocodile travelled together on the sea. They were heading towards the east. They searched for that magical land but the sea seemed to have no end. After a long time of swimming, the old crocodile could not swim any farther. “I do not have any strength so I must stop to rest,” said the crocodile.

The moment he stopped swimming the old crocodile’s body was transformed into a beautiful island. The boy also instantly turned into a grown man. He was delighted to see that hanging from his chest was the golden plate that he and the crocodile had dreamt about.

The man walked the beaches and climbed the hills and mountains that were full of animals and trees. He realized that he was on the magical island he and the crocodile were searching for. He settled on the island with the shape of a swimming crocodile and called it Timor, meaning east.





Supplementary information

- **Timor Leste** (or East Timor) is the newest country in Southeast Asia on 20 May 2002. With a population of just over 1 million people, its official languages are Tetum and Portuguese.
- Present-day **Makassar** is the capital of the province of South Sulawesi, located on the eastern part of the Indonesian archipelago. It has a long history as a vibrant trading port even way before the arrival of the Dutch.



