

Jill Jolliffe, *Finding Santana* (Wakefield Press, 2010)

Jill Jolliffe has had a career so focused on the East Timorese struggle that it is not surprising she still has stories to tell, despite the country's having broken free from Indonesian oppression over ten years ago. In the case of this book, a chronicle of two visits she made to interview guerrilla leader Nino Konis Santana in 1994, some of the material could not have been published when East Timor was still under Indonesian occupation, given that it reveals how Jolliffe entered and travelled through Indonesia even when she had been banned from the country. Her knowledge of the issues, the places and the personalities involved gives this book, as with her other work, an explanatory authority which makes her required reading for anybody interested in East Timor, as also for anybody interested in Australia's interaction with both East Timor and Indonesia.

The two journeys outlined had very different conclusions. In the first Jolliffe, after many delays and tribulations, eventually got to see and spend a brief but happy time with Santana. In the second, she and her Dutch camerawoman, Irene Slegt (now Chrystalis), not only never got to see Santana, but they were captured by Indonesian authorities, narrowly escaping with their lives. The book well portrays the constant menace of the network of police, military and informers by which Indonesia controlled its vast and complex territory, and Jolliffe's bravery in undertaking her self-imposed mission indicates the depth of her commitment as well as the trust she was granted within the resistance movement.

This closeness to the East Timorese struggle means that Jolliffe has had to work extra hard to establish her credentials as a reliable reporter, and indeed Australian pro-East Timorese books and journalism in general are notable for their careful construction of the overwhelming proofs of their case against not only Indonesian oppression but against official Australian pro-Indonesian interference and support for Indonesian actions in East Timor. Jolliffe's *Balibo*,¹ for example, is a patient and relentless indictment of Indonesian brutality as of official Australian duplicity and high-handedness. Nevertheless, despite the clarity of the issues for most Australian observers, little of the excellent tradition of Australian investigative journalism had any impact upon official positions or actions. Not the murder of Australian citizens, the mass-murder and scorched-earth policies of the Indonesian military, the filmed massacre in the Santa Cruz cemetery in 1991, or the taking of people from churches and killing them; none of it made the Australian government swerve from its craven position of bending the knee to Indonesia. In this context, it is not surprising that Jolliffe was led to the desperation of entering a country where there was a police alert for her arrest, and where little compunction had been shown in the matter of murdering foreigners. Given the Indonesian control of information leaving East Timor (with Australian support), there was an urgent need for reliable first-hand accounts of the situation in East Timor. There was also a need for stories of successful defiance to bolster the resolve and energy of support groups outside East Timor, and

¹ Jill Jolliffe, *Balibo* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2009). This is an updated version of *Cover-Up: The Inside Story of the Balibo Five*, first published by Scribe in 2001.

Jolliffe's reporting after she returned from her trips achieved this aim at a time when the resistance movement had little to be optimistic over.

This book, however, only partly participates in the tone and urgency of the material Jolliffe filed at the time. With the apparent safety mark of ten years free of Indonesian control having passed, Jolliffe can not only reveal some of the ways in which she managed to cross the country all the way from Sumatra to East Timor despite the warrant for her detention, but she can even look back at parts of at least the first visit with wry amusement. From an attempt to obtain a false passport from a dubious rural shyster in Portugal, to the comic-book recourse to an appearance-altering haircut and dye in Hong Kong, to the Le Carré-like ruse of applying for a new passport when the Australian consul was 'bleary-eyed from a long night out on the expatriate bar scene' (15), Jolliffe's preparations do not seem like the steely-eyed professionalism required to circumvent the controls of a military-police state. Nervously waiting in a basic *losmen* for a riverboat in Sumatra she accidentally sets fire to her mattress, slices the top off a toe while cutting her toenails, and listens to the BBC World Service in what appears almost a parody of a type of freelancing foreign correspondent in the tropics.

The danger becomes real soon enough, and for those of us who have protested the situation of East Timor, and Australia's shoddy official behaviour, from our classrooms and computer screens, Jolliffe's heroic risk-taking and dogged pursuit of material have been of crucial importance. Eschewing the self-conscious examination of memory, history and witness, of which Tony Maniaty's *Shooting Balibo: Blood and Memory in East Timor* is a good example,² Jolliffe's belief that the attempt to uncover and display information about the Indonesian occupation could never be abandoned, however hopeless the situation seemed, paralleled the determination and faith of the guerrillas themselves.

Santana, and all the people involved in the fight against Indonesian oppression, come across as incredibly courageous against murderous odds. Santana's death in 1998, sadly before the referendum on independence, is one of many thousands between 1975-1999. Most of these people's stories remain largely untold, but Jolliffe's book serves to record aspects of their resistance and the price they often paid for contact with foreigners. It is to be hoped that Jolliffe will continue to write up as much of this material as she can in as lucid and informed fashion as she has with this book.

David Callahan

² Tony Maniaty, *Shooting Balibo: Blood and Memory in East Timor* (Camberwell, Vic.: Penguin Australia, 2009).