

Influences and Echoes of Indonesia in Timor-Leste



Australian
National
University

GORDON PEAKE, LIA KENT, ANDREY DAMALEDO &
PYONE MYAT THU

SSGM DISCUSSION PAPER 2014/8

Introduction: Influences and Echoes of Indonesia in Timor-Leste

Since 1999, when a United Nations (UN) transitional administration was established in the wake of the East Timorese vote for independence from Indonesia, the case of Timor-Leste has been a relative mainstay in research and policy debates on post-conflict reconstruction (Call and Wyeth 2008; Hood 2007; Svoboda and Davey 2013). Timor-Leste is often characterised by scholars as a 'post-conflict' country and, as a consequence, compared to other countries that have recently emerged from political strife. While this focus is understandable, it has also meant that surprisingly little scholarly attention has focused on the connections, points of similarity and interrelations between Timor-Leste and its near neighbour and former occupier Indonesia. Only recently have researchers begun to explore the multiple dimensions of Timor-Leste/Indonesian relations and unpack the relationship across a range of disciplines.

This new and promising research agenda is very much in its early stages. This discussion paper contributes to this turn to Indonesia in the Timor-Leste studies literature by presenting four brief case studies that highlight, in different ways, how the two countries and peoples remain intricately entwined at the social, political, cultural and personal levels.¹ The cases explore the relationship across different scales ranging from the institutional to the level of individuals and families; they are written by four scholars who approach the issue from different disciplinary backgrounds. Case study one² shows how Indonesia is the prime reference point for East Timorese police officers and how these bonds become strengthened further by commercial ties. Case study two³ explores the

lives of East Timorese women who, during the occupation, were coerced into sexual relationships with members of the Indonesian military, and who continue to encounter stigma and difficulties in their newly independent homeland. Case studies three and four turn to an examination of the lives of tens of thousands of East Timorese who fled across the border to Indonesia following the 1999 referendum. Case study three⁴ provides a historical and cultural perspective on how Tetun-speaking East Timorese from the Suai area conceptualise the border region. Case study four⁵ focuses on the experiences of former East Timorese refugees in Indonesia who have recently crossed the border to return home and examines how, in the post-occupation period, rural lives are being rebuilt with minimal state assistance. Before turning to these case studies, we first examine how a reductionist 'conflict paradigm' has come to dominate scholarship on Timor-Leste, which has meant that relatively limited attention has been paid to the influences and echoes of Indonesia.

The dominance of the 'conflict paradigm'

As one scholar of Timor-Leste has noted, the small South-East Asian nation serves frequently as 'a cautionary tale or case study for debates surrounding post-conflict fragility and the UN state-building approach' (Scambary forthcoming:2). Attention has focused mainly on examining (and oft-times finding fault with) the development and state-building efforts of the UN and bilateral donors in Timor-Leste. By way of example, over 30 articles have been published on the topic of police development alone; this works out as a ratio of one article for every 100 East Timorese police officers. Most



researchers are working within the frame of 'post-conflict studies' and therefore tend to associate Dili more with Juba than Jakarta. As scholarship on Timor-Leste accretes, this framing gets set further, with researchers building on (and referring to) each other's work, creating something of a path dependency. This 'post-conflict' definition is also embraced enthusiastically by the East Timorese Government, most notably through its initiation, support and championing of the g7+, a forum for fragile and post-conflict states. Large delegations of East Timorese politicians and civil society travel regularly to places like South Sudan to contribute their 'lessons learned' to other nations rebuilding after conflict.

The focus on international efforts is understandable given the size and scale of the state-building endeavour in Timor-Leste over the past decade. However, it has resulted in a tendency to frame Timor-Leste within what Bexley (2010) refers to as a 'conflict paradigm'. This paradigm has a number of features. First, it positions East Timorese as 'victims' of conflict and colours the experience of Indonesia as a 'wholly negative one' (Bexley 2010:9). Second, the conflict paradigm examines developments in Timor-Leste through a state-centric 'security-focused' lens (ibid.). Building on Bexley's framework, we would add that the conflict paradigm also views Timor-Leste within an ahistorical lens; the nation is seen as a '*tabula rasa*' that began its 'transition' to independence following the referendum for self-determination in 1999. This paradigm is problematic because prioritising attention to internationally led state-building and peace-building efforts means that less emphasis is placed on the extent of East Timorese agency in this endeavour. Combined with an ahistorical focus, it leaves significant gaps in our understanding about other influences on Timor-Leste, including the long relationship with Indonesia. For instance, it ignores the enormous extent to which the Indonesian occupation, although oppressive, has influenced social, political and cultural life in Timor-Leste.⁶

The scholarly lack of attention to the points of connection between Timor-Leste and Indonesia is somewhat surprising given that, even to the casual observer, there are many striking parallels between

the two nations. The same sorts of minibus taxis (made in Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city) throng roads in urban areas in Timor-Leste as they do beyond the border. Among other points of commonality are kindred architectural styles, types of popular restaurants and the food served in them, as well as the omnipresent whiff of clove cigarettes. Police, civil servant and military uniforms are practically identikit, perhaps not surprising given they are produced in Indonesian factories. The yellow lorries 'that speak of government funded construction contracts' (Pisani 2014:128) are ubiquitous in both countries.

Factors such as cultural similarities, the long history of engagement between the two nations (including the 24-year Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste) and language are all important in facilitating close economic, political and people-to-people ties. One of Indonesia's largest banks, the state-owned *Mandiri*, is based in Dili. Despite the energy reserves in the Timor Sea, all the fuel that fills the cars is Indonesian. Most of it is supplied by the Indonesian state oil company, a durable and commercial success story that operates out of the same facilities it built during the occupation and whose depot provided the fuel to burn Dili down in 1999. Indonesian satellite TV beams into East Timorese homes, and the default language for web browsers and social media sites is Indonesian. There are as many East Timorese undertaking higher education in Indonesian universities as there are in Dili. Flights between the countries leave on a daily basis. According to the last census, many more East Timorese speak Indonesian than either Portuguese or English. Over 6000 Indonesian citizens live in Timor-Leste (KBRI Dili 2013).

In recent years, pragmatic international relations between the two governments have also played a vital part in binding the countries together. Relations between the two countries are remarkably warm given their recent pasts. Leaders visit each other's countries often and are feted when they do. Timor-Leste was the first country that Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono visited in 2005 following his inauguration and also one of the last before he stepped down in 2014.⁷ Timor-Leste's prime minister, Xanana Gusmao, is a regular

visitor to Indonesia. In October 2014, he received Indonesia's highest medal of honour (*Bintang Adipura*). There are advantages in the close relationship for both countries. From Indonesia's side, relationship is significant as evidence that a new era of political and democratic reform (*era reformasi*) has been initiated. From Timor-Leste's side, the stability of independent nation is underwritten by an implicit deal to 'forgive and forget' Indonesia for crimes committed by its military during the occupation.⁸ Pursuing good ties with Indonesia has been a key objective of East Timorese governments since independence, which have responded to the violence of history as a matter requiring reconciliation rather than criminal sanctions. It is against this backdrop of complex, historically grounded interconnections and tensions that the case studies are set.

1. Case Study One: Influences on Policing

The links between Indonesia and Timor-Leste are strikingly apparent in the arena of policing and in the actions of the 3000-strong Timorese police service, the PNTL (*Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste*). There appear to be five areas of relationship and similarity: historical-cultural legacies, similarities of governmentality, shared methods of policing, the ramifications of the pragmatic politics described in the previous section and the importance of business linkages.

1.1 Historical legacies

The literature on the police development in Timor-Leste is emblematic of the dominant framing of the country within a discourse of conflict and state-building. Broadly speaking, it alights with only a glance at past experiences of policing and order-maintenance in the territory prior to the arrival of the UN, a narrative arc that one commentator has likened to 'historical amnesia' (Nygaard-Christensen 2011:10).⁹ This serves to downplay the complex of international influences brought to bear upon the development of Timor-Leste's policing, including the two historical occupying powers — Portugal and Indonesia.

Most chapters and articles tend to begin in 1999, when a UN transitional administration

assumed temporary authority over the territory. With the departure of the Indonesian police, there was a complete vacuum of formal policing and the UN created two new forces to fill it. An international police force assumed primary responsibility for actual policing, while an accelerated plan was made for founding and developing a professional, impartial and politically neutral indigenous service to take over that responsibility. The East Timorese police was established on 27 March 2000 and although the rhetoric around the new institution was framed in terms of blank slates and fresh starts, the 'new' East Timorese police had a strong Indonesian vein running through it.

In order to expedite the development of the new institution, the UN decided the backbone of the new East Timorese police would be those officers who served as police officers in POLRI (*Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia*; the Indonesian National Police). The man chosen to be the first police commissioner had, prior to 1999, been the most senior ranking East Timorese in the Indonesian police apparatus. Other colleagues went on to fill senior leadership roles. The first head of the police's immigration wing and subsequently the director of the police training school was formerly a plainclothes intelligence officer (Manianty 2009).

The connections with Indonesia were not just emerging through past employment. Younger officers were, to a large extent, socialised amid the context of an authoritarian Indonesian regime. This cohort, commonly known as the *jerasaun foun* (Tetun: new generation) were born and grew up during the Indonesian occupation, meaning that they were socialised in the occupying country's languages, cultures and means of doing business. Although often characterised as a 'post-conflict' country, it is probably every bit as accurate to think of Timor-Leste as a post-authoritarian country, with all the implications that has for the introduction of a liberal-democratic model of policing.

1.2 Governmentality

Although the Indonesian occupation ended, its governmental legacies endure. Like many postcolonial states, Timor-Leste has inherited more

from its predecessors than nationalist rhetoric might suggest. One area in which this similarity manifests is in terms of governmentality and a mimetic modelling of behaviours. Similarities in terms of architecture, uniforms and police insignia are striking. By and large, the police stations and compounds that the East Timorese police occupy are former Indonesia-era buildings. Indonesian-language slogans and insignia are still very visible.

These reverberations tend to be characterised in negative terms. Gunn and Huang (2006:123), for example, cite legacies of Jakarta's occupation as including 'nepotism, favouritism, corruption, and bureaucratic inertia'. Blunt (2009:90) suggests 'twenty five years of Indonesian occupation have left indelible marks on bureaucratic practice and public expectation in Timor-Leste'.¹⁰ Other authors suggest more benign interpretations. Wilson (2010) identifies similarities and resonances between Timorese and Indonesian approaches to power and governance.

Looking further back, Indonesian authoritarian approaches to policing built on and reinforced Portuguese authoritarian ideas about policing, which in turn utilised and reinforced autochthonous ideas about 'policing' and authority broadly written.

1.3 Police practices

Contemporary Indonesia appears to be emerging as the major model of modernity and development in many government spheres in Timor-Leste and policing is no exception (Nygaard-Christensen 2013). Beyond the existence of similar uniforms and equipment, and the fact that Indonesian words are used as police jargon, it would seem that Timor-Leste's neighbour serves as an inspiration for behaviour.

Some of this is influenced by television. East Timorese police are avid aficionados of 'cops' style reality television shows beamed in via satellite. Professional education also plays a role, with East Timorese police regularly travelling across the border for training.

Perhaps the most vivid similarities can be observed in the ways the East Timorese police appear to model behaviour based on the paramilitary policing style of the occupation. The

large-scale police operations appear inspired by Indonesia circa the 1990s, and the similarities between operations to protect the population from (imaginary) bogeymen are striking. From the latter part of the 1990s, the East Timorese police have engaged regularly in operations that follow a similar curvature. The operations begin with vague rumours, insinuations and tittle-tattle of threats emanating in a far-off part of the country. These rumours, spread by text message and social media and fanned by the country's febrile media, then require the country's police to mount an operation to charge off and restore calm. The operations usually involve the rounding up of a large group of people suspected of vague misdeeds, most of whom are subsequently released. The operations are large '*proyek*s' (projects), eating up hundreds of thousands of dollars in costs for staff overtime, fuel and food, and the nod to Indonesia is palpable. For example, *Operasaun 88*, purportedly an effort to round up terrorists in a mountainous part of the east of the country, was named after the Indonesian counter-terrorist unit Delta 88 (Fundasaun Mahein 2011).

Perhaps the most famous of these operations was the one to tackle an alleged 'ninja' menace in 2010, the evocative name garnering unusually high degrees of attention from the international media. The term 'ninja' in Timor-Leste doesn't evoke a real band of fighters, but a hidden, sometimes imaginary menace stalking the country. It came into the vernacular in the 1990s, when shadowy militias backed by the Indonesian army targeted East Timorese independence activists. Villages were terrorised and East Timorese were believed to be kidnapped and killed in the dark by men garbed in black (Myrntinen 2013).

1.4 The impact of pragmatic politics on policing

Pragmatic politics have reverberated in terms of policing, with the tendency to prioritise relationships over tasks. This was most apparent in the case of Maternus Bere, a former militia commander caught by the Timorese police and subsequently released by Timorese authorities, allegedly under intense pressure from the Indonesian Government.

More than 400 Timorese are indicted for serious crimes that took place in the run-up to and the aftermath of the vote for independence. Many of them are living in plain sight in Indonesia, and most are just over the border in West Timor. The problem of what to do with former leaders such as Maternus Bere is something that both governments prefer to keep in the background. With Bere's arrest, the matter became front-page news; the drama played out with world attention on the country, as it coincided with the tenth anniversary of the vote for independence. The decision to free Bere prompted outrage from opposition parties, civil society and human rights non-government organisations (NGOs). It even drew an unusually direct reproach from the normally anxious not-to-offend UN mission, which accused the East Timorese Government of trading victims' rights for peaceable relations. The incident also showed up the limits of the police's independence sovereignty. In arresting Bere, the East Timorese police had, in many ways, performed in a professional manner but this was trumped by political considerations.

1.5 Business ties

Another facet of the relationship concerns business ties. Indonesian business dominates the marketplace across all sectors. Given the extent of Indonesia business interests in Dili, the Timorese capital city is awash with the Indonesian language in terms of private sector advertising. During 2013, Timor-Leste exported US\$181 million to Indonesia (in return for goods which came in through reported customs channels), according to monthly trade reports from Timor-Leste's General Directorate for Statistics. Over the past three years, Timor-Leste's total imports of services were about 50 per cent larger than total goods imports, and a significant part of this would have come from Indonesia as well.

This plays out in a number of obvious ways in policing. When refurbishments are done to Indonesian-era police posts, it is often Indonesian contractors who do the work. Indonesian companies produce uniforms for the Timorese police, often according to similar couture. Guns, communications equipment, trucks and assorted

policing paraphernalia are sourced from Indonesian factories. Seeing senior East Timorese police officers in Dili hotels being wined and dined by Indonesian business people is a reasonably common occurrence. Some Timorese officers and civil servants post photos on their personal Facebook pages of trying on expensive kit at Jakarta warehouses.

Some of the deals that are reported seem to result in pretty lousy products, often bought according to inexplicable and hidden off-budget payment schedules. However, when allegations of some deals have emerged, they appear to disclose close relationships between Indonesian businesses and Timorese politicians. For example, in 2012, a scandal erupted in Dili following disclosure of a commercial deal between the Timorese police chief and an Indonesian arms company for the supply of assault weapons.

1.6 Conclusion

Although much has been written about the police of Timor-Leste in the past decade and a half, scholars have rarely tied the political and governmental cultures of the new country with that of the countries that formerly ruled over it, one of which is its near neighbour. Instead, the focus has been on comparing the new country with other states and territories emerging from conflict and/or favoured with large international peacekeeping presences.

The point is not that Timor-Leste mimics or wants to be, Indonesia. It is, however, to suggest that, to understand Timor-Leste, one must look to its strong Indonesian influences. Indonesia is far from the only source of inspiration for the current attitudes, posture, trajectory and style of the Timorese police but it is perhaps more significant than has been considered previously.

2. Case Study Two: The Legacy of Coercive Sexual Relationships During the Occupation

The enduring nature of ties between Indonesia and Timor-Leste can also be observed in the realm of intimate personal relationships. Indonesian and East Timorese men and women were, not surprisingly, entangled in many different kinds

of personal relationships during the 24-year occupation involving varying degrees of consent. This case study is concerned specifically with the highly coercive, non-consensual, sexual relationships that were formed between East Timorese women and members of the Indonesian armed forces. These relationships, although widespread during the occupation, are rarely spoken about in independent Timor-Leste, in part because of the deep social and cultural stigma associated with them (CAVR 2005: Chapter 7.7:5).¹¹ By and large, women who have survived such relationships are perceived as sexually 'defiled'; they do not fit within prevailing nationalist discourse which celebrates women's sexual purity and their roles as mothers (Kent and Kinsella 2014).

In 2011, an exploratory research study aimed to shed light on the sociopolitical circumstances that led East Timorese women to enter into relationships with the Indonesian military and to consider the ongoing impact of these experiences in their lives.¹² In-depth interviews were conducted with 19 East Timorese women who had been coerced into relationships of this nature. Below is an overview of the key themes that emerged from the women's accounts. These themes are then examined with a view to highlighting how more research on the complexities and ongoing legacies of these relationships is needed.

2.1 Narratives of the conflict: coercion and complicity

Many of the women interviewed for this study began their accounts of their lives by discussing the circumstances in which they first came into contact with the Indonesian military. It seemed that, for most women, this had occurred during the early years of the Indonesian occupation, between 1975 and the early 1980s. It was during this period that, under the strain of military onslaught, many civilians were captured or surrendered after coming down from the mountains where they had been sheltering behind FALINTIL (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor) lines. Most women had been very young at the time — the majority were only teenagers. Some described how

they were transferred to military posts after their surrender or capture. Others were approached directly in their homes, where parents and other family members were described as having little choice other than to allow their daughters to 'marry' Indonesian military officers.

Women were coerced into a range of different kinds of relationships. In some cases, a member of the security forces lived with a woman and her family on a permanent basis or visited them regularly in their homes. Another kind of coercive relationship involved women being held permanently in military installations or houses rented by the military in a manner similar to 'comfort women'.¹³ These women became the sexual 'property' of one man or a number of men. In other cases, women were not physically detained but were summoned regularly to military barracks for sexual purposes and were considered the property of a military unit. A number of respondents had endured consecutive coercive relationships as sexual ownership was passed from one military battalion to its replacement. The length of time women remained in sexual relationships also varied. In some cases, the relationships lasted only for several months, while in others they continued for a number of years.¹⁴

When describing why they believed they had been targeted, a number of women stressed their involvement in, or links to, the resistance movement. Some women had played active roles in organisations such as OPMT (Popular Organisation of East Timorese Women), acting as cooks, couriers and intelligence for the armed front. Others had male family members who had joined FALINTIL. The specific targeting of women with resistance connections suggests that sexual violence was used as a strategy by the Indonesian military to weaken and destroy those who opposed the Indonesian occupation (see also CAVR 2005: Chapter 7.7:108).

Another striking theme in women's stories was that East Timorese men (and sometimes women) were often mentioned as complicit in their abusive treatment. A number of women spoke of the role of East Timorese members of the Indonesian army and its auxiliary groups, including civil defence groups, as well as government officials

such as district administrators and village chiefs, in facilitating their handover to the Indonesian security forces, or 'keeping watch' while they were raped. Some also spoke of how East Timorese men committed rape and sexual violence against them. The research team was also told of how, in some cases, family members or community leaders had conceded women to enter into relations with the Indonesian military in exchange for security for the village or family.

When talking about their past experiences, women focused not only on the sexual and physical abuse they had endured, but on 'everyday' and psychological forms of violence. Some described being locked in houses and barracks and prevented from leaving, and spoke of the loneliness and social isolation that came with being taken far away from their families. Women also described how they were expected to cook and clean, and attend to other domestic duties. Not surprisingly, experiences of pregnancy, and struggles to feed and care for babies featured prominently in women's accounts of their lives.

Despite their undeniably coercive beginnings, it was clear that for some women, these relationships had also provided them with a limited form of self-protection. Entering into them was sometimes part of an attempt by women to protect their family members and their own reputations. That is, for some women, entering into an arrangement with one military officer could be seen as a preferable option to remaining vulnerable to ongoing rapes from multiple men and being marked by their community members as 'whores'. It was also apparent from women's accounts that not all the military officers involved treated them with the same degree of disrespect. At times, individual army officers even showed acts of kindness towards women. In one case, a relationship resulted in a formal church marriage, after the couple had a number of children together, although this marriage dissolved after the 1999 post-referendum violence when the woman's husband returned to Indonesia.

Women's stories about their past experiences help to illuminate the messiness of the Indonesian occupation. They show, for instance, how

violence permeated everyday life and fostered the pervasive militarisation of society. They also illuminate the specifically gendered consequences of this militarisation by showing how the violent militarised masculine identities produced during the occupation intersected with and exacerbated pre-existing unequal gender relations. Within the oppressive circumstances of the occupation, the security concerns of families and communities could be valued more highly than the welfare of individual women, and young women could thus be sacrificed. The militarisation of everyday life also created opportunities for East Timorese men to engage in violence, both to prove their loyalty to the Indonesian military and for more opportunistic reasons.

At the same time, women's narratives revealed that although they entered into these arrangements in highly constrained circumstances, there was a great diversity among their experiences and, for some women, there was a limited space to negotiate and manoeuvre. Within the constrained circumstances of the conflict, and their unequal position within East Timorese society, women improvised, negotiated and made calculations based on how best to protect their families, their reputations and their bodies.

2.2 Reconstructing lives amid continuing violence

Although the women interviewed were prepared to speak about their past experiences, their main preoccupation was their ongoing, everyday struggle to rebuild their lives. Concerns such as feeding their families and educating their children were foremost in their minds. The women we interviewed had had little formal education and most appeared to be living in a state of economic precariousness, many with limited support from extended family members.

Compounding these difficulties is the stigma associated with these women's experiences, a stigma reflected in the labels of 'whore' and 'TNI wife' that are sometimes affixed to them by community and family members. Those who remain unmarried, particularly those with children fathered to the Indonesian military, appear to occupy a particularly marginalised and ambiguous position, as they

can claim neither 'wife' nor 'widow' status. Some explained that they felt such a deep sense of shame they felt unable to marry a Timorese man. Many also appeared to have limited information about the services available to them, including the *Bolsu de Maie* scheme that provides modest financial assistance to female-headed households with children.¹⁵ Some expressed a reluctance to go to church or participate in other community activities. None of the women we interviewed had any ongoing contact with, or assistance from, their former 'husbands'. The extent to which women felt stigmatised was also reflected in their concerns about protecting their children. Many told the research team they did not want to discuss their children's paternity with them for fear that they would be discriminated against or that they would pass their grievance on to the next generation. For many of those interviewed, the violence that occurred in the past was understood as continuing; it is embedded in ongoing interactions with family and community members and in the denial of opportunities that would enable them to live as respected women.

Despite their economic and social marginalisation, the women interviewed for this study were also acutely conscious of the unfairness of the stigma attached to them. Many expressed views that they had sacrificed their bodies to save their families and communities. Some also sought to emphasise the roles they had played within the resistance movement against the Indonesian occupation and gave lengthy descriptions of how they had contributed, for example, by hiding resistance fighters in their homes or smuggling provisions or messages to them in the jungle. In the context of the interview encounter, if not within the public sphere, they insisted on their innocence and social worth and sought to reinscribe their experiences as a legitimate part of the nation's story. It was also the case that not *all* the women interviewed remained in a tenuous, marginalised position. Those who had been able to remarry appeared to have been able to re-enter socially acceptable life and defuse the stigma with which they had been tainted, even if they were not able to speak of their past experiences with their husbands and children.

2.3 Conclusion

Many of the key themes that emerged during this study resonate with the comprehensive account of 'sexual violence' and 'sexual slavery' during the occupation that is contained within the final report of Timor-Leste's Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR 2005, especially Chapter 7.7). Like the CAVR report, this exploratory study illustrates how the violence of the Indonesian occupation played out in specific gendered ways. Yet, close attention to women's narratives also indicates that these 19 women should not simply be categorised as victims of sexual violence or sexual slavery. This terminology does not fully capture these women's roles within the resistance struggle nor their attempts to negotiate their relationships to protect themselves or their families. Nor does it give enough attention to the ways in which violence against women was exacerbated by deeply embedded structural inequalities within East Timorese society that made it possible for young women to be 'sacrificed' in exchange for community security and later blamed for their experiences. Finally, it does not capture women's ongoing attempts to rebuild their lives and protect their children amid continuing stigma.

All of this suggests that there remains a need for more multidimensional accounts of personal relationships between Indonesians and East Timorese men and women. While it is important to acknowledge the overwhelmingly oppressive context in which all of these relationships took hold and were sustained during the occupation, close attention to these entanglements might also complicate the story of 'sexual slavery' and 'sexual violence' documented by CAVR. Close attention to the lived experiences of women and men involved in intimate relationships — from the coercive to the less coercive end of the spectrum — might, for instance, help to shed light on the ways that ordinary men and women navigated and survived the occupation using various forms of ingenuity. It might also highlight the diversity of these relationships, show how women and men negotiated them, and help to shed light on their intergenerational legacies. These accounts are

important not only because they contribute to the historical record but because by enabling those whose experiences have been marginalised to 'claim space in the imaginings of the nation' (McEwen 2003:756) they might also help to contribute to a more inclusive vision of East Timorese national identity.

3. Case Study Three: Cultural Perspectives on Displacement and Mobility among the Timorese

3.1 Introduction

As CAVR has observed 'most individual East Timorese alive today have experienced at least one period of displacement. Many have experienced several' (CAVR 2005:73). One of the most significant periods of displacement occurred in early September 1999 when, soon after the UN announced that an overwhelming majority of the population (78 per cent) had rejected special autonomy within Indonesia (which was an effective rejection of continued Indonesian control over their territory), a stream of refugees left Timor-Leste, many of them coerced into joining the militia exodus. By late 1999, an estimated 250,000 East Timorese had fled into the neighbouring half of the island, West Timor, part of the province of East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia (CAVR 2005:85).

There have been various attempts to generally identify the East Timorese who left and then decided to stay in Indonesia after the 1999 referendum. They have been variously labelled as *pengungsi* (refugee/IDPs) or *eks pengungsi* (ex-refugee) or *warga baru* (new citizens). These labels, however, provide little understanding of the ways East Timorese in Indonesia negotiate and maintain their relationships with their families across the national boundaries. Of all the Indonesian regions to which East Timorese migrated after the referendum, West Timor presented the most immediately attractive destination. Geographically, it is the closest place to seek temporary refuge. Yet, there is another reason why West Timor was a compelling destination for the displaced Tetun-speaking people from Timor-Leste; the western part of the island has

deep cultural and historical significance. This case study focuses on cultural ideas of mobility among the Tetun-speaking people of south-western Timor-Leste.¹⁶ An underlying objective is to examine how those who live in this area perceive their displacement and cross-border movement. An understanding of the cultural ideologies that straddle national territorial boundaries is crucial for strengthening future relationships between Timor-Leste and Indonesia.

3.2 The recognition of origin in Wehali

Among the Tetun-speaking people on both sides of the island of Timor is a narrative of collective origin that revolves around the central position of Wehali.¹⁷ Now part of a small unremarkable-looking town just south of the city of Atambua, Wehali was, for a long time, a site of great power. Historically, Wehali's great influence on both sides of Timor was exemplified as long ago as 1756 in the Contract of Paravicini which was signed by the Dutch and the rulers of Timor, and its surrounding islands (Roti, Savu, Sumba and Solor). In this document, the sovereign ruler of Wehali of Timor, Hiacijntoe Corea, signed on behalf of the Timorese population across 29 domains. More than half of these domains were located in present-day East Timor, including Liquica, Manatuto, Kova Lima, Same, Bobonaro and Ermera, signalling that the putative realm of Wehali in the past extended over a large area of both West Timor and East Timor (Therik 2004:57).

While this evidence depicts an image of the central power of Wehali, there is a considerable lack of consensus about the way its authority operated. Two major political disruptions that occurred within Wehali territory may have played a role in this situation. The first was reported in 1642, when the Portuguese *fidalgo* (nobleman) Francisco Fernandez led a small troop of men from their newly established settlement and trading post in Lifao, present-day Oecussi, and attacked Wehali centre, burning it to the ground. This event had major symbolic significance, with many constituent Timorese domains distancing themselves from Wehali and realigning their allegiances towards the Portuguese (Boxer 1947; Hågerdal 2012).

A second disruption occurred two and a half centuries later when, in 1906, as part of the Dutch coercive pacification efforts in the western part of the island, an extensive military campaign was launched across the area and eventually took control over Wehali territory.

These ‘incursions upon Wehali’ (Francillon 1980) may have diminished its political power but, centuries on, Wehali’s influence across the island persists. For instance, in early 2000, after the flood that swept across most of Wehali land and took the lives of many displaced East Timorese, elders and representatives from different East Timorese communities in West Timor came and offered their tributes to the Wehali sacred house of earth and sky (*ai lotuk*) in the village of Laran. For the East Timorese living in West Timor the flood was more than a natural phenomenon. It was a symbolic representation of Wehali spiritual authority over the land they were settling. It was this spiritual authority that they hoped to capture from Wehali, as their land of origin, a symbolic category that will accommodate and reconcile them in Wehali land.

Adopting a historical and cultural lens when considering recent East Timorese displacement and emplacement in Wehali land is important. It helps to show that the 1999 displacement of the Tetun people from Suai into West Timor follows a similar journey to that set by their predecessors.

3.3 Origin and unity among the Tetun people

In 1999, around 500 households from the Fohoterin area of Suai arrived in Wehali, West Timor. Unlike other areas where displaced East Timorese were camped in temporary barracks, the displaced Tetun of Fohoterin origin knew where to go to seek accommodation. Their destination was Sukabiwedik, a hamlet in the village of Kamanasa. Kamanasa comprises seven hamlets and is named in remembrance of people from Suai-Camanasse in Timor-Leste who took refuge in Wehali land during the anti-tax rebellion of 1912 (Therik 2004:85).

Thus, just like their predecessors, local people welcomed the arrival of these displaced Tetun people of Fohoterin origin and accommodated them in local people’s houses. ‘Because we are coming from one origin’ is the common phrase

expressed by the local people to describe their basis of support. It was this shared origin that has also led the local people to offer their land for the incoming East Timorese to settle. From the Wehali perspective, land is an appropriate gift from the female centre. The idea that land has a unifying influence among Tetun people is culturally encoded as an inevitable consequence of the symbolic representation of Wehali as the land of origin (*rai hun*). In Wehali, the concept of *rai hun* extends well beyond the areas around their ritual centre in the village of Laran. In another categorical sense, *rai hun* is perceived as the place of the light (*rai kroman*) and the earth itself (*rai klanan*) and therefore extends without limit (Fox 2006:247; Therik 2004:71). In a complementary way, Suai is ritually expressed as the land of the darkness (*rai kukun*), the land of the dead (*rai matebian*). As the narrative goes:

Wehali: *Atu simu ema moris iha rai klanan*
Accept the living people in the bright land

Suai: *Atu simu ema mate rai kukun*
Accept the dead people in the dark land.

The idea of unity between the Tetun people from Suai and the Tetun people of Wehali is also conceptualised in the symbolic representation of Wehali as Suai’s source of prosperity. Another narrative about the living ritual of Nai Loro Nubatak, one of the mythical rulers of Suai, exemplifies this relationship:

One time during his leadership, Nai Loro Nubatak was very keen to make a ritual to offer thanks to God for the goodness extended upon the people of Suai. The essential instruments to conduct this ritual were betel and areca nut (*bua abut*). Betel and areca nut, however, were not found in Suai area at that time so Nai Loro Nubatak made an appeal to Liurai Wehali to provide the seeds of betel from Wesei (*Takan Wesei Oan*) to be planted in Suai.

Liurai Wehali approved the request and gave the betel seeds delivered by a couple from Wehali. The name of the man was Klau Firak and the woman, Dahu Firak. This

couple lived among the Suai people and together they planted the betel and areca nut in Weafou, Mota Masin and Wetaeboko. (Damaledo, fieldwork notes 2013)

Here the sense of unity between Suai and Wehali and the nature of their relationship is symbolically expressed as seedbed and plantation. As elsewhere in eastern Indonesia, betel and areca nut are the essential elements of ritual in Wehali. The expression *Takan Wesei Oan* refers in ritual terms to the heir of the domain, the son of the *liurai*, the one who holds the authority. Thus, the association of Wehali as the source of betel and areca nut implies the central role of Wehali in the ritual life of the Tetun-speaking people in Suai, symbolically the source of life. As Wehali maintained spiritual authority, Suai is perceived as their cultivated land, the land that can grow and prosper.

The shared recognition of Wehali as land of origin confirms an imagined unified identity as one people for both the Tetun-speakers from Timor-Leste and those in West Timor. This, at the same time, legitimises the Tetun-speaking people from Timor-Leste's claims to belonging in West Timor by articulating their displacement culturally as a process of returning to one's land of origin.

3.4 Return and return (again)

The origin narrative depicts the Tetun-speaking people who left Suai (inside the Timor-Leste border) for the Wehali land in West Timor as 'returnees'. This does not mean that they have been completely detached from Suai. For them, Wehali, with its representation as the mother and the father, the female and the centre, the land of origin and the earth, means Wehali accommodates but does not constrain, embraces but does not confine, and receives but also gives away. The idea is based on a different narrative in Wehali which conceptualises mobility as the key characteristic of the Tetun people. Mobility in Tetun narratives is categorised symbolically as the departure of Wehali's men to the land of the morning sun and the land of the setting sun:

Na'i Taek Malaka married Ho'ar Na'i Haholek and had six boys and one girl.

The first born was Na'i Saku Mataus, then Na'i Bara Mataus, Na'i Ura Mataus, Na'i Meti Mataus, Na'i Neno Mataus, Na'i Leki Mataus.

The last born was a girl named Ho'ar Mataus, entitled Ho'ar Makbalin Balin Liurai (literally Ho'ar, the one who was in charge of appointing rulers — *liurai*).

Na'i Saku Mataus and Na'i Bara Mataus were given away to sit in the land of the rising sun. (Therik 2004:81–82)

For many Tetun people from Suai, moreover, the narrative serves as a foundation for their return to their land in Suai. And this is what happened regarding the displaced people of Fohoterin origin who now live in Sukabiwedik, West Timor. With the warm reception and the land gift they received from the Tetun people, one would have expected that this group of displaced people would eventually settle in Sukabiwedik. However, in late 1999, 400 households decided to return to Suai. Between 2001 and 2003 another 20 households decided to return. Today, only around 40 households remain in Sukabiwedik. For these people, Wehali has always been home but another home should also be looked after. The people of Suai origin who have decided to stay in Wehali land commonly describe the decision of others to return to Timor-Leste in the following way: 'We encouraged them to return because if everyone stays here, who is going maintain the path of our ancestors and maintain the house and the land in Suai?'

3.5 Conclusion

In the introduction of his discussion on the conception of land and territories among the Austronesian people, Reuter (2006:14) argues that 'no matter how much displacement they might experience, their relationships with the land, their place of origin and their place of residence are matters of utmost importance to all people, and no less so to a people on the move'. This statement is exemplified by the shared recognition of origin among the (displaced) Tetun-speaking people from Timor-Leste and those they describe as their 'brothers and sisters' in West Timor. This has led to a supportive process of emplacement in West

Timor and, for those who have decided to return to Timor-Leste, a supportive repatriation process. The narrative of shared origin has also facilitated various kinds of life cycle and religious rituals (e.g. birth, marriage, death, reconstruction of ancestral sacred house) that have involved people from both sides of the border. In this process, population mobility is celebrated, and accommodated. In their ritual expression, the Tetun-speaking people always say: *'ita ema nu'u dei nehe tau malu // nu'u nehek tau malu dalam lakotu'* ('we are like ants, moving back and forth but we always remain as one').

In their attempts to support such mobility, the governments of Indonesia and Timor-Leste have agreed to implement a regime of cross-border passes (*pas lintas batas*/PLB) in nine locations along the border. This enables a flexible and cheap means of crossing the border without a passport. But East Timorese who have decided to stay in West Timor are not only living along the border. As the next case study demonstrates, the idea of mobility is shared among the East Timorese who, after the 1999 referendum, were displaced to the West Timor district capital of Kupang. Because they are located some 300 kilometres from the border, however, these people do not have the same privileges as the Tetun-speaking people who reside in the border areas.

4. Case Study Four: Repatriation and Cross-Border Movement in a Timorese Village

Extending upon the themes raised in the previous case study, this case considers the repatriation to their former homeland of some East Timorese who were forcibly displaced to West Timor. Despite the large East Timorese refugee diaspora who have resettled in Indonesia since 1999, there is a small but continued trend of repatriation to Timor-Leste. In September 2012, the return of six families at the border crossing between West Timor and Timor-Leste was observed. In August 2013, these families were retraced back to their origin village of Caicua in the eastern subdistrict of Vemasse in order to observe how they were reintegrating into their origin community and how they were rebuilding livelihoods. Drawing on local accounts

of displacement, return, and ongoing cross-border movement, this case study presents a microcosm of the broader trend of informal repatriation that is taking place across Timor-Leste after 13 years of national independence. Importantly, the continued return process highlights the long-term impacts of conflict whereby people are still searching for stability in their lives, as well as the enduring social ties that traverse national and political boundaries. It is argued here that the governments of both countries should recognise the interconnectedness and flows of their diasporic communities.

4.1 Introduction

Early in the morning of 28 September 2012, volunteers at the East Timorese NGO *Fila Hikas Knua* (Working Group to Bring Them Home) travelled to Mota Ain, the official northern coast border crossing post between Timor-Leste and West Timor, Indonesia. Six families were repatriating to their origin village in Vemasse subdistrict following 13 years of residence in West Timor.¹⁸ The returnees left their West Timor residence in Naibonat in Kupang district a day earlier to travel to Atambua district, before reaching the Mota Ain border around noon the following day. They were accompanied by CIS-Timor (Centre for Internally Displaced Peoples' Services), an Indonesian humanitarian organisation that provided emergency relief to East Timorese refugees in 1999 following the post-referendum vote for national independence which displaced nearly a quarter of the East Timorese population into West Timor. CIS-Timor continues to give social assistance to the so-called 'ex-refugees' from Timor-Leste who have resettled as new citizens in Indonesia.

Fila Hikas Knua is composed of volunteers coming together through the strong network established among East Timorese civil society groups. They have worked collaboratively with CIS-Timor since 2010 to assist East Timorese families separated by the 1999 conflict through a messenger program and, associated with it, the voluntary repatriation of East Timorese to their former homeland. They connect separated family members by delivering letters and video messages.

Commonly, returnees decide to repatriate after reconnecting with family members, and making subsequent trips to their origin village. Both NGOs work with minimal funding from the Timor-Leste and Indonesian governments, running on tight budgets to organise the necessary logistics involved in each repatriation trip (which costs up to US\$3000). To date, they have repatriated nearly 180 East Timorese.¹⁹

The official procedure involved in voluntary repatriation is led almost entirely by these two organisations and local government authorities in West Timor and Timor-Leste. Returnees must first surrender their Indonesian citizenship, which requires an official declaration from the local district and provincial authorities. Correspondingly, the village chiefs in Timor-Leste receiving the returnees must endorse an official statement acknowledging their return and guaranteeing their safety upon repatriation and reintegration into the village.

Due to the limited NGO funding available at both ends, the six returnee families (18 individuals in total) had access to one construction truck on which they packed many of their belongings, which importantly included a large statue of the Virgin Mary. There was a flurry of activity at the border checkpoint as returnees unloaded their belongings from the first truck onto a second truck hired by *Fila Hikas Knua*, which then took returnees back to their origin village of Caicua. The oldest returnee was an elderly woman attired in black. She was crouched on the ground looking distressed, with one hand tightly gripped onto a small wooden coffin. The coffin contained the remains of her husband who had passed away in 2009. Since there was limited space on the trucks, she was asked to find a smaller coffin that would fit. She later explained that the local tradition of her ethnolinguistic group — Wai'mua, which was also that of her husband's — was to bury the body of the deceased in their birthplace. Hence, her husband's remains were exhumed from a Naibonat grave to be reburied according to Wai'mua ritual in Caicua. There were furthermore younger returnees, notably two newborn babies, and six youths aged between 4

and 15. The youths spoke Indonesian and Wai'mua but they did not comprehend Tetun, the national lingua franca of Timor-Leste. For these youths, Indonesia had been considered 'home' until now.

After signing the immigration papers, passing through police and customs clearance, and having a light meal, returnees carried on the next leg of their homeward journey. The returnees, volunteers and drivers arrived in the administrative capital Dili, where they rested after battling nearly three hours of torrential rain. The group then travelled homeward to Caicua village in the middle of the night. Finally, they reached Caicua around midnight where they were warmly welcomed by relatives. The family of the deceased man had the opportunity to mourn for their loss and show respect to the dead.

Almost a year later, in August 2013, the six returned families were traced to Caicua to learn more about their experiences of displacement to West Timor and life since repatriation. The narratives told by these families revealed that they fled during the violence of September 1999 due to fear of a backlash against pro-integration supporters. Despite residing in Naibonat for over a decade, they had limited livelihood resources and access to land to carve out a viable living. Upon repatriation, families are presently restoring livelihoods with minimal state assistance.

4.2 Flight

The six families fled Caicua village separately on 9 September 1999 fearing an outbreak of violence after the announcement of ballot results in which 78 per cent of East Timorese voted for national independence. According to respondents, they were not threatened to leave their homes, but followed their family members who worked in some capacity for the Indonesian security forces. Damaledo (2009:24) describes this category of refugees as those who are 'guilty by association' since they were not members of militias, the Indonesian police force or the military, but comprised family members and relatives of militias and the Indonesian security forces.

At the time of fleeing, the majority of respondents had only the clothes that they were wearing. They were flown out on Indonesian

military aircraft from Baucau. Anita, a female respondent relayed, 'I did not know where we were heading. Cuba? Portugal? We did not have anything with us. We just went.' A male respondent, Eduardo, explained that in 1999 he simply followed his elder brother who was a high-ranked military officer under the Indonesian regime. Their destination was Kupang, where respondents were loaded onto military trucks and taken to army barrack grounds that became temporary refugee camps. In Kupang, the initial months after arrival were dire. One female respondent who was aged 12 at the time recalled, 'we resided opposite the Tuapukan Church. Every day we could see the dead being carried past. Maybe five persons each day.'

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Red Cross and Indonesian Government provided relief efforts in the initial years. Respondents resettled close to one another in Naibonat, spatialising and re-emplacing their origin community away from 'home'. Respondents had a brother, uncle or father who worked in the Indonesian military or police force; as such, they were given public housing on army grounds before Indonesian authorities requested them to resettle elsewhere. Most of them negotiated land access from landowners in West Timor to reside and cultivate. In fact, respondents described the physical environment in Naibonat as similar to Caicua; in both places they depended on agriculture.

4.3 Return

There were a number of reasons cited by respondents for repatriation. These included the desire to reunite with family members, secure better access to land and resources, and return to one's birthplace.

Eduardo stated that his brother continues to receive social assistance and an Indonesian Government pension since he was a retired military officer. Meanwhile, Eduardo worked in the gardens and kitchens to earn an income for his own family. In 2008, he married a West Timorese and they had two daughters. Eduardo's mother became ill in 2010, and he made several trips to visit her. Finally, he decided to return with his family to take care of her. His mother died five months after his

repatriation. Eduardo relayed that although he was thankful he was able to have nursed his mother, the everyday struggle to earn money from crops since returning has not diminished, particularly because he was still waiting for his first crop harvest. Moreover, he had saved enough money to invest in only one pig and two chickens. Another male respondent, Joao, whose uncle retired from the military, similarly decided to return because his parents were growing old and they needed extra hands to raise their livestock.

Since respondents were not direct beneficiaries of the Indonesian Government's public servant pension schemes or forms of social assistance (such as those described in the previous case study), life in the new country was difficult. Most respondents relied on agriculture as their main source of income, and found it difficult to secure land for cultivation from local landowners. They either worked as labourers, sharecroppers or earned minimal income from growing crops on small plots of land they could access. However, upon return, they had access to inherited rice fields and gardens which their relatives maintained claims over, while returnees were residing in Indonesia.

A number of the older respondents stated that Timor-Leste was their birthplace and that they wanted to contribute to the rebuilding of the country and die where they belonged. The second generation born and raised in Naibonat were swiftly learning Tetun in school. However, the oldest boy, now aged 16, had dropped out of secondary school because he could not keep up with learning the Portuguese language.

In the first month after their return, Timor-Leste's Ministry of Social Solidarity provided two sacks of rice for each member of the six returnee households. Respondents said that the ministry had assured them they would provide more rice in later months, but this had not eventuated. The village chief of Caicua was eager to welcome the former residents, largely because the six families were related to him through marriage ties. He bought rice for the families and furthermore endorsed returnees to create Timor-Leste identity and electoral cards. While returnees were generally

disappointed that the state has not paid more attention to their immediate needs, particularly during food-insecure months, most returnees simply said, 'if the state gives us help, we will receive. If it doesn't, then it's okay.' In this sense, they exhibit the qualities of dignity (*dignidade*), self-respect and independence in securing themselves better livelihoods. A number of villagers who returned through their own means in earlier years similarly explained that they had not received any government social assistance. Instead, they primarily relied upon members of kin for support, especially during the initial period after their return.

4.4 Cross-border mobility

During the time that interviews were conducted, a number of relatives were visiting from Naibonat. At the same time, some residents from Caicua were away visiting the remaining family members in Naibonat. Between 30 to 60 former residents of Caicua remain in Indonesia. It is difficult to get an exact number since family members have married local residents in West Timor, or have married fellow Timorese who were also displaced in 1999. Alternatively, some family members have migrated elsewhere in Indonesia.

As described in case study three, thousands of former East Timorese refugees remain in West Timor. While many individuals and families have resettled permanently as Indonesian citizens, others are contemplating repatriation. There is a steady flow of people and goods across the border, legally and illegally, among these geographically extended families. The Joint Border Committee established between the two states has implemented a border crossing pass which permits free of charge border crossing for 10 days for residents in the recognised border zones to travel within the designated areas.²⁰ Those who do not reside in particular villages along the border require a passport and visa to move between countries. Former refugees and their families separated across borders beyond the recognised villages are not eligible for the scheme, which means that there is a tendency for people to resort to travelling through the 'back roads' or *jalan tikus* ('rat trails') to avoid paying visa fees.

Those who are travelling from Timor-Leste in particular typically do not have a passport and cannot afford visa fees. Consequently, they choose to trek through the forests, cross dry river beds, or bribe border patrol officers. One respondent explained that he even paid a fisherman to take him on a boat when the river was high, before continuing his journey by *ojek* (a motorcycle taxi) to Naibonat. Another male respondent who was a police officer during the Indonesian occupation said he was travelling to Kupang regularly to receive his pension up until 2011 when his Indonesian passport expired.

4.5 Conclusion

Versions of these experiences of flight, return and cross-border movement can be found elsewhere in Timor-Leste where individuals, families and communities continue to rebuild livelihoods and recover from forced displacement and conflict a decade after Timor-Leste achieved nationhood and statehood. The absence of official state assistance in repatriation efforts has been compensated for by NGOs and local kinship networks, which have given returnees the necessary resources to rebuild their lives.

Although East Timorese political leaders have publicly encouraged the return of the East Timorese refugee diaspora, they have not formally embarked on assisting voluntary repatriation of former refugees in Indonesia. The repatriation of former pro-integration leaders and militia members, particularly those who played a role in violence and criminal acts, presents a politically sensitive issue for Timor-Leste's leaders. Indonesia and Timor-Leste recognise the high rates of mobility of people and goods associated with the longstanding cultural and trade links between the border areas. However, former refugees are excluded from formal bilateral border crossing agreements and must bear the brunt of first applying for a passport and then paying high visa fees.

As recommended in an International Crisis Group report (ICG 2011), the Timor-Leste Government could provide returnees basic social assistance for an interim period (or at least an agricultural cycle) upon their return to the origin

villages or resettlement elsewhere. Reconciliation efforts are best left to the local communities to carry out since there are wide variations in terms of violence committed during the 1999 conflict. High rates of mobility are involved in maintaining kinship ties and exchange relations between non-returnees in Naibonat and the origin community. Hence, there needs to be recognition of, and allowances made for, diasporic communities such as Caicua.

In summary, the trend of small-scale, individual and household-level repatriation, through legal and illegal means, will likely continue for some years if Timor-Leste remains politically stable, and makes steady progress in key areas of social and economic development. In the meantime, the border between Indonesia and Timor-Leste remains porous as the East Timorese refugee diaspora seek the best path to secure stability in their lives.

Conclusion: Beyond the Conflict Paradigm: The Need for More Complex Narratives of Timor-Leste – Indonesia Relations

In very different ways, the four case studies discussed here illustrate the enduring but sometimes fraught nature of ties between Timor-Leste and Indonesia. They show that, in terms of institutions, Indonesia continues to be a key influence on the development of Timor-Leste's police force. They also demonstrate that, in the realm of everyday life, the influence of Indonesia is felt in myriad ways: displaced East Timorese living in West Timor continue to negotiate the political border between the two nations, or deal with the challenges of returning to their communities in Timor-Leste. Moreover, the lives of both East Timorese and Indonesians continue to be marked by the legacy of complex intimate relationships. Collectively, the case studies seem to suggest that Timor-Leste's relationship with Indonesia is characterised not by 'outright opposition' but by more subtle forms of ambivalence and tension (Nygaard-Christensen 2013:424). Although influenced by history, this relationship is constantly evolving and is renegotiated both by political elites as well as ordinary people.

What might these insights suggest to academic researchers writing about, and policymakers working on, Timor-Leste? First and foremost, the case studies suggest the need to develop more complex narratives of Timor-Leste and Indonesia relations — accounts that move beyond the ahistorical 'conflict paradigm' and engage with the longstanding historical, cultural, social and political ties that exist between the two nations. Greater recognition of these ties might lead policymakers to eschew the idea that Timor-Leste is a post-conflict *tabula rasa* in which key institutions have been developed from scratch, and accept that those institutions, including the 'new' police, have been significantly shaped by Indonesian experiences and practice. By developing a more historically grounded understanding of how Indonesia has influenced, and continues to influence, the formation and practice of key institutions, scholars and policymakers might gain more insight into how these institutions function in the present and how they might evolve in the future.

A more complex, multidimensional, narrative of Timor-Leste – Indonesia relations would also see academics and policymakers moving beyond the oft-repeated statement that 'pragmatism' lies at the heart of this relationship. While pragmatism is certainly a feature of bilateral diplomatic relations between the political leaders of the two nations, to stop with this observation does not do justice to the deep ties that exist at the level of everyday, 'people-to-people' relations. Indeed, it is clear that, despite the violence of the occupation, most ordinary East Timorese do not display animosity towards Indonesians. It is common to hear East Timorese express the view that 'we rejected the Indonesian military regime, not the Indonesian people'.

A focus on the everyday lives of East Timorese and their interactions with Indonesians, both historically and in the present, might lead to more nuanced understandings of how people conceptualise both the state and their national identity. As case studies three and four highlight, the geographic border between Indonesia and Timor-Leste is not as 'fixed' as it might appear, and many people continue to negotiate lives,

families and business in both countries. Greater recognition of this fluidity and movement could help to inform more flexible policy responses in relation to border policing, visas and the provision of basic social assistance that ease the burden on displaced East Timorese who decide to return to their country of origin. While case study two focuses on the experiences of a particularly marginalised group of East Timorese women, it nonetheless also complicates accounts of East Timorese national identity based upon East Timorese victimhood. While acknowledging that women who were coerced into sexual relationships with the Indonesian military during the occupation experienced violence, repression and victimisation, it also highlights their negotiation and survival skills. These skills, evinced by many East Timorese during the occupation, are perhaps also assisting people to rebuild their lives and negotiate complex, and at times seemingly contradictory, relationships with Indonesia in the post-independence era.

We would also venture so far as to suggest that it is too simplistic to characterise the relationship between political leaders in terms of good state-to-state relations. Of course, it is undeniable that Indonesia is seeking to restore its reputation as a 'good' international citizen in the aftermath of the occupation and to demonstrate that *era reformasi* is clearly underway, and that Timor-Leste's policy of reconciliation is informed by the need to build relations with its large neighbour. Nonetheless, these relations, like those between ordinary people, are informed by deep historical and personal ties, as well as the begrudging respect that both the Indonesian military and FALINTIL developed during the occupation.

This is very much a new topic of research and further work is required to elaborate the extent of linkages, relationships and entanglements between Indonesia and Timor-Leste. One fruitful avenue of inquiry, as foreshadowed by the section on police, might explore the new alliances that are emerging between East Timorese political elites and Indonesian businessmen, and the role that Indonesian businessmen are playing in the shaping of post-independence Dili (see also Nygaard-

Christensen 2013:435). Research into how the new generation of young East Timorese studying in Indonesia engage with the legacies of the past in their attempts to forge their own relationships might also reveal valuable insights. Already, however, it would seem that, when transposed with the existing literature, exploring the influence of Indonesia may present a fuller picture to understanding ongoing processes of state and nation formation in contemporary Timor-Leste.

Author Notes

Gordon Peake and Lia Kent are research fellows at the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia (SSGM) Program, The Australian National University (ANU). Andrey Damaledo is a doctoral student in the Department of Anthropology, ANU. Pyone Myat Thu is an adjunct research fellow in the School of Earth and Environment, University of Western Australia and a former research fellow at SSGM.

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Endnotes

- 1 These papers were presented at the Oceanscapes conference in Sydney in April 2014.
- 2 Written by Gordon Peake.
- 3 Written by Lia Kent.
- 4 Written by Andrey Damaledo.
- 5 Written by Pyone Myat Thu.
- 6 Locating Timor-Leste in the same bracket as countries such as South Sudan and Nepal, and apart from its neighbours, is a relatively new trend. Historians, anthropologists, botanists and geologists have long located the half-island within a broader Malay archipelago (Fox 1980), but scholars working on the country in the 2000s have tended to shy away

from emphasising one regional context. Ideological predilections may also play a part, whether subliminally or otherwise, in emphasising differences between Timor-Leste and Indonesia (Nygaard-Christensen 2013).

- 7 During his 2005 address to the East Timorese parliament, the then Indonesian president stated that 'the people of Timor-Leste have always been our close relatives'. He went on to say, 'we are two nations and we are two states', sending a clear message that territorial ambition is part of Indonesia's story of the past and that the newly reformed Indonesia recognises and respects East Timor's sovereignty.
- 8 During his visit to Indonesia in May 2008, for instance, following the conclusion of the bilateral 'Truth and Friendship Commission', Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao stated: 'Our future relations must be built around a strong partnership that promotes peace and security, as well as new opportunities for prosperity, freedom, justice, tolerance and democracy for our neighbouring and friendly countries ... Let us reinvent new partnerships, formulating serious cooperation proposals, as a way to defend the freedom of our brother countries ... Our common history is made by our two peoples. Let us create the conditions for friendship and solidarity among them to grow stronger and stronger' (Gusmao 2008:6–12).
- 9 An important exception to this trend is the work of Bu Wilson (2010), who frames her doctoral thesis on the origins of the East Timorese police in terms of Portuguese and Indonesian antecedents.
- 10 Blunt spent time in Dili working inside the East Timorese Government.
- 11 The CAVR (2005) report provides the most comprehensive accounts of these experiences (see especially Chapter 7.7). As part of its nationwide truth-seeking process, it documents 853 cases of sexual violence against women, 229 of which were cases of what the commission termed 'sexual slavery'.
- 12 The study was undertaken in collaboration with a team of East Timorese women researchers from the Timor-Leste office of the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and the Alola Foundation. Nineteen women from the districts of Aileu, Ainaro, Los Palos and Baucau were interviewed about their lives. All interviews were conducted via existing contacts of the ICTJ. The study was exploratory in nature; it sought to open up discussion and deepen understandings of an underexplored issue, rather than provide a comprehensive account of women's experiences. Interviews were sought not so much to document an objective 'truth' but to gain an understanding of the meanings women ascribed to their experiences and how they sought to rebuild their lives. For a fuller account of the project findings see Kent (2014).
- 13 The term 'comfort woman' refers to the thousands of young women and girls who were pressed into sexual servitude during the Asia–Pacific War.
- 14 In the most extreme case encountered by the research team, a woman in Los Palos was found to have endured a coercive sexual relationship with a military officer followed by a policeman, for a period of nine years.
- 15 The *Bolsu de Maie* (mothers pocket) scheme, introduced in 2008 to assist the neediest female-headed households, provides a monthly subsidy of between US\$5 and US\$30 for each child to assist in the education of children.
- 16 This paper is based on my ethnographic research among the East Timorese in West Timor between October 2012 and October 2013. This analysis on the Tetun people would not be possible without the support of my good *kolega* Nato Moreira who has shared not only his companionship, knowledge and networks, but also his accommodation during my stay in Betun. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of my good friend Olyvianus Dadi Lado in sharing the stories of Sukabiwedik people in his inspirational but unfortunately short-lived Loro Sae Li'an bulletin.
- 17 Properly it was referred to as Wewiku-Wehali or Wesei-Wehali. I choose to use Wehali as a shorthand.
- 18 I am extremely grateful to *Fila Hikas Knua* for giving me the opportunity to observe and participate in the repatriation process, in particular Charles Meluk for providing research assistance in Caicua.
- 19 There are further East Timorese who are returning or have returned illegally, and their numbers are unrecorded.
- 20 See Arrangement between the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on Traditional Border Crossings and Regulated Markets, <http://treaty.kemlu.go.id/uploads-pub/4284_TLS-2003-0003.pdf>, viewed 2/12/2014.

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State, Society and Governance in Melanesia
School of International, Political & Strategic Studies
ANU College of Asia and the Pacific
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200

Telephone: +61 2 6125 8394
Fax: +61 2 6125 9604
Email: ssgm.admin@anu.edu.au
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The State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program acknowledges the generous support from the Australian Government for the production of this Discussion Paper.

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