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**“First I cry, then I fight”: documenting sexual violence
in occupied East Timor and evaluating the response
of representatives of the Timorese Catholic Church.**

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This research project is dedicated to the countless Timorese women who suffered, and continue to suffer, the violent effects of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor that occurred between 1975 and 1999. I have learnt much from the courageous commentary of the women I have been studying throughout the course of this research. One day I hope to visit East Timor myself, if only to see the country they fought so hard and suffered so much for.

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Abstract

This research project looks at the period of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor with a view to documenting instances of sexual violence perpetrated by the military during their 24 years of rule and analysing the response of the Timorese Catholic Church during that time. The research aims to look at the instances of sexual violence that occurred in East Timor in the light of a global analysis of violence against women during conflict situations and to examine first, why women are particularly vulnerable to these forms of violence, and second, what types of sexual violence they are subjected to. The specific experiences of Timorese women will be discussed using a feminist analysis of women's 'position' versus women's 'condition' by evaluating information on cultural norms in Timorese society to establish the status that Timorese women have traditionally held there. The research will also examine the role of the local Catholic Church in assisting women during the occupation, using the examples of two Catholic leaders in East Timor. The attitudes and actions of the two Catholic representatives, Bishop Belo and Sister Maria Lourdes, will be evaluated in terms of Catholic doctrine and beliefs that pertain to women's role and identity in society and in the Church. The influence of the Second Vatican Council in heralding the advent of new theologies such as liberation theology and feminist theology will also be discussed, with a view to establishing a clear picture of gender roles within the present-day Catholic Church. Once again, the material will be weighed up by analysing how their actions and attitudes may have affected women's 'position' in East Timor, as well as their 'condition'.

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Yet She is Beautiful

(a poem for my country) ¹

My sorrow grows within
Triggered from that without

A monsoon stirs inside my heart
The rivers from my eyes flow out

Seep into the scorched earth
For she is now without tears

Those which glistened black inside her
Drained out for twenty four years

Inner sanctum gives her strength
She screams out, I never said yes

Yet demons flow, inside they come
Setting out to leave their mess

It's only goodness they put inside?
Be without gratitude for their pains?

Thus my heart is in a season
You'll find throughout there rains

¹ This poem was written by Sarina and is taken from Buibere: Voice of East Timorese Women Vol., 1 compiled by Rebecca Winters (1991) East Timor International Support Center, Australia.

Chapter One – The Research Project

Introduction to the research project and its aims

This research project has sprung from two main interests that have characterised the work I have been involved in during the past year. The first source of interest is the country of East Timor, the eastern half of an island across the other side of the world; the other source of interest (which has been more influenced by the studies I have conducted as part of my Master's Degree) is the statuses of women around the world, both in the sense of their 'states', or 'situations' and their 'statures', or 'standings'. It soon became apparent that these two subjects could be looked at in conjunction and thus the initial research plan was developed: to look at violence against women in East Timor. However there was a specific angle that had to be addressed for the purposes of this dissertation: the research needed to contribute to both fields of development and religious studies. Some of the initial reading that was carried out at the start of the research process soon led to the formulation of the research questions below. The thesis by Patrick Smythe (2004), which looks at the response of the Catholic Church to the occupation of East Timor by the Indonesian military, mentions the plight of Timorese women who suffered particularly under the military regime. However his research does not include an engagement with the response of the Catholic Church to those specific issues, rather it outlines the *general* response of the local Church and the global Church to the violent occupation of East Timor.

Having decided then, to look at the response of the Catholic Church to violence against women in East Timor, I then established two main aims of the research. The first: to uncover as far as possible what kinds of violence

Timorese women experienced during the Indonesian occupation, and the second: to assess how the local Church reacted and responded to that violence. There was also a practical consideration to be taken into account, which is worth pointing out. As I will be continuing my study of women in East Timor beyond this Master's Degree, this research project has proven a useful starting point for assessing the quality and accessibility of information about women in East Timor. More will be said about this below in the subsection on research practicalities.

Once these aims were established the research questions were formulated through some initial reading and researching. Some of the questions first articulated were later discarded and some evolved during the research process. Initially there were two questions relating to the aftermath of the occupation in terms of how justice is being served through the setting up of tribunals and other specialist courts, however the scope of this research project was deemed inappropriate for those questions and so that angle was later abandoned.

The set of questions that has come to define the main body of this project is as follows:

- ◆ **What kinds of violence did women in East Timor suffer under the Indonesian regime?**

- ◆ **What can we know about sexual violence during conflict from other situations in which it has occurred?**

- ◆ **What was the response of the Catholic Church to the violence suffered by women during the occupation?**

- ◆ **What can we say in general about the Catholic Church and its standpoint with regards to women?**

Research practicalities

As we have seen, the research questions cover a range of topics, requiring different types of information. The sources used in this research are a mixture of academic, documentary and journalistic. Some of the materials found were written to raise political awareness of the situation in East Timor (such as Amnesty International reports), some were written as specific reports to be submitted to UN bodies and others were written with personal aims as historical and journalistic accounts to be read by a wide audience. The materials were found through a variety of means, some accessed via the internet, some accessed using library resources and some accessed through referencing from other materials. The experience of finding the necessary information was at times a little like fitting a puzzle together. I had an overall picture of the research through having read one or two key sources, such as Patrick Smythe's thesis on East Timor and the Catholic Church (2004) and press reports which mentioned violence against women during the Indonesian occupation, but actually finding the pieces of information to back those main sources up was more complicated and took much more time and patience. As mentioned above, however, this experience was helpful for discovering exactly how accessible materials about East Timor actually are, and how

many of those materials address women's issues, something that will be of interest to me in the future since I will be conducting further research on women's issues in East Timor following completion of my Masters Degree.

Methodological concerns

The epistemological and ontological positions adopted for the research were extremely significant in this process. From the start, the research process was inductive; in other words, it was guided initially by the questions I started out with and then led by the materials found and the information gathered.

Inductive reasoning is an approach involving the generation of theory throughout the research process, rather than using a deductive approach that employs a specific theory that is then tested with the data found (Mason 1996, p100). This approach provided more flexibility and meant that on more than one occasion, new directions were explored through finding interesting information to follow up. An inductive approach is often linked to the use of qualitative research. Qualitative research methods are concerned with accessing richer and more detailed data so as to provide a more complex picture of a social phenomenon. Thus the aim of qualitative research is not necessarily to provide large-scale statistical findings on a subject but to narrow the lens and provide a close-up view of a situation in greater detail (Bryman 2004, p266). This approach influenced decisions taken during the research process, for example the decision to focus on two case-studies of representatives within the Catholic Church in the third chapter, rather than using data about the whole Church. In analysing the documents, a hermeneutic approach was taken in that I was analysing data that already

existed and interpreting it in relation to the specific questions I was asking (May 2003).

Standpoint and values of the author

As mentioned above, one of the sources of interest that has motivated this research project is related to assessing women's states and statuses in the world. This relates to the standpoint of the author, which is one that identifies with feminist values. Feminist research attempts to seek out and amplify the underprivileged voice. For feminists, the goal of social research is not simply an academic one: "Our goal is after all women's liberation, and we assume that creative and scholarly work can contribute to reaching it" (Nielsen 1990, p30). Therefore throughout the project there will be an evaluation of the potential for Timorese women's voices to be heard and the author will attempt to discover for which reasons their voices are subordinated and in which contexts.

In terms of the religious aspect of the research, my standpoint is closer to that of an observer-as-participant, which, according to Knott (in Hinnells 2004, p6) is the stance of an outsider to a religious community, interested in the community's belief system but not necessarily sharing or accepting that system. Although I do hold personal beliefs similar to those of Catholics, I am not a member of the Catholic Church and also disagree with some Catholic teachings. Some of the main areas of disagreement have to do with some of the issues being raised in this research, such as the place of women in the Church, and Catholic doctrine and practices concerning sexuality and reproduction.

In terms of the wider history of East Timor, I am merely an observer but one which has been concerned for a few years about the situation of the East Timorese. This interest has sprung from a series of coincidences that have led me to have some knowledge of the situation in East Timor. I feel that this research has a personal significance for me and I have looked forward greatly to conducting it.

Chapter summary

This chapter has introduced the research topic, its aims and motivations. The research questions were introduced and related back to the aims of the research. The practical concerns of the research process have been identified, as have the main epistemological and ontological positions. The feminist values of the author have been introduced and the author's standpoint has been identified, both in relation to her connection with East Timor and to the Catholic Church.

Chapter Two – Setting the Scene

“You can destroy flowers but not destroy spring. We are like leaves; when the hot season comes the leaves fall down, but after the rain the leaves will come back again” Bisoi²

Introduction

This chapter looks briefly at the situation that East Timor found itself in during the occupation by the Indonesians. There will be a short explanation of the period of invasion and the period of the occupation itself. There will also be an analysis of some of the cultural factors that may contribute to our understanding of Timorese gender relations. These insights will set the scene for the main body of the project, contained in the following two chapters on the sexual violence women suffered during the occupation and evaluating the ensuing response of the Catholic Church.

Invasion

East Timor lies south-east of Indonesia and north-west of Australia. It is the eastern half of the island of Timor which was divided in 1859 by the colonial powers in the region, the Dutch and the Portuguese, each part developing its own identity, with West Timor eventually becoming part of Indonesia in 1945 and East Timor remaining under Portuguese rule, apart from a brief Japanese occupation during the Second World War (McCloskey 2000). In 1974 Portugal underwent a brief and bloodless revolution (the ‘carnation revolution’) that put

² This quote is taken from *Bitter Dawn* by Irene Cristalis 2002, p189, while the quotes at the start of Chapters Three and Four are taken from *Buibere: Voice of East Timorese Women*

an end to the military dictatorship, which had been in power for more than 40 years. One of the first acts of the new left-wing government was to get rid of its colonial ties by abruptly pulling out of its various colonies (Cristalis 2002, p34).

Around this time the first political parties became established in East Timor. The three main parties that formed were to play a crucial part in the next stage of Timor's history. The Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) and the Timorese Social Democratic Union (ASDT) both aimed to achieve independence for East Timor, however UDT had strong ties with the Portuguese, as most of its members were part of the Timorese elite that the Portuguese had favoured. USDT leaders were mainly ethnic Timorese who had not mixed with the Portuguese, and so had not been in such privileged positions during the colonial period. While UDT wished to maintain links with Portugal until they felt able to survive alone, ASDT wanted to break free from colonial ties and so its members decided to rename themselves the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor (Fretilin) to indicate their claims for independence. The third party was the Timorese Popular Democratic Association (Apodeti) whose members were keen to become part of Indonesia, as an autonomous territory. This party included members of the small Muslim community in Dili and some tribal clans from around the border with West Timor (*ibid.*).

UDT and Fretilin initially formed a coalition that fell apart once Fretilin's "communist-sounding rhetoric" started disturbing some of the UDT leaders (Cristalis 2002, p35). At this point it became apparent that there were others unhappy with the potential "communist threat" as the Indonesian General Ali

Murtopo told UDT leaders that if Fretilin was not stopped, they would step in. UDT decided to mount a coup in an attempt to wipe out Fretilin, and while the war only lasted a few weeks, the damage to relationships between these two parties was to remain an issue for many years to come. Fretilin won the brief war, pushing UDT forces across the border into West Timor and for the next two months, Fretilin attempted to run the day-to-day governing of East Timor while fighting off raids carried out not only by UDT forces but with the backing of Indonesian forces. The Indonesian plan was starting to unfold.

Fretilin decided to declare East Timor independent on the 28th November 1975, hoping to receive international recognition with that act. However only two days later leaders of the UDT and other Timorese parties met with the Indonesian foreign minister Adam Malik to sign an agreement declaring East Timor integrated with Indonesia. A few days later, on the 7th December, Indonesian troops landed in Dili and so ensued the 24 years of occupation in which 100,000 to 200,000 people are thought to have perished unnaturally (Cristalis 2002 p37, Magalhães 1992 p35).

Occupation

The first thirteen years of Indonesian occupation were characterised by isolationist tactics and brutal military repression. The only international organisation allowed to enter the territory during that time was the Red Cross and then only under restricted conditions. The Red Cross reported severe food shortages and lack of medical aid (Magalhães 1992 p35). The (very few) foreign journalists that did gain entry during that initial period reported a suffering population, “torn apart by war, hunger, and every sort of atrocity on

the part of the invading forces" (*ibid.*). There followed, however, a 3-year period in which the Indonesians opened up the Timorese territory to allow some greater freedom. Essentially, the Indonesian government wished to portray a peaceful territory that was being developed and improved. However events in 1991 would reverse this trend. In 1991 the Indonesian military fired upon peaceful protestors who were gathered at a graveyard to commemorate the death of a young student, killed by the military days before. This event became known as the Santa Cruz massacre and was caught on camera by a western journalist who managed to publicise the footage internationally after having successfully smuggled the films out of East Timor (Taylor 1999, xiii). Although the public responded by vociferously condemning the military action, western governments were less forthcoming and the Indonesians were left to continue with their rule of terror. Following the events of 1991, the Indonesian government placed more and more power into the hands of the Kopassus unit (Special Forces), which focused its energies on targeting resistance fighters and intimidating the local populations (xiv). It was the 1997 Asian currency crisis that produced the most resounding blow on the position of Indonesia in East Timor. In 1998, President Suharto was forced to resign following the massive economic meltdown that had been sparked by the currency crash. The new president B J Habibie seemed open to political reform and the political climate started to become less repressive and more open. In June 1998 the new president stated that he was willing to offer 'special status' to East Timor if it became an autonomous territory of Indonesia, however this offer was rejected by representatives of the Timorese

independence movement. Six months later, on January 27th 1999, the Indonesian government announced that there would be a proposal made to the national Consultative People's Assembly to 'let East Timor go' (Taylor 1999, xvii). To make this offer more palatable to the military generals who continued to wield immense power in Indonesia, it was finally decided that the Timorese would be given a referendum to decide if they wished to have autonomous status within Indonesia or be given their independence (*ibid.*). The months leading up to the referendum were marked by violence mostly carried out by the militias who were being funded directly by Kopassus forces. This was *Operation Clean Sweep*, designed to terrorise the Timorese into voting for autonomous status. The Timorese refused to be intimidated and on August 26th 98.5 % of the population turned out to vote and chose independence by a majority of 78 %. After the referendum *Operation Clean Sweep* took on an even more aggressive nature and became simple destruction of everything in its path. The militias, aided by Kopassus, destroyed houses, burned down buildings, forcibly moved thousands of people across the border to West Timor and killed and tortured indiscriminately. This continued until president Habibie finally allowed UN forces to enter the region on September 27th, at which point the militias started to retreat and the long business of building the peace started in earnest (Taylor 1999, xxiv).

Contributing cultural factors

As the previous section has shown, the conditions during the occupation were severe for all of the Timorese population. However, for the purposes of this

research, we are interested specifically in the experiences of East Timorese women. When looking at gender issues there is a distinction to be made between the material conditions that women find themselves living in, and their relative status, or “position” in society (Young 1988 p1). In this section there will be a brief analysis of women’s position relative to men’s in East Timor.

There are many aspects of traditional Timorese culture that exacerbated the struggles of women under the Indonesian occupation (ETAN Network 2005). The traditional role of women in East Timor is restricted to caring for the home and family and women are not supposed to participate in leadership or decision-making roles (*ibid.*). This is also reflected in the fact that women and men do not traditionally enjoy equal rights in terms of individual freedoms and property rights (Carey in Wessel & Wimhöfer 2001).

From an ethnographic study by David Hicks, who has looked into fertility and gender in East Timor (2004), there are the following points to be made about gender relations:

- *Masculine is considered superior to feminine as the adult (father) is superior to the child (p101)*
- *In the case of rape...if the victim is a married woman the offence is interpreted primarily as a blemish on her spouse’s reputation (p102)*
- *That rape is construed as being directed more against the man than the woman is confirmed by the fact that should an unmarried woman be raped, the rapist must pay to her father the same penalty as if she had become pregnant as a result of a mutually agreed-to act of sex (p102)*

These quotes quite clearly portray an unequal balance of power between women and men in traditional tribal culture. The first quote is typical of a patriarchal view of women as less capable than men and in need of 'looking after' as a father would look after a child. The following two quotes show how rape is not seen as a crime against the woman but against her family, specifically her male relatives. This victimizes the woman leaving her defenceless in the hands of the males around her. The slur on the husband's or father's characters is compensated for in an elaborate ritual which essentially denies the woman's suffering and *her* need for justice. The different tribal groups in East Timor also practice forms of 'bride-price', a custom which can be oppressive towards women, especially as it indicates the 'buying' of a woman by her husband who is then free to exercise his 'right' of possession of her and her assets (Hicks 2004, p104).

These traditional values show how women in East Timor are not treated equally to men. They occupy a less powerful position in Timorese society, which, as the following chapter will demonstrate, increases their vulnerability to maltreatment and abuse.

Chapter summary

This chapter has described the period of violence that characterized 24 years of East Timor's recent history. There was a brief analysis of the circumstances leading up to the invasion by Indonesian forces and then the years of occupation that followed. The second section closed with a description of the events that lead to the eventual withdrawal of Indonesian troops.

In the third section there was an analysis of the cultural factors that affect the relative status of women in East Timor, both reflected in traditional beliefs and everyday practices that render women's position disadvantaged in relation to that of East Timorese men.

These sections aimed to provide a background to the following two chapters that look at how women suffered at the hands of the military and how representatives of the local Church responded to women's needs during the occupation.

Chapter Three – Women’s Experience of the Indonesian Occupation

“Because of the violence done by the Indonesian military, Timorese women are suffering every day. We have never wanted and still don’t want to give our bodies to them, so every day we have to fight them” Coca Cola

Introduction

This chapter introduces the theme of women and conflict and outlines the main issues that make women more vulnerable to various forms of sexual violence. Types of sexual violence are identified and exemplified, using data showing women’s experiences of violence as both local (unique to a situation) and global (following certain patterns in different contexts). The second part of the chapter is dedicated to the specific experiences of women in East Timor and identifies the types of violence they encountered and some of the specific issues that the violence produced. Finally, there is a brief discussion of how these experiences relate to the status of women in East Timor (as defined in the previous chapter).

Section One: background information

Women’s vulnerability in conflict situations

There is a gender dimension to conflict that is not necessarily apparent to the uninformed observer. Often, since it is men who tend to be in the majority in the armed forces, it is assumed that they are more vulnerable in times of war. Men are seen as the heroes who die “for their countries” and are remembered

for their bravery and honoured for their war action. Women, however, suffer the consequences of conflict in a unique way due to their vulnerability in various areas (Callarmard 2001, p9).

Part of women's vulnerability has to do with the changing nature of warfare during modern times, which involves a higher risk to civilians as certain technologies such as land mines and small arms become more widely deployed (Jacobs et al 2000). However there is also a higher risk posed to women due to unequal gender relations that exist before, during and after the conflict.

Investigating Women's Rights Violations in Armed Conflicts (Callamard 2001) is a booklet that looks at women's experiences in armed conflicts. Women suffer specific trauma during periods of conflict due to the following reasons: they are vulnerable as civilians since they are both targeted through village and city bombings, and left caring for land and families without a male presence; they are also targeted through their sexuality, both through 'gendered' forms of violence, such as rape and sexual slavery, and as transmitters of ethnicity and culture. These experiences are compounded for women by the fact that there is very little global recognition of this phenomenon, mainly due to already existent forms of gender discrimination and "a lack of recognition that many of the violations occurring in armed conflict situations constitute violations of human rights and humanitarian law" (Callamard 2001, p11).

These factors are clearly not simply rooted in the nature of conflict. They are interconnected to gender inequality existing in society before and after the conflict and relate to cultural values that societies around the globe hold with

regards to women's position and status (Bouta et al 2005, Lentin 1997, Moser & Clark 2001). Irene Fernandez (in Schuler 1992) describes the sorts of violence women suffer due to their position in society. She describes how society's construction of female sexuality and its subordinate role in social hierarchy subjects women to rape, genital mutilation, female infanticide and sex-related crimes; also how, due to society's concept of woman as the property of a male protector (father, husband, etc.), a woman may suffer forms of domestic violence, dowry murder, or *sati*. She shows how this notion of women as property of men will also be apparent in times of conflict as women are abused directly to humiliate members of her community, since a woman's sexuality is perceived as both representing and belonging to that community. It is this last point that will be addressed in the next section as we look at the specific forms of sexual violence women experience in times of conflict.

Types of sexual violence

Rape is one of the most documented forms of sexual violence that may occur as a direct result of a conflict. There are many examples of rape being used as a 'weapon of war' against a population. Recently, women who were used as 'comfort women' by Japanese troops during the 2nd World War have been revealing just how widespread instances of rape and sexual slavery were under the militarization of their countries (such as China and Korea) (Sajor 1998); in the former Yugoslavia Bosnian women and men were raped by Serb troops as a form of ethnic domination. Troops used rape as a way of both asserting their national identity and taking away the identity of their enemies

by impregnating the women and emasculating the men (Hague in Lentin 1997). Women and the non-Serb enemy were seen to be inferior to the masculine ideal of the Serb troops and therefore to be raped as a symbol of their 'masculine' domination of the enemy's 'femininity' (*ibid.*).

Another form of sexual violence used in conflict is the forced sterilization of women to prevent the 'enemy' from reproducing and as a form of 'ethnic cleansing'. Women in Chinese-occupied Tibet are forced to undergo abortions and sterilization at the hands of the Chinese government (Kikhang in Lentin 1997). This was also known to happen in Nazi Germany during the 2nd World War, where disabled women, women with mental health problems, and women of 'undesirable' ethnic origin were sterilised as a way of achieving a 'pure' Aryan race (Lentin in Lentin 1997).

Sexual slavery and sexual torture are often common in ongoing militarised zones and may occur as a form of control by the authoritarian state against dissidents or by occupying forces against the local population. In some countries in Latin America (for example Argentina, Chile and Uruguay), sexual torture occurs as a way of 'punishing' women who actively protest against the militarised state and as a way of 'punishing' activist men through their mothers, sisters, daughters and lovers: "The super-macho military system brutalizes these women as an extension of the ego of and as a possession of the male whom they consider the 'enemy' in an 'internal war' (Bunster-Burotto in Davies 1994).

Sexual violence and genocide

As sexual violence relates to women's reproductive function, it may be used to such a degree that it can be considered to have the political aim of genocide in some situations.

Rape, for example, constitutes an attack on two aspects of reproduction: first by impregnating 'enemy' women and second, by preventing those women becoming mothers in their own communities through stigma or injury (Turshen in Moser & Clark 2001). Genocide in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia was characterised by "wide-spread and systematic rape, forced impregnation and other sexual violence" (Sajor in Sajor 1998). There were clear political aims in both situations as the Serbs sought to 'clean' out the Muslim population from territories that the Serbs claimed belonged to them (Drakulic in Lentin 1997). In the case of Rwanda, Tutsi women were stripped of their assets through rape as Hutu men laid claim to their reproductive worth and their material worth (expressed through their access to land and livestock), although there were instances of Hutu women also being raped by the Hutu military (Turshen in Moser & Clark 2001).

Forced sterilisation of women undoubtedly has the political aim of 'ethnic cleansing' and as we have seen, occurs frequently where one nation, or group, believes itself to be superior to another living in its close vicinity, where that nation or group has political power to enforce such practices. This type of violence may be institutionalised and legitimised by the occupying forces often through the guise of 'family planning' services, as in Tibet (Kikhang in Lentin 1997).

Section two: sexual violence in East Timor

Types of violence

There are examples of many types of sexual violence that occurred between the years of 1975 and 1999 in East Timor. There are documented accounts of rape, sexual slavery, sexual torture and forced sterilization. The following section will give examples of the violations. The section after that will examine the specific issues that these violations raise.

Rape: There are examples of rape occurring throughout the 24 years of occupation and under a variety of circumstances. The sources accessed during this research project describe individual rape by militaries on a random basis, mass rape of many women, gang rape by many militaries and targeted rape of specific women (by targeted rape I mean, rape of a woman suspected of being part of the resistance movement or otherwise affiliated as a wife, mother, daughter or sister to a male activist). Rapes are reported to have occurred from the very start of the occupation in 1975 (Turner 1992, p146), throughout the late 70s, the 80s and the 90s and there are reports of widespread sexual violence by the Indonesian military and the sponsored Timorese militias, occurring up to and beyond the referendum in 1999 (Cristalis 2002, p164, Aditjondro 1997, Furusawa & Inglis in Sajor 1998). Of all the types of rape, the materials accessed during the research tended to document those targeted at specific women and those that had a political motivation. Rapes that occurred randomly and as part of the ongoing intimidation of the Timorese population have often found their way third and fourth hand into the literature whereas there are quite a few first hand accounts written up of women who themselves suffered targeted rape

because of their family background or because they themselves were suspected resistance fighters. For example Inalu, a member of the resistance describes her experiences at the hands of Indonesian militaries interrogating her. "They asked me, 'where is the leader of the Falintil?' but I was silent, and that is why they raped me. At the same time as they interrogated me, they were raping me." (Winters 1999, p25).

Sexual torture: There are also instances of sexual torture being used as methods of interrogation. This can take the form of verbal abuse "they spoke very bad words...like the way bad men speak to prostitutes" (Sintadewe, Winters 1999, p11) or physical abuse such as stripping women naked and also forcing husbands to watch while their wives are raped. Another common form of sexual torture is forcing Timorese men to rape women themselves: "The soldiers forced them with guns, and the people had to have sex with each other in that river." (Bi-Kiak, Winters 1999 p93).

Sexual slavery: There are many documented accounts of women becoming the "wives" or "girlfriends" of Indonesian militaries. Again this was both an ongoing practice of Indonesian militaries that affected the whole population but was also implemented as a more strategic measure for political motives. For example a Timorese exile, Domingos Alves reports the abuse of OPMT women in which "women activists were gathered and placed in a "chicken coop" and being subjected to daily rapes and sexual abuse" (Carey 2001). Some Timorese women have been used as "comfort women", forced into sexual relationships with billeted militaries and then left supporting children once they move on. According to the literature, this type of sexual slavery occurred more commonly in rural areas and, as Odilia Victor reported at the

Free East Timor Japan Coalition, was often targeted at women with a low level of education as they tended to be more easily intimidated (Carey 2001).

Forced sterilisation: although there are not many direct accounts of forced sterilisation in the material gathered, there are clear indications of reproductive abuses carried out by Indonesian militaries and there is also evidence in the form of a report by Miranda Sissons, that the Indonesian family planning programme (known as the KB programme) was involved in various violations of human rights. These included the forced injecting of young women with hormonal contraceptives; breaches of informed user consent; denial of treatment in life-threatening circumstances and military involvement in the provision of family planning services (Sissons 1997). There are also first-hand accounts that speak for themselves. Bernadina Alves describes how during one of her pregnancies the Indonesian doctor attending her used forceps to damage the skull of the 4-month foetus inside her, which led to the death of the baby a few days later, while also abusing her verbally by using “foulmouthed language” throughout the consultation. When asked 18 days later to attend a family-planning clinic she refused as “she knew that many Timorese women had died through being involved with these Indonesian family planning projects” (in Carey 2001).

Issues arising from the violence

One of the main themes throughout the accounts of sexual violations is the difficulty of identifying abuses as women are too ashamed to talk about what they have suffered. This is both demonstrated by the reticence of women to be personally identified as the victim, choosing to talk in the third person, of a

'friend's' experiences and also by the language used to describe abuses, such as using hints to suggest what may have occurred without using specific vocabulary (Bernadino in Winters 1999 p36). This is partly due to the fact that the Timorese do not have a word for 'rape' and tend to use Portuguese words such as *violação* which means literally 'violation', or *estraga* which means 'damage' or 'destruction' (*ibid.*). This self-imposed silence is of course, common to most victims of sexual violence. Even when women are prepared to talk about their experiences their voices are not always heard. For example one of the first-hand accounts by a Timorese woman was recorded by a researcher and then translated by a young man who explained that he did not in fact translate all the content of Mesak's statement as the "details were too embarrassing". This kind of wellmeaning but essentially unhelpful attitude shows how discerning women's voices can become a complex exercise which necessitates cultural awareness of gender roles and relations. One way of fostering this awareness is to look at women's position and status in a particular society.

In the first half of this chapter the vulnerabilities of women were looked at from a global point of view. It is clear that women suffer disproportionately in times of conflict due to gender inequalities that exist outside of the conflict. This is no different for Timorese women as they clearly occupy a less powerful position to men in Timorese society (see previous chapter's discussion on women's status in East Timor). Following such experiences of sexual abuse, some women have been rejected by their communities and families (Costa 1999).

Even in the resistance movement, where women and men were supposedly treated as equals, Irene Cristalis found that she only encountered one woman in a political role during her visits during the occupation. Instead most of the women working in the resistance would perform the domestic tasks and take care of the male soldiers, this is despite the fact that in the Falintil women and men are supposed to be treated equally (Cristalis 2002, p189).

Was it genocide?

The findings of this research project do not provide enough evidence to link the sexual violence women suffered with a military aim of wiping out the Timorese population as this is an area that requires a more detailed analysis, one that is unfortunately not within the scope of this project.

The forms of violence that women were subjected to are to some degree consistent with what could be perceived as genocidal practices by the Indonesian military and the types of sexual violence documented do bear similarities to the examples of Bosnia and Rwanda looked at in the previous section, where there were attempts made to wipe out a whole population, however, there are insufficient numbers of cases to declare conclusively that the Indonesian military were attempting to wipe out the Timorese population. Having said that, the fact that many women were targeted for sexual violence as members of, or connected to the resistance does indicate the military's aim of deliberately humiliating and attempting to destroy this section of Timorese society, certainly with intent to dominate this community, much like the Serbs did in Bosnia, where genocide did occur.

Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the main factors that contribute to women's vulnerability during conflict. There was an analysis of the different kinds of sexual violence that women are likely to suffer during conflict and a brief discussion of how such violence can become linked to genocide, through the abuse of women's sexuality and their reproductive role.

The chapter then introduced the specific example of East Timor, looking at the kinds of sexual violence women experienced during the 24-year occupation by the Indonesian military. Different types of violence were documented and there was a discussion of some of the issues that contributed to women's suffering, including the cultural factors that made it difficult for women to talk about their experiences. There were clear examples of how women were subjected to the most brutal abuse at the hands of both Indonesian militaries, including rape, sexual torture, sexual slavery, and forced sterilisation and a brief evaluation of whether they could be defined as an act of genocide against the Timorese people.

Chapter Four – The Response of the Catholic Church

“I cry a lot. Crying makes me feel stronger. First I cry, then I fight.” Mana Lou

Introduction

The role of the Catholic Church in assisting the East Timorese in their struggle against the brutality of the Indonesian Occupation is one that has already been documented in a thesis dedicated to the question of how various factions of the Catholic Church responded to the Timor crisis. Patrick Smythe (2004) examined the role of the Catholic Church not only in East Timor but also in connected countries, such as Indonesia, the USA, and Australia among others.

For the purpose of this discussion however, the analysis will be limited to looking at the local church and indeed, local figures within the Catholic Church in East Timor. The first half of the chapter will examine Catholic social doctrine and specific theologies related to human rights and women’s rights; namely liberation theology and feminist theology. The second half of the chapter will look specifically at the examples of how two representatives of the local church responded to the abuses suffered by women during the occupation: Bishop Belo, who took over the position of Bishop following Mgr da Costa Lopes and who remained in post until after East Timor was finally declared independent in 1999; and Sister Maria de Lourdes, also known as Mana Lou, who is a nun still serving in East Timor to this day.

Section one: background information

Women and the Catholic Church

The position of women in religious systems is often a reflection, however oblique, of women's status in society. Religion in its turn, shapes and mediates women's status (Bayes & Tohidi 2001)

As this quote suggests religion plays an important part in determining women's roles in society, as such it can have an empowering effect on women's lives and can also be linked to attitudes and beliefs that may disempower women.

In Catholicism it is possible to trace an official line on gender relations through the administration of the Vatican, which is the central organisation of the Church. As the head of that organisation, the Pope's views on gender roles are essential to understanding that official line, though there will be Catholics who disagree with that line (Bayes & Tohidi 2001). In the case of Catholicism the late Pope John Paul II was unfavourable to the ordination of women, going so far as to ban discussion on the subject and was a supporter of the view that men and women are equal but essentially different and therefore must have different roles (*ibid.*).

Catholic doctrine must be viewed in the light of this separation of roles among men and women. Women are to be valued primarily for their roles as wives and mothers (Maloney in Bayes & Tohidi 2001). Or if not as wives and mothers, as virgins who have sacrificed those roles in order to dedicate their lives to God (*ibid.*). This latter role is deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition of Marianism which involves the veneration of the Virgin Mary and the religious symbolism that surrounds beliefs about her purity and virginity (Ary 2000 p74). The Catholic Church's condemnation of contraception is characteristic of this

form of sexism. Since outside of marriage women are to remain celibate and inside of marriage they are to become mothers, contraception is deemed both unnecessary and indeed an unnatural measure to be avoided under every circumstance. This being the case, women are therefore unlikely to be able to engage meaningfully in society in a professional capacity (Radford Ruether in Hastings 1991).

However, in the last few decades, there has been some progress made in advancing the cause of women within the Catholic Church especially following the remarkable events of the Second Vatican Council which has become renowned for its modernising effect on Catholic doctrine (Smythe 2004 p28, McDonagh in Hastings 1991, McBrien 1994 p734). Much has been written of one of the main documents that resulted from the Council: *Gaudium et Spes* which was designed to deal specifically with the Church's role in the modern world and included some positive attempts to raise the question of women's status both in the Church and in society (Radford Ruether in Hastings 1991). *Gaudium et Spes* became especially famous for its rights-based language which reflected modern liberal democratic ideology and was far-removed from traditional Catholic triumphalism and exclusivism (McDonagh in Hastings 1991).

The following statements are taken directly from the text of *Gaudium et Spes* (1966) and are the portions which refer directly to women's advancement:

We should overcome and remove every kind of discrimination which affects fundamental rights, whether it be social and cultural discrimination, or based on sex, race, colour, class, language or religion (statement 29)

The active presence of their father is of great help in children's training, but their mother's care in the home, which the young especially need, must also be safeguarded, without losing sight of the legitimate social advance of women (statement 52)

Women are now working in almost every field. It is desirable that they should play their part fully in accordance with their natural gifts and there should be general interest in recognizing and promoting their proper and necessary share in life (statement 60)

Although these three short statements in a document of 93 paragraphs do not demonstrate a full-scale analysis of gender relations in the Church, the statements do, nevertheless, show a recognition of the Church's need to engage further with the issues surrounding unequal gender roles and relations.

New theologies

Since the Second Vatican Council, new theologies have sprung up, focusing in much greater depth on the kinds of issues that concerned the Second Vatican Council, such as the importance of identifying with the poor and trying to raise the status of women and other social groups whose voices have often not been heard. Two of these theologies are liberation theology and feminist theology. The following section analyses these theologies, assessing in particular their contribution towards changing women's status in the Church.

Liberation theology

The theology of liberation attempts to reflect on the experience and meaning of the faith based on the commitment to abolish injustice and to build a new society...Liberation from every form of exploitation, the possibility of a more human and dignified life, the creation of a new humankind – all pass through this struggle Gutiérrez 1988 p174

This quote highlights the main principle behind liberation theology: that exploitation and injustice are not to be tolerated by the Church but challenged and overcome through a liberating struggle on behalf of the oppressed. Thus, liberation theology represents a radical move away from the traditional implications of the Church as an institution unsuited to change. This unsuitability is discussed by Glock & Stark in their book *Religion & Society in Tension* (1965). In it they describe how the church tends to offer other-worldly promises rather than present-day Utopias, where radical political movements offer to change the here and now:

While radical Utopias and theological heavens may be equally chimerical, hope for the former lies in the material world, thus posing a potential threat to existing institutions, while the latter imply no social overhaul (Glock & Stark 1965, p191)

Liberation theology on the other hand, declares war on poverty and oppression and insists on the unacceptability of the suffering of populations in the here and now, whether or not paradise is to come in the future.

Although liberation theology did not emerge with a strong feminist presence, feminist theologians have since contributed much to its evolution. María Pilar Aquino is one such theologian who has written from her own Latin American context showing how liberation theology cannot focus on discussions of the

poor and oppressed without addressing the plight of those who are doubly oppressed: by their situation and their gender. Aquino (1994) shows how this oppression is present in all areas of life, including theology where women are mainly invisible (p66). For her “liberation theology and the church of the poor are devoted to liberation, justice, and a full life to the poor and oppressed, which is why they provide women with space in which to operate” (*ibid.*).

Feminist theology

Feminist theology, in its turn, has developed substantially since the 1960s. It has also focused on the theme of challenging oppression and relieving those who suffer, as well as asking important questions about women’s role in the Church and their standing (or lack of standing) in the eyes of the dominant male leadership. Theologians such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Anne Carr have challenged the traditional hierarchies of male over female in the church and offered new ways of exploring biblical themes of oppression and equality, to show how the Church has a mission to serve the poor and not dominate, or rule over them. Thus patriarchal structures have to be demolished to make way for those who have traditionally been marginalised through class, culture, gender or race, so those people can become active and equal members in the Church (McBrien 1994 pp704-705).

The Church today

The theologies looked at in the last two sections have both attempted to address deep-rooted Catholic traditions that have led to women being

overlooked in the decision-making context of the Church. They have also both identified injustice on a global scale that leads to many sections of society being ignored and even abused by a powerful minority. However, as the introduction to this chapter pointed out, it is possible to judge the Church's outlook on gender through the teachings of its main leader, the Pope. Since women are still unable to legitimately become ordained and contraception is still condemned, there seems to be a long way for the Church to go, in spite of the advances of the Second Vatican Council and the emergence of feminist and liberation theologies.

The status of women in the Catholic Church is a much-debated subject, often defined by a refusal by the Church's leadership to recognise women as deserving of positions of authority. A recent example of this kind of oppressive effect on the furthering of women's position in society is demonstrated by the controversy surrounding the Muslim-Catholic alliance, formed during the Beijing Platform for Action held in 1995, that pitted religious beliefs against women's rights and which effectively jettisoned consensus on a number of topics, mainly those which affected reproductive rights; individual rights as opposed to family rights; and women's sexual rights (Bayes & Tohidi 2001). This reflected the stance of both some Muslims and some Catholics, who were supporting "divinely ordained and biologically determined different yet complementary masculine and feminine roles" (*ibid.*). This shows that although the Second Vatican Council opened the way for new attitudes towards women to emerge within the Catholic Church, there remains much work still to be done if women's position is to improve in the Church. Women, in the meantime, are still unable to be ordained and to make decisions about

their sexuality and reproductive role due to the unbending policy of the Vatican.

Section two: East Timor and the Church

Introducing the role of the Church in East Timor

This section is constructed around two short case studies and looks at the response of individual members of the Catholic Church in East Timor to the plight of women during the occupation. Although there is nothing written directly about the role of the church in relation to crimes against women, some material has been found to mention the issues concerned. Much of the information has been derived from comments made by the religious representatives examined below.

During the occupation, the Timorese came to rely heavily on both the spiritual and practical support of the Church. This is brought home by the fact that many Timorese decided to join the Catholic Church during the occupation. In 1974, 30% of indigenous Timorese were members of the Catholic Church. By 1999 that figure had risen to over 90% (Smythe 2004 p16). Not only did religious orders and church leaders set up projects to be used for offering health care provision and training facilities (Pires & Scott 1998, Bürgel 1998), but they were also courageous in their defence of the human rights of the Timorese people (Bürgel 1998, Smythe 2004 p16).

From the perspective of many East Timorese women, faith was seen as an empowering force (Pires & Scott 1998). Not only did the Church provide a physical space for women to find refuge in (as Churches and convents often provided a haven for those escaping violence) but there was also a

psychological space from which came the strength to resist the occupying forces, this was partly enjoyed through the rituals of the Church which are based around memory and enable women to remember their loved ones and draw strength from those memories (*ibid.*).

However, the Church in East Timor is known for being conservative in its worship and practices (Gabrielson 2001) and this presumably will have affected the way women are viewed by Church leaders and how their roles have been defined both within Church structures and in society. Next, two leading figures of the Catholic Church in East Timor will be looked at to analyse their response to violence against women during the occupation. When deciding how to go about analysing the response of the local church, it became apparent early on that it would be necessary to mention particularly the role of Bishop Belo as the co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize (for his work in East Timor) and the person who the Timorese associate with their struggle of resistance during the oppression. Sister Maria Lourdes represents an interesting juxtaposition to the Bishop as a woman who found she had to stand up against her superiors (namely Bishop Belo) to fight for the right to help the Timorese in the way she believed necessary.

Bishop Belo's role

Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo was born and raised in East Timor, attending missionary schools and then a seminary just outside Dili from which he graduated at 25. He then moved to Lisbon and continued his religious training, becoming a member of the Salesian Order. After having returned to East Timor a few years later, employed as Director at Fatucama College, he was

asked to assume the role of Apostolic Administrator of the Dili Diocese after Mgr da Costa resigned in 1983 (Abrams 2005). He was later consecrated as bishop.

There is no doubt that Bishop Belo used his position as head of the Catholic Church in East Timor and therefore of the only institution independent of Indonesian control, to promote the well-being of the Timorese and to protest, both on a local and a global level against the atrocities that the people suffered at the hands of the military (Taylor 1999, p234, Smythe 2004 p28, Kohen 1999, p332).

He is described, and has described himself, as being a “voice for the voiceless” (Kestenholz 2005) in East Timor. He denounced many atrocities that specifically related to women, such as rape and forced sterilisation (Kohen, p164, Smythe 2004, p32). Upon winning the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with José Ramos Horta, his acceptance speech used rights-based language “what the people want is peace, an end to violence and the respect for their human rights” (Abrams 2005). One of his most symbolic gestures of solidarity with the people was insisting that the Mass be conducted in the native Tetum rather than Bahasa Indonesian. There were even times when his very home became a place of shelter for those running away from the violence (Kohen 1999, p334). .

From the material gathered, it is clear then that Belo had a deep concern for the condition of Timorese women and wished to raise awareness through the means he had available to him of their plight. He was not afraid to mention rape and sexual violence and to condemn these acts.

He was especially willing to condemn the abusive “family planning” procedures, though this is likely to be strongly influenced by his Catholic convictions which would place him anyway in an opposing camp to contraception. The fact that he uses rights-based vocabulary suggests that he may be sympathetic to women’s rights, though he never mentions these specifically.

However there is also much information that places Bishop Belo very firmly on the conservative end of the Catholic Church which would influence how he addressed any issues pertaining to women’s status as opposed to merely their condition in society. He is described as “liturgically conservative” (i.e. doctrinally) and has been accused of “ultraconservatism” by other East Timorese (Lundry 2000, Gabrielson 2001). Although he most clearly follows a Vatican II line: “We try to be the voice of the voiceless. To protect those suffering oppression and persecution and mainly to preach the dignity of human beings”, a statement which recalls the fervour and compassion of *Gaudium et Spes*, he very clearly stated in the same interview that he is not a follower of liberation theology, declaring this in such a way that he seemed almost offended by the suggestion:

“Question: Is there a kind of liberation theology in East Timor?”

Answer by Belo: No, we don’t have this. I never learned it... Why liberation theology? What is that?” (Kestenholz 2005)

This attitude contrasts with the attitude of Sister Maria Lourdes, whose role during the occupation will be examined in the following section.

Mana Lou's role

Sister Maria de Lourdes, or “Mana Lou” as she is affectionately called in East Timor, is described in two separate sources, firstly as East Timor’s Joan of Arc, and secondly as its Mother Teresa (Cristalis 2002, p74, Rogers 2004). Although her grit and determination in the face of adversity could very well place her alongside these women, her understanding of theology, which owes much to the insights of liberation theology, would most likely place her quite some way to the left of both (Cristalis 2002, p74).

Mana Lou was also born and brought up in East Timor and having had a powerful conversion at the age of 5 decided to join a Canossian Order at 13. While helping prepare 10,000 people to receive sacraments at the tender age of 17, she caught the attention of the Bishop of her region who would later send her to Indonesia to receive further education, after she was unable to settle in a convent, even after visiting 10 around East Timor. It was in Java at the catechetical school that she had a profound spiritual experience that would eventually lead her to her dream of founding her own order in East Timor. Her vision for the order was simply that women and men should live among the poor in the villages and assist them to become self-sufficient and able to earn a living and enjoy meaningful and healthy lives (Rogers 2004) Upon returning to East Timor she set up the Secular Institute for Brothers and Sisters in Christ. The order would function with vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but there would be strictly no dress code; the members would wear civilian clothes (Rogers 2004). This is important to Mana Lou as she does not believe habits should be worn as they offer a higher social status in the eyes of the Timorese: “It’s all nonsense. It’s the inside that counts, not the

outside.” (Cristalis 2002, p75). To this end she calls herself a “secular nun” a term that, in spite of its slightly contradictory connotations, says something about her desire to identify with the people around her (*ibid.*).

Mana Lou believes that people, especially women, should be empowered “to become truly self-sufficient” (Rogers 2004). She is critical of the hierarchical nature of established religious orders, such as the Canossian Order she belonged to as a young woman: “These orders don’t make women grow up. They don’t make them strong and self-sufficient...In their hierarchical structures, the women have to listen to a mother superior. This keeps them children.” (Cristalis 2002, p75). The girls and young women who are at her training institute are given an education and taught practical life-skills. They also receive spiritual guidance but are encouraged above all to take responsibility for their own lives and spiritual journeys. As one of Mana Lou’s friends describes: “She wants to get rid of the separation between religious life and everyday existence, to integrate spirituality into daily life” (Cristalis 2002, p80). This language of empowerment is consistent with the ideals of both liberation theology and feminist theology analysed in the first part of the chapter.

However, Mana Lou has not always been popular among the local clergy in East Timor. She was threatened with ex-communication at one point and when she tried to visit Bishop Belo to gain permission to set up her order, she found he was too busy to receive her. Her order was only formally recognised by the Bishop in 1998, and then only on a trial basis. When she gave Bishop Belo a letter to take to the Pope on an occasion that he was to receive an audience in Rome, he returned with the letter unopened, having apparently

forgotten to deliver it (p81). This suggests that her position is removed from the main position of the Church in East Timor, especially as she has not always agreed with the Bishop, who is the Church's highest authority in East Timor.

Putting the pieces together

Having looked at our two examples of local figures of the Church who were active in East Timor during the occupation there are some conclusions that can be drawn:

- Bishop Belo is obviously passionate about the well-being of the people of East Timor and outspoken in his defence of their human rights, however, he is definitely on the conservative wing in terms of doctrine and therefore is likely to agree with the late Pope John Paul's stance on gender roles and relations, which is anti-women's ordination and anti-contraception, something which affects women's lives substantially;
- Mana Lou, on the other hand, is concerned about raising women's status as well as improving their condition in East Timor. Her ideals are much more closely aligned with feminist and liberation theologies and she has therefore been ostracised at times by the leadership of the Church. She responded positively during the occupation by helping women who had suffered violence at the hands of the Indonesian military by providing them not only with material care, but by teaching them that women can be independent and enjoy a fully equal status to men within society.

While there is no doubt that Bishop Belo fought tirelessly for the sake of East Timorese women and men, I am doubtful as to how he would have affected the actual status of women in Timorese society through his work, thus his position suggests a concern more for women's condition, while Mana Lou may well have contributed to improving women's position, if only in the lives of a few girls. Since it is women's position and status that needs to improve if sexual violence is to be addressed in society, it is likely that Mana Lou's response to the violence during the occupation of East Timor will have had more positive effects on women in the long-term.

Chapter summary

This chapter looked at how the Catholic Church approaches gender relations and how women are treated as members of the Church and as members of society at large. There was also a brief introduction to some contemporary theologies that have changed the face of modern Catholicism: liberation theology and feminist theology. The second part of the chapter looked specifically at the role of the local Church in East Timor and at the two examples of local Church representatives who affected the lives of the East Timorese during the occupation: Bishop Belo and Sister Maria Lourdes, or Mana Lou. Their roles were looked at particularly in relation to their attitudes towards women's status in society. There was evidence to show that Mana Lou took steps to consciously improve women's position during the occupation, while Bishop Belo was perhaps more concerned with women's condition and has more conservative religious views when it comes to women's rights and equal status in society.

The Final Word: Summary and Conclusion of the Research Project

This last section will draw out the final conclusions of the research project, firstly to evaluate the success of the actual research process, and secondly to reflect on the findings of the research and to suggest future directions that the material points towards.

As pointed out in the introduction to the research project and its aims, this project was one that had multiple aims from the start: to fulfil a desire to discover more about the country of East Timor and its tragic recent history, to make an academic contribution to a variety of fields (gender studies, development studies and religious studies), and to establish a practical knowledge of the accessibility of materials on women's issues on East Timor, which is an area I will be returning to for further study. Those aims have all been reached through the course of this project.

Firstly I have discovered that there is a variety of published materials available on the subject of East Timor, although those that mention women's issues specifically are more likely to be published solely on the internet, and are much more recent than materials which tend to cover general aspects of the Indonesian occupation. Much of the current information relating to women in East Timor documents domestic violence occurring nowadays. This could be an important avenue to follow, considering that the Timorese government has highlighted this violence as an area of serious concern and that the attitudes of religious leaders would be of particular importance in addressing this issue in a country that remains quite deeply religious.

In terms of the research process, the approach that was adopted from the beginning, which was inductive, ensured that the project was able to proceed even when the original research questions were changed and adapted to suit the information accessed. This inductive method was complemented by the qualitative nature of the data sought, since at times there was a lack of a variety of sources, but instead one or two sources provided sufficient information that was detailed enough to provide good-quality data, for example the book compiled by Rebecca Winters (1999) *Voice of East Timorese Women*, where much of the first-hand reports of sexual violence were found.

The inductive approach described in the section on methodology in Chapter One was led to some of the original aims being adapted to fit the information uncovered during the research. This occurred specifically in Chapter Four which was originally intended as a general overview of how the Church responded to violence against women in East Timor. However, discovering the existence of a feminist Timorese nun led me to restructure that chapter around a more detailed case-study of the nun's role in East Timor as I felt it provided an important comparison to the role of the much better-known and more popular Bishop Belo. This decision also reflects the feminist values that characterise my standpoint, also outlined in Chapter One, as I wished to provide space for the experiences of Mana Lou and signpost the importance of her contribution to women's well-being in East Timor, something clearly influenced by the feminist values previously described.

I will take the last paragraphs to look at the research questions and reflect on how they have been addressed within the project. The first two questions

targeted women's experiences of sexual violence, both at a global level, and at the local level, in East Timor. Chapters Two and Three both contributed to an overall understanding of the vulnerability of women in during the Indonesian occupation showing how their position in East Timor was already one of relative disadvantage to men's. Chapter Two provided the backdrop of the overall situation, while Chapter Three focused more specifically on sexual violence during conflict. The chapter covered the global nature of sexual violence during conflict, taking various examples from different situations to provide a detailed picture of the types of violence that women may be vulnerable to during times of conflict; and then went on to analyse East Timor's situation, looking at the types of violence women suffered there at the hands of the Indonesian military. It became clear that East Timorese women suffered considerably during the 24 years of the Indonesian regime. The instances of sexual torture, rape, and sexual slavery were repeated in a variety of sources and some sources included detailed reports of violence by Timorese women themselves.

The other two research questions were concerned with the role and response of the Catholic Church in East Timor in relation to women and the violence they suffered during the occupation, which would require a general overview of women and the Catholic Church as a background to the discussion.

Chapter Four was dedicated to responding to these questions. First, the chapter introduced the role of women in the Catholic Church and looked at how women are viewed in Catholic doctrine. This provided some important insights, such as the role of women being primarily based around their sexual and reproductive roles as virgins or mothers, and the concept of women as

“equal but different”. This differentiation between women’s and men’s roles suggested a relative disadvantage for women within the Catholic Church as they are not able to take part in the decision-making processes of the Church, which undermines their ability to voice their opinions and to take part in leadership roles since they are not allowed to be officially ordained.

However the chapter also looked at some of the positive developments that have occurred, in particular since the Second Vatican Council, in terms of new theological interpretations of Catholic doctrine and spirituality. Liberation theology and feminist theology were briefly introduced and discussed and shown to include women in a new and consciously emancipatory capacity. This discussion provided an important backdrop for the second half of the chapter, which looked at the Catholic Church in East Timor. In this section, the Church in East Timor was shown to have provided an important haven for many Timorese women and to have also contributed to their material well-being through healthcare and educational facilities. However, to look more closely at how the Church may have sought to improve women’s position, two individual representatives were looked at for closer analysis. Bishop Belo and Sister Maria Lourdes (Mana Lou) provided an interesting comparison of two members of the Catholic Church who both attempted to help women during the occupation but had slightly different approaches and aims. Although it is clear that both individuals had a positive effect on women’s well-being, I have argued that Mana Lou was more deeply concerned with improving women’s position in society, which would eventually decrease their vulnerability to violence; while Bishop Belo was more concerned with improving women’s condition during the occupation, without attempting to address some of the

deep-rooted inequalities that exacerbated their suffering under the Indonesian regime and would certainly continue to colour their lives beyond independence.

Overall this research project has provided a picture of the global problem of sexual violence during conflict and an understanding of how religious beliefs (namely Catholic) could potentially impact negatively on this situation. It has also, however, examined the particular case of East Timor and shown how there may be positive roles for representatives of the Catholic Church to fulfil when it comes to improving women's position and condition, even in the face of such severe violence and sexual abuse.

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