WOMEN AS OTHERS IN THE LOCAL GAZE: MALAE NIAN

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Timor-Leste has been considered one of the most successful laboratories of the UN mission involving peace-making incorporating human rights and democracy. Furthermore, women’s rights and gender equality have been mainstreamed in politics and society in the Constitution, laws, and other policies since the beginning of nation-building. However, some women who had been engaged in consensual relationships with the UN peacekeepers during years of missions were affected, yet were either invisible or under-investigated and documented. Furthermore, they were neglected and forgotten after the UN Mission withdrew from Timor-Leste. It is unclear how many Timorese women are involved in these cases in reality. Numbers are not reliable because these cases tend to be underreported by women due to the sensitivity of this issue, social stigmatization, ostracization, and abandonment by the fathers (Ndulo, 2009). Therefore, I wanted to investigate these women’s experiences of their relationships with the UN peacekeepers to understand how these “malae nian” (foreigners’) were named and othered, its political consequences, and political implications in relation to the ongoing nation-building project of post-intervention Timor-Leste.

Methodologically speaking, I conducted fieldwork in Timor-Leste from 2016-17. Meanwhile, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 65 informants, including previous and current UN staff, and 17 women who had or are still having voluntary relationships with the UN personnel: 2 women are married to the UN personnel and are still in married status, 2 women had boyfriends from the UN personnel, and 13 mothered peacekeepers’ babies from their relationships, from different occasions and municipalities in safe spaces, such as women’s homes.

I found that despite there are some agreed meanings on the concept of malae nian, its referents, meanings, and entailed moral judgments vary among individuals. Moreover, I found that malae nian is constructed against ideal femininity which portrays women as mothers and wives, which no longer exists in post-intervention Timor-Leste where local social-economic-political structures as well as the lifestyles of Timorese experience great changes with the presence of peacekeepers since 2002. The romanticization of good women as mothers and wives against the bad women malae nian is not only moral but also political. Instead, a particular group of women, malae nian, are stigmatized and silenced as others by the locals in order to sustain the ideal image of good women who are the building blocks of the family, community, and nation. I further argue that although such a unifying nation has its origin based on the common interests of resistance of Timorese political elites in Indonesian occupation time, the unified idea of a nation is also predicated on the control of women’s bodies and sexuality.

In this article, I first introduce the story of Natalia, who used to be a policewoman and led the Section of Vulnerable Population Unit (SVPU) of the National Police of Timor-Leste (or Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste, PNTL) in 2001 and then had a son with her Senegal coworker in UN Police. Natalia was labeled as a malae nian, who later got blamed, harassed, and disowned by her
ex-husband and her own family. Then I compare her story with another two women who worked with the UN peacekeepers and also got labeled as *malae nian* by other locals. Next, I show how the local men and women make sense of *malae nian* in various ways, and how *malae nian* are named and excluded, compared to an idea self of Timorese women. I argue that *malae nian* highlights how global discourse of peacekeeping continues to include and exclude women in the nation-building projects of post-intervention and post-colonial Timor-Leste.

**Natalia**

“In 2001, I worked as a police woman in VPU of PNTL in Dili. Then I had a close relationship with a UN police Mamadu Sila from Senegal from 2001 to 2002. I had one son from Mamadu. Mamadu left in 2002, when I was two months pregnant of his son. My son is now 16-year-old now. I got no support from this guy after I gave birth to her son. I was still married but separating from my ex-husband when I started a relationship with Mamadu. He (ex-husband) could not accept the fact that I was with foreigners. He came to my workplace to make complaints about this and told me: ‘I prefer you to be with Timorese people.’ Under the mediation of my commander, Jorge Monteiro, in PNTL, we reached an agreement. I cannot marry Mamadu and had to end the relationship immediately. I felt too afraid to stay in Dili. My ex-husband’s family also kept blaming and harassing me in my workplace: ‘Foreigners just want to give kids to you, not marry you.’ I asked my commander to transfer me from Dili to Suai’” (Cardoso 2017a).

“I suffered a lot from my own family too. They told me: ‘You are so stupid to get the kid from the UN.’ They also told me: ‘You make our dignity dirty cause you live with the malae.’ There are nuns and priests in my family. They rejected to accept my son and did not visit me at all since I moved to Suai with my son in 2002. People also told me, ‘You are a slut of malae.’ Some Timorese men wanted to marry me, but I did not want to get married again. Sometimes I felt that my dignity did not exist anymore. Sometimes I cried alone. I would hold my son, who usually looked at me with big eyes. I would tell him: ‘Bad words are bad words. Your mom had you without any regret.’ He will cry and hold me back. I also told him: ‘You have to accept those words. You have to be strong and fight for me’” (Cardoso 2017a).

In her story, Natalia was considered a “bad” example by violating local moral norms in many levels: First, Natalia was married to a Timorese man when she met Mamadu and mothered a boy with him. She was not a chaste wife of her Timorese husband from this regard. She was also not a good wife according to the Catholic Church, which asked women to obey their husbands. Second, the fact that she had an affair with a UN police and mothered a boy with this guy from Senegal in an informal relationship shamed not just her own dignity but also her family from which her sisters and relatives are nuns and priests. Nuns and priests are highly respected and endorsing high moral standards in a Catholic-majority Timor-Leste. Third, what is noteworthy from the accusations from her ex-husband and her ex-husband’s family is that she should not be with a foreign man as opposed to other Timorese men. Her behavior which tarnished her ex-husband, her ex-husband’s family, and her own family caused her to be harassed, blamed, and eventually disowned by her ex-husband’s family and her family. Natalia’s story demonstrated that her behavior was immoral and was not accepted by the local. As a result, she was punished by her family and her ex-husband and
his family to reinforce the values and virtues which are acceptable—chastity of wife and the loyalty to her Timorese husband, community, and family. By naming and shaming Natalia as *malae nian*, a slut of malae, a woman who has no dignity, she is othered as a morally degraded woman and a traitor of her community and family, and thus got excluded from her family and the whole community. Natalia’s story demonstrates that how the label of *malae nian* works to transform her identity from good Timorese women to bad women through social and discursive practices, which leads to her everyday experiences of shame and suffering.

*Malae nian*, in Timorese context, could also refer to other women who are seen together with foreigners but do not have relationships with them. Next I use the stories of Andreza and Marilia to show how both construct “*malae nian*” compared to themselves, that is, women who worked closely with the UN peacekeepers without forming relationships with them.

**Andreza**

Andreza worked in human rights and security sector in UNMIT (2011-12), when she was responsible for police and military training. She now works in UNICEF in Dili. When Andreza was training police, police often asked her if she needed to have special relationships to work with the UN. She replied to them,

> “There are 2 kinds of UN staff within the mission: One is administrative staff while the other required more skills and experiences. Administrative staff only need to have some English skills, and some of them are from bars/disco” (Guterres 2017).

The “other”, administrative staff, working in the same mission is constructed in Andreza’s story in relation to other local female staff working in the same UN mission with lower levels of professional skills and experiences.

Similarly, Marilia also mentioned a story of *malae nian* she knew during the interview. Marilia has been working in Fokupers since 2002. Now she is the current director of Fokupers (as of the time of interview). She mentioned a policewoman has three children with her husband but the youngest child looks different from other siblings:

**Marilia**

“I have one case in my neighbor. Maybe before she has the relationship with the peacekeeping force. She is a policewoman, and she met someone from Africa. She has a husband, already has three children, the last child is different from others. Because she has curly hair, black, so African. When this baby was born, her husband was not happy because it’s totally different from the other children. Maybe she isn’t aware that she can be pregnant from this (relationship), and she also has a husband. But then the neighbors become curious. They start asking. This police woman worked with the African police when they came here with the peacekeeping force since 2006.

If she is married to African man, then people may not have problem with this. But he has a husband, and this kid is totally different from other kids. In
Portuguese time, there were many people married to people from Angola or Mozambique. People do not have problem with this, because they know whom they married. This is her fault, her problem, for people will give stigma to women working together with peacekeeping force” (Alves 2016).

To explain, in Marilia’s story, women who work with the peacekeepers without having relationships with them, and women who have, are separated. This is shown in Marilia’s last two sentences of comments by attributing social stigmatization to her and other women alike who work with peacekeepers to her neighbor.

From the stories of Andreza and Marilia, we learn that *malae nian* refers to women who have real relationships with the UN peacekeepers, or women who work closely with the UN peacekeepers, like policewomen or administrative staff in the UN missions. What is intriguing is that the stigmatizations of these two kinds of *malae nian* are not directly related to foreigners in the stories of Andreza and Marilia. This is different from the story of Natalia, which highlights her intimacy with foreigners as well as the intolerance of her ex-husband, her family and her community. What makes these women “*malae nian*” are their lack of necessary skills and experiences and lack of loyalty to their marriage. By constructing those women as “others” compared to themselves, Andreza and Marilia separate themselves from these *malae nian*, although they are also considered as *malae nian* from the local perspective.

*Malae nian* is socially constructed, however, its meanings as well as the boundary between *malae nian* and non-*malae nian* are not stable. This conceptual fluidity is demonstrated in terms of how the local men and women make sense of *malae nian* in various ways.

1. Women who have relationships with peacekeepers
   A2: In terms of language, they might be friend. In Lospalos, people also say this. I have not heard people pointed at a specific person. My understanding is it means that the person has a special affair with malae, for example, with UN police, civil, or other UN staff (A2, 2017).

2. Women who belong to foreigners
   Elizabeth: Means something belonging to foreigner. People use it to women who have relationships with the peacekeepers because that woman belongs to a foreigner (Soares 2017).

3. Women who work in or with the UN
   Marilia: They say, “oh this is *malae nian*.” They think that because you work as a UN staff, so you may also involve in the situation (Alves 2016).

Andreza: People call me “feto-malae (foreigners’ women) because I work in the UN (Guterres 2017).

Rosalia: Yes, always, people always say it in front of me. All people tease people who work for UN. This is because we worked for UN so we heard that a lot people say that to us (E. Fernandez and Araujo 2017).
Alzira: In UN time, they use “malae nian”. When I was in Interfet, most women who worked with the UN were “malae nian” (Reis 2016).

In terms of meanings, malae nian mean differently to different individuals.

1. Whores, prostitutes, slaves, and sluts
Malae nian means “slave of male” (Cardoso 2017), “doll to be used” (Goncalves 2017), “a slut of malaes” (Cardoso 2017b; Sandra 2017), “hot girl” (Goncalves 2017), or foreigner’s (Goncalves 2017; Nehu 2017; E. Fernandez and Araujo 2017).

Matias: People will consider her as a prostitute. Because they do it with money, and you will not be the same in the community where you came from (Bovida 2016).

Bill: It means “belongs to malae.” Negative meaning. Someone owned by malaes, or sold to malae. Sometimes I wonder if you mean prostitute. What you mean by that? (Soares 2017)

Sheila: When locals see them (women) with malae, they will look at them from head to toe, and they will say you are “puta (prostitutes)”. Everybody touches you and sleeps with you already (Freitas 2017).

Oldegar: Letra 2(UN) ho letra 3(Guarda Nacional Republicana, GNR) nia letra 4(women)=the whore of UN and GNR (Massinga 2017).

Veronica: When I walk, they think I just want to sleep with malae (Almeida 2017).

Iriana: It means whore, puta. Timorese cannot separate malae nian from whore. When the UN came, many had one night stand. Some get money for sex. But Timorese cannot tell the difference between one night stand and prostitution. I think one night stand is more consensual. My ex-husband always called me “whore” or “horrible ex-wife” because I was always with malae (Ximenes 2017).

2. Leftover women
Secondinho: We call these women “leftover women.” It’s stigmatized for women. Hard to get another man. They (malae nian) are leftover from the UN (Salssinha, Guterres, and Correia 2016).

3. Possession/property of malae
Bill: It means “belongs to malae”. Negative meaning. Owned by malae, or sold to malae (Soares 2017).

4. Peacekeepers’ babies without fathers
Alberico: People use malae nian to describe women like this. In my local language (Fataluku), they label kids. For (peacekeeper) babies, we call “apul moco”, kids without father, or forbidden child in non-official relationships (da Costa 2017).

Malae nian refers to women who have intimate or working relationships with peacekeepers, their children, or women who are seen with foreigners in general depending on the contexts. The
concept of *malae nian* does not necessarily represent particular referents. Douglas Dow (2014, 65-66) claims that “the meanings and functions of political concepts through which political actors describe, evaluate, anticipate, and enact politics never remain static, but instead change and develop constantly”. What he means is that conceptual meanings can be constructed in different and complex ways, but they do not necessarily confirm the empirical referents. In the case of *malae nian*, the conceptual referent is women. However, which woman is referred to is never certain.

Everyday experiences of the local are constitutive of multiple realities and knowledges. The social realities and knowledges are produced and reproduced from actions, interactions, intersubjectivities of human beings. They require an interpretive understanding of researchers. “Interpretive philosophies reject that the human possibility of such social science mirroring. In their view, social realities and human knowledge of them are created by human actors through our actions and interactions, intersubjectivity (Yanow 2014, 105). Different meanings of *malae nian* demonstrate the contingent and fluid nature of language couched on complex life worlds and everyday experiences, which constantly shape and reshape our perceptions. I put myself in the web of meanings of the local society to listen to how locals think and behave surrounding the concept of *malae nian*. I found that the locals tend to perceive *malae nian* as enemies who go astray from the values and virtues of Timorese family and culture, as narratives of Nina and Alberico suggested. In other words, *malae nian* are othered, excluded, and recast as the enemy of the home front. The following interviews show how the locals perceive *malae nian* diverting from virtues and values of local family, culture, tradition, and community, in spite of the unclear and vague meanings of what these virtues or values are.

Sanio: For us urban people, it is normal for Timorese women with malae. Some people want to marry malae…but some people still use traditional thinking. They are less-educated. Whenever a girl approaches malae, they start to think: ‘this girl is not a good girl.’ But it’s not true. It (stigmatization of women) is still strong in the villages and districts but not in Dili (S. Fernandez 2017).

Sanio’s narrative highlighted another possible way of interpreting *malae nian* as a gendered concept, which attaches particular meanings to the body of women. When women do not embody those meanings in accordance with the social expectations and roles for women, that is, marrying to Timorese men, the locals will question and even blame women for not following the collective norms. On the contrary, Timorese men are not bound by these norms when they marry or date foreign women. *Malae nian* do not apply to Timorese men in relationship with foreign women but Timorese women. Sanio’s description of difference between men and women demonstrates that how gender plays into women in the context of Timor-Leste as well as how gender confines women to the power hierarchy between sex. Seeing gender in sexual difference and their related treatments makes the concept of *malae nian* not just a descriptive concept but also a normative one.

By recovering its normative possibility intersecting with gender, *malae nian* can be seen as a site where multiple narratives about women contest and intersect with each other. According to Wibben, “The narratives do not speak for itself but has to be articulated through our
reading/engagement with it” (Wibben 2011, 27). This quote implies not only the multiple forms of narratives and meanings, but also the conceptualization of narratives as an ongoing process which is open to all kinds of actors to participate in sense-making. Meanwhile, its political nature also makes salience that some meanings and related narratives are hidden or obscured while others are highlighted. Although malaenian could be a sign or a source of gender oppression, it is also a valid concept problematizing the political and social construction of malaenian. Since the meanings of malaenian are not fixed nor stable, they can always be redefined and reconstructed.

Furthermore, I argue that malaenian is not just a moral construction established on local culture or tradition, it is also integral to the implementation of modern projects of nation states through repackaging and reproducing culture where women are represented in particular ways. Malenian is constructed against particular ideas of tradition and culture local society and community endorse in the narratives of the local. Nevertheless, tradition and culture are not the same thing. In the discursive realm, the concepts of tradition and culture are not fixed. The meanings of tradition evolve throughout history and the definition of culture changes with contexts. Moreover, local and culture do not necessarily share the same meaning, despite that they are used interchangeably or semantically related. “Not everyone from, or living in the same place (be it a village, a town or a country) shares the same culture, the same classificatory system or moral values, nor are certain cultural institutions or values just local” (Silva and Simao 2016, 196). Silva and Simao point out that the local might define culture based on the logic of selectivity, that is, “valorizing some practices and overlooking others” (2016, 201). If the local make sense of malaenian against culture based on their selective identifying and labelling some local practices as culture, malaenian should not be understood simply as someone whose behavior is degrading or tarnishing the whole society and community. Silva and Simao demonstrate that culture can be used as vehicle to state and nation-building: In the case of state-building, culture could be considered as uncivilized local practices which need to be purged for building nation states. (Elias 1982). In the case of Timor-Leste, culture is both a challenge to be overcome for more efficient administration and other policies as well as a vehicle for “more efficient education policies and for tourism promotion” (Zhiming 2014). Silva and Simao found that culture, local practices, and nation-building in Timor-Leste interweave with each other; “The national construction of Timor-Leste has implied the reinvention and management of local practices, including their use for government purposes”(Silva and Simao 2016, 202). This means that in contrast to Elias’s description of something from the past which needs to be purged, culture, in Timorese contexts, is something fundamental to be reproduced in the modern nation-state projects of Timor-Leste. Although there are no governmental policies or NGOs’ projects related to these malaenian, such a total omission of malaenian in the nationwide needs to be problematized. Silence and exclusion of malaenian signal a form of control through discursive violence working through bodies of women. Such an exclusion and silence, I further argue, is crucial to nation-building of post-colonial and post-intervention Timor-Leste. The social stigmatization of malaenian in Timorese society signals the political attempt of post-colonial and post-intervention Timor-Leste to bring culture back while purging unwanted practices or footprints of colonialism by controlling women’s body for national development.

“Malenian” is socially constructed against the general ideal of good Timorese women who have self-dignity and moral purity in the local culture. While the content of culture is vague and abstract, what the local mean by good women is also undetermined and negotiable. Although many
informants tend to perceive the idea of good women as wives and mothers in a patriarchal society, some of their understanding of good women are mixed with more modern sense of womenhood who are independent from men. The following selected narratives show that how local understand good women according to their culture, as well as their own perception of good women in modern society against their culture.

Manuela: People who live in the island believe if you are against something, you get punished. I live in Atauro for long time and I know this. I learn from this belief, from this principle. If you violate something, you will face the waves. You have to be a good woman (Leong 2016).

Merita: As a woman, we have to know our role and duty. For instance, as myself as the director of Alfela, I have to know my duty or the job, like cook, look after the children, and clean the house. Some experts say that 90% of the family are women’s responsibility (Correia 2017).

Alzira: If you are a good woman, you should just stay at home. You should not go out if there is night activity. In the night time, they do not allow you to go out. If a woman married, you should not have any experience of divorce. You should obey to your father and mother, even your brother hit you. Women should be quiet, this very happen. They say this one is good woman, because women go to church, and stay at home (Reis 2016).

Marilia: “Sometimes the society wants women to live or act based on their expectation, like women should be like this, women can cook, women is loyal to the husband, and family, even here sometimes good women also wear long skirt. If a woman should be free, it’s based on her. Because of the patriarchal system, when women get married, her husband and family bring the barlake, so the family wants this women cook, and also serves the big family. My husband’s family, like his father or mother, doubts that. I should be there to cook. But sometimes I don’t have time. I just send my family members to go to help them. Even you work in public, you also work in the family” (Alves 2016).

“It’s like a double job. I am lucky cause my husband also helps a bit before here in Fokupers. He knows and he always helps with the domestic works. But when my mother-in-law came, he showed her some cooking. She said, “why you are cooking? Where is your wife? She always asks. And he said, “she works too. Now she is busy with her work. I have to cook too.” And sometimes my mother-in-law goes to others, “when I went to Dili, I was very sad. Because I saw my son works hard. He also cooks. Why they don’t pay someone to do this thing?” This always happens.” (Alves 2016)

Matias, a local Timorese man, provides a typical view of good women in relation to their husbands as well as the gender difference in marital relationships in a more strait-forward way.

“If you are a woman, you are doing domestic issue, right? Your task in terms of domestic. You have to work everything for your husband, and women will be very well-respected. If the guy, your husband, marries more than 1 female, it doesn’t matter, if you are the first human he marries. Even you are the second wife he marries, as long as you marry in the Church, you will be respected” (Bovida 2016).
The above narratives demonstrate that patriarchy is constitutive of femininity of women in Timorese culture. In a patriarchal society, the activity realm of women is in the household. Women have to play the roles of wives and mothers taking care of the household. In addition, they also have to keep quiet and obey their husbands and family members. However, we should not forget that post-intervention Timor-Leste has experienced a huge political-economic structural change, which accordingly affects the reform of gender norms and roles. Women are still bind by gender norms which define women as mothers and wives, but the changing circumstances and structures allow women to take up the responsibilities of breadearners of households. Women engage in informal economy by opening coffee shops, housekeeping and cleaning, cooking, working in local bars or restaurants, doing small business, selling vegetables, fruits, and crafts on the street, gambling, etc. Structural change opens space to women to participate in politics alone with other male elites. Women can step in to the public realm through working and participating in politics. Local women are not just wives and mothers but they are also career women, who enjoy more economic independence and political freedom. The structural change affects how people think about what good women should be. Some women expressed their own perceptions of good women, which are different from their understanding of good women in the cultural terms as follows:

Manuela: Good women do not stay, do not wait for men. Independent women, I think, is good women. Nowadays men like independent women because they help them. Before they (men) have to work hard to bring everything. Now we work hard then we become strong. Now it (culture) changed (Leong 2016).

Alziria: Women should have equal rights to access education, to access to health, to access to justice, to work, and the decision making in the family itself. For example, I am already married, I have a husband, so the decision making is not only from my husband. It should be considered as equal decision making in the family (Reis 2016).

Marilia: From my understanding, (good) women should be help herself, knowing what she wants and what she wants to do (Alves 2016).

Although these women present a more modern sense of womanhood in terms of independence from men and equality as men, they do not abandon their cultural roles as good women. Culture which defines ideal good women is not just discursive construct but also integral to their everyday life. The struggle to negotiate their roles at work and at home, is highlighted when Marilia discussed the visit of her mother-in-law, who felt sad when seeing her son help cook and then complained it to others. In post-intervention Timor-Leste, women have to do double jobs: One is at home while the other is at work. Quoting from Marilia, “even you work in public, you also work in the family”.

**Treatments and experiences faced by malaenian**

Languages are powerful because they not only shape the way we perceive women but also how we interact with them. When we act on and embody those ideas and perspectives, they become realities. How women are perceived by the locals are related to how these women are treated in the family, society, and community, as well as the lived experiences of these women.
Women tend to be stigmatized and gossiped by the locals due to these negative perceptions of these women. What is worse, they might be ostracized from the community and family and thus lose financial and familial support. Francisca mentioned that in Timor-Leste, People gossip a lot, especially about women with foreigners, cause people think that “you are just a doll to be used” (Goncalves 2017). Gossip does more than expressing or exchanging opinions about certain people, events, or topics. It shapes the ideas about women intersubjectively as slut, slave and whore between Timorese women and other Timorese.

Therefore, the public perceptions of women shape women’s individual experiences ranging from emotional downturns to the loss of material supports from the family or community. For example, Natalia cried because her family thought “You make our dignity dirty cause you live with the malae” (Cardoso 2017). while Lola felt hurt and cried because she was deceived by her partner. In addition to invocation of many emotions and feelings, how people perceive these women causes the loss of financial resources and family support, and thus makes women become isolated in the community. For instance, Natalia was disowned by her family members after she had a son with a UN Police. They rejected her son and did not visit her after she left Dili for Suai. Similarly, Francisca’s friend who had intercourse with the UN personnel and got AIDS was ostracized by her family and died alone.

At the individual level, negative perceptions of malae nian by the local also help silence malae nian in public.

Micato: Culturally, family will have dignity when a marriage is made through formal and normal way, so parents will know it. But if something is not normal, people will gossip about it. So women are shy and are afraid it to tell other people if they have relationship with the UN staff. Fokupers got reports from women, but women who had affairs from UN did not report. They never went there to report.

Teresa: Women who work in UN agency and English-speaking women do not report because they get jobs easily. Women who have low status and have less power do not report due to lack of support and shame. The church ignores these cases due to morality. But father remains anonymous in the birth certificate of these peacekeeper babies (Verdial 2016).

Manuela: People just keep quiet. If you talk about this, people don’t like you to talk about their business. That’s my business, that’s my life, that’s my privacy. That’s why sometimes we are very careful with this. We talk about this, even the Jordanian cases. We helped her, but after this case was brought to the court, she didn’t want to talk about this. She said, “it’s enough for me to make me think. I don’t want to talk about this.” We just talked with her, “you have rights to ask us to follow up this case”. But she didn’t care about this, even we don’t know now where she is (Leong 2016).

Marilia
They didn’t report to Fokupers (Alves 2016).

Alzira
Alzira shared her experience of dealing with a case of sexual violation by a Jordanian peacekeeper. “The thing is that they are still private, so they didn’t share, because some challenges women are facing in this country is the relationship with the UN peacekeepers in person, maybe with the other partners, they were divorced or. They didn’t have the confidence to share. It’s happening here, so sometimes women themselves want to share, but in society some community members say that’s what you like, how can you complain that? So there is no support from the community member itself and the family. So sometimes it makes women lack the courage to claim the cases” (Reis 2016).

“One of my friends also had the relationship with this person. She had a baby, but she said because she had a position so she didn’t want to report. Some friends I know they were in the relationship with the peacekeepers, but they were really good, like working in the UN, having really good skills, so they didn’t claim about their kids. The moms still have money, can sustain their family and the kids” (Reis 2016).

What is noted is that the treatments and lived experiences these malaenian experience in the local society is based on an ideal self of Timorese women constructed in Timorese culture, which did not encapsulate the current reality. Nevertheless, the construction of an ideal self of Timorese women as a whole among the informants, cannot explain why only particular forms of performance of femininity are permitted in a post-intervention Timor-Leste where women start to gain independent economic and political power in both public and private sphere. I argue that such a representation of Timorese women as a unified whole is helping create a myth of a self of Timorese women as if there is no tension within and among women. Moreover, such a categorization and representation of women do coincide with the changing political and economic structures of Timor-Leste after the UN intervention. When the locals talk about women who have sexual relationships with the peacekeepers, they consciously or unconsciously downplay and inferiorize these women as immoral others in the society according to the criteria of an ideal of good women. Through the othering process operating along with the logic of exclusion and inclusion, a superior, pure and perfect self of Timorese women is constructed in relation to other women in the same society. The category of the ideal women essentializes and homogenizes women as obedient and domesticated actors in relation to their husbands, families, and communities. However, bearing the power and violence of gendered discourse in mind, the construction of self cannot be understood without the existence and exclusion of the other, which tends to be shamed and stigmatized against an ideal femininity of good and pure Timorese women. Nevertheless, such an ideal is isolated from reality of post-intervention Timor-Leste. No women can and will be able to fulfill such an ideal based on the imaginary self of Timorese good women packaged in the language of culture. The vagueness and abstractness of constructed self of Timorese women help create an illusionary solidarity of women by rendering its inner tension and contestation within and among women invisible, as well as allow selective naming, stigmatization, and exclusion of some particular women who do or do not necessarily have sex with peacekeepers.

**Malae nian, peacekeeping, and nation-building in post-intervention Timor-Leste**

Life stories and everyday experiences of women surrounding the concept of *malae nian* help problematize the continuous colonial process of categorizing and representing women in post-intervention Timor-Leste according to the logic of selectivity. In this section, I show that *malae nian* highlights how global discourse of peacekeeping affects women in the nation-building
projects of post-intervention and post-colonial Timor-Leste. The discourse of peacekeeping assumes that *malae nian* belong to, are protected by, and benefit from the peacekeepers. As a result, they are the protected. But women are affected and even victimized by peacekeeping discourse. The concept of *malae nian* is vague and abstract, which appears to include all women with foreigners yet only selectively highlight and exclude women with the peacekeepers in post-intervention Timor-Leste. I claim that such a labelling and stigmatizing of particular women against an ambiguous sense of culture is not moral but political, which needs to be situated in the ongoing progress of nation-building along with global peacekeeping. If certain meanings of concepts of *malae nian* are selected and performed through people’s behavior which shape not only how the local perceive these women but also how they treat these women, we need to further question the logic behind it and how such a process shapes women’s lived reality by asking why and for what purpose.

To understand the connection among these three, first we need to know the relation between postcolonial and post-intervention states like Timor-Leste and peacekeeping. Although peacekeeping is repackaged itself in the form of peacebuilding in post-intervention states, militarism, which is defined by James Eastwood “as an ideological phenomenon” (Eastwood 2018, 44), still exists through assigning military to do the civilian work in peace-building missions. Therefore, in opposition to the militarism perpetuated and expanded in the civil society, which is constituted on the insecurity of some people, postcolonial feminist scholars criticize that peacekeeping is a colonial project in the form of neoliberalism as well as its unintended consequences (Angathangelou and Ling 2003). Another group of literature comes from critical security studies, which charges that militarism emphasizes much on military power through the dichotomy of civil/military aspects, as well as its universal and inclusive yet mostly Western concept. Although both groups of literature push back against peacekeeping as a universal discursive practice, they highlight different aspects: Postcolonial feminist scholars focus on the hierarchy and effects of power relations between colonial and the colonized countries, while the critical security studies scholars emphasize on different ways militarism is understood and practiced in different countries as well as its effects, such as the constitution of the idea of Africa (Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen 2018, 65).

Although peacekeeping in terms of militarism sheds lights on its effects on civil society, seeing peacekeeping in terms of militarism might reinforce the binary concept of civil and military aspects. Moreover, such a definition might not be useful in problematizing the connection between militarism and society by seeing peacekeeping as an ideology which shapes some social facts. Eastwood points out that understanding militarism as ideology is too narrow. Instead, he borrows from Althusser and defines it as “a structural relationship between social practices and the individuals who participate in it, which works by producing those individuals as subjects” (2018, 48). In my opinion, I think that such a definition not only connects the structure and the individual, but also reframes militarism central to peacekeeping as a performative act rather than merely ideology in the level of mind. Applying such an understanding of militarism to peacekeeping can tell us how individuals are transformed into subjects in society through engaging in “desiring war and military activity” (Eastwood 2018, 48).

How can such an understanding of peacekeeping help us to understand the relation between peacekeeping, women and nation-building, as well as the effects on *malae nian* in post-colonial
and post-intervention Timor-Leste? The above definition of peacekeeping highlights the transformative power of peacekeeping on citizens, which is omitted from the literature of postcolonial feminist and critical security studies literature. If citizens act through peacekeeping which is a form of ideology and peacekeeping as ideology has the power to transform citizens into subjects through performative acts, peacekeeping will shape the reality in particular ways. Putting it in the context of postcolonial states, Swati Parashar argues that “postcolonial anxiety” of the Third World states “enables militarism at various levels of governance and state interventions in the everyday lives of the citizenry” (2018, 123). Parashar draws on the example of manifestation of excessive militarism domestically and internationally in India, which demonstrates how militarism is practiced in post-colonial India after the Cold War. Although we should not generalize her findings to Timor-Leste, her case study of India suggests that militarism might be practiced in other post-colonial and post-intervention states like Timor-Leste. Timor-Leste, which adopts state-building model in the peacebuilding projects, could possibly revive militarism by mobilizing its citizens to perform national identity constructed and promoted by elites in some way. If militarism persists and continues to shape how the citizens perceive and act in particular ways in Timorese context, we need to know the how women, state, militarism, and national identities are related to each other.

1.Women and the state
Women have been integral to larger political entities, such as state and nation. Feminists have engaged in theorizing the linkage between gender, women and the construction of state, nation, and nationalism. However, the discourses and categories in association with the construction of the state and nation have been insensitive to the invisibility of women and gender by centering on the state (Peterson 1992). According to Hobbes's theory of social contract, individuals fight with each other in the state of nature because of the human need to survive. Because there is no guarantee of their security and property in the state of nature, people give up part of their rights in exchange of protection from the state to ensure that they can escape the state of nature, where each one preys on the other (Walker 1992, 187). The sovereign, a person or a body of persons, gaining rights from the people, turns individuals into citizens endowed with rights and responsibilities (1968, 44). At the same time, women are invisible and excluded from the citizenship with the erection of the dichotomy of public and private sphere. The origin of the state is constructed on women's insecurity (Peterson 1992, 32).

Feminists highlight the exclusion and integration of women form the public sphere. Carole Pateman provocatively argues that the theory of social contract which has been considered is a theory of sex contract, for the original theory did not recognize the fact that the original pact is based on men’s access to women’s body and domination over women through conjugal contract (Pateman 1988). Through marriage, women become dependent on their husbands, who are heads of the household. After entering the civil society through contract-making, only men become citizens, while women are relegated to the private sphere. The fact that men dominate women and the household becomes apolitical and naturalized. Furthermore, it is reified by consolidating the status of state as protector of people. For Pateman, all contracts, marriage or citizenship, are inevitable patriarchal and thus destructive to equal and free rights by sustaining the dominance and oppression of men over women in the language of rights.

Ironically, despite the fact that women are subordinate to men in the construction of states, they are necessary and integral to the existence of the state. Even though women are denied full
citizenship in terms of rights, access to resources, and participation compared to men, they are still protected by state, since they are fundamental to sustain the system of state physically and symbolically. For example, the idea of motherhood highlights women's contribution and significance to state as mothers in the homelands during the war times (Kaufman and Williams 2007, 27). Motherhood is also used to justify the legitimacy of war and sacrifice of lives of soldiers. Some feminists, for example, Ruth Lister, also argue that the full citizenship of women comes from their role as mothers (Kaufman and Williams 2007, 28). Additionally, women, who usually have no place in the battlefield or political leadership, are fundamental in supporting the war system and family while men are away.

2. Women, body, and gendered identity

Gender and its relation to body are equally highlighted by feminists. Feminists pay attention to the difference between sexed body and gendered subjects. The concept of gender “represents a questioning of correspondence between sexed bodies of men and women and ideational constructs of women and men in representational practices” (Wilcox 2011, 596). Gender is “an identity tenuously constituted through time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts,” which determines subjects by designating particular roles and values to subjects to maintain the difference among subjects (Butler 1988). Gender, in other words, is the symbolic and cultural construction of identity and meanings predicated on unequal power relations, which does not necessarily conform to sexes of bodies. The socially constructed nature of gender thus distinguishes itself from biological sex, the sexual essentialization of men and women.

The sex-and-gender distinction is a powerful move which allows feminists to question not only the practices of security, but also the naturalization of bodies. Lauren Wilcox mentioned that security studies “has implicitly theorized body as natural, biological entities only relevant insofar as they live, suffer, or die by the various practices of violence of interests to security scholars” (Wilcox 2011, 596–97). Moreover, by relating bodies to security practices, feminists are able to theorize how bodies and security practices help shape each other: “A body that can be killed or tortured is a body that is the product of discursive practices in international security, for example, the gendered and racialized discourses of ‘terrorist’” as a subject” (2011, 597).

Nevertheless, Wilcox also warns us of the danger that such a distinction and emphasis on the constitutive nature of gender might be limited in the sense that bodies only exist to be inscribed gender identity through discourses and practices of security. She contends that gender and body “are mutually implicated, but not reducible to one another” (Wilcox 2011, 598). To explain, the bodies of men might possess masculine traits or values, such as aggressiveness, courage, and rationality, which are favorable and desirable compared to feminine ones within a society. Although masculinity is often related to men, women also have and could have masculinity to make themselves able to access the status and power men enjoy. Men also have and could have feminine values and characteristics. However, rather than assuming that there is a universal masculinity and femininity, there are multiple masculinities and they might have hierarchical relations compared to hegemonic masculinity, according to R. W. Connell and J. W. Messerschmidt (2005). “Gender orders construct multiple masculinities” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 835). Moreover, even men could be deprived of their masculinity through feminization, which make them torturable or killable. “The feminization of the victims at Abu Ghraib, who were described as robbed of their masculinity in the most humiliating possible way
by women” (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007, 231). Feminist security scholars question the gendered nature of the state by contending that state justifies its legitimacy on hegemonic masculinities, “which are the ideal of citizenship and serve to ‘support male power and female subordination’ (Tickner 2001, 15). “Ideal types of masculinity almost always rely on a feminized, enemy other (Huston 1983, cited from Sjoberg, p.209)”. What gender can shed light on the dynamics of gender, state, and body is that the protective masculine role of the state is justified on the feminine or feminized bodies.

The socially constructed nature of gender does not fully consume the material existence of bodies, which allows bodies to be able to challenge gender norms and categories which define bodies. For instance, if bodies can only be represented in and through discourses and practices of security, usually women and femininity are relegated to bodies and other less favorable characteristics, such as passivity, irrationality, or emotion.

The introduction of gender and body by feminists highlights the potential of feminist security studies scholars in formulating counter-hegemonic discourses through challenging dominant masculine security discourses and practices where identities and subjectivities of bodies are implicated, constructed, and positioned. The dynamics of gender-and-body shed light to the fact that a body is killable not just because it is a vulnerable body, but because it is constructed as a particular body discursively in the first place. Gender is a signifier of power relations, which indicates its operation and effects at a broader social and political context. According to conventional international relations theory, states or groups make war and, in doing so, kill and injure people that other states are charged with protecting. While it sees the perpetrators of violence as rational actors, it views those who are either protected or killed by this violence as mere bodies: ahistorical humans who breathe, suffer and die but have no particular political agency. In its rationalist variants, IR theory only sees bodies as inert objects. Constructivist theory argues that subjects are formed through social relations, but leaves the bodies of subjects outside of politics, as “brute facts.” According to Wilcox, such limited thinking about bodies and violence is not just wrong, but also limits the capacity of IR to theorize the meaning of political violence. By contrast to rationalist and constructivist theory, feminist theory sees subjectivity and the body as inextricably linked. This book argues that IR needs to rethink its approach to bodies as having particular political meaning in their own right. For example, bodies both direct violent acts (violence in drone warfare, for example) and are constituted by practices that manage violence (for example, scrutiny of persons as bodies through biometric technologies and body scanners). The book also argues that violence is more than a strategic action of rational actors (as in rationalist theories) or a destructive violation of community laws and norms (as in liberal and constructivist theories). Because IR theorizes bodies as outside of politics, it cannot see how violence can be understood as a creative force for shaping the limits of how we understand ourselves as political subjects, as well as forming the boundaries of our political communities. By engaging with feminist theories of embodiment and violence, Bodies of Violence provides a more nuanced treatment of the nexus of bodies, subjects and violence than currently exists in the field of international relations. What gender constitutes and how gender operates in the sites of bodies are political questions. In other words, body is political instead of biological/natural. Although there are many possibilities of formulation of gendered identities of the same body, no identity or body is possibly recognized or visible beyond the social process. However, this does not mean that bodies do not exist outside discourses, since gender determines the visibility and invisibility of
certain bodies and subjects simultaneously. By using gender as a category of analysis, what seems to be natural and unquestioned could be problematized by foregrounding the power relations and political construction among sexed bodies and gendered subjects.

3. Women and militarism

Women are not just integral to state but also crucial in militarism. The influence of militarism continues to exist in the post-Cold War era through the co-constitution of security and militarism, even in peaceful times. The emphasis on human security does not mean demilitarization but the opposite, since human security tends to reaffirm the status of the state to protect its people with strong militarism. According to Swati, even though militarism is characteristic of colonial project in many post-colonial states, it does not cease to exist in post-colonial states due to “post-colonial anxiety”: “‘Postcolonial anxiety’ among states enables them to imagine their legitimacy and territorial control through militarism, overriding other modes of social and cultural existence” (Swati 2018, 127). This means that militarism might expand and gradually slips in society. It indicates the continual existence of gendered ideology in peace times based on exclusion and invisibility of women, which could be an impediment to peace. If we put this anxiety which drives militarism in Timor-Leste in the context of peace-building, even though military approach is no longer the foremost approach to protect the citizens against the its enemy in the development process, its ideology and values could still affect non-military aspects and citizens. Since militarism usually is constructed on the control of women as well as violence against women, the restoration of security and order does not guarantee women's immunity from violence, as long as women or gender are still excluded from reconstruction process with patriarchal limits of women to domesticity. The process of demobilization, disarmament and reconstruction (DDR) and on security sector reform (SSR) has been highly male-dominated, since female combatants have been excluded from participating. DDR as part of international peacekeeping aims to “bring wartime violence to an end” and “lay the groundwork for a sustainable peace” (Enloe 2007, 126). However, it tends to adopt a gender perspective that “DDR is about that men and boys,” which is related to the naturalization of manliness (Enloe 2007, 127). Megan MacKenzie (2009) examines the causal relation between gendered construction of women and desecuritization. She demonstrates that category which defines women as war victims has undervalued the role of former female soldiers in post-conflict programs in Sierra Leone. While men are securitized as a key element of transforming war to peace, women are desecuritized and considered as a social issue. She argues that because the DDR programs failed to include female soldiers, they might not be able to recognize the agency of women in making wars and peace. This further renders DDR process ineffective. Sandra McEvoy (2009) holds a similar argument to MaKenzie’s. McEvoy challenges the traditional views of peace negotiations and their tendencies in excluding the voices of female combatants. She argues that the inclusion of female combatants in peace process will make conflict resolution more likely to succeed.

The security-militarism dynamics also points to security sectors reform after the war. Erin Mobekik (2010) argues that security sector reform is broader than traditional security sector, which "incorporates non-state security and justice sectors and mechanisms and critically seeks to guarantee not only state security but also human security (Mobekk 2010, 279). Mobekik suggests that a gender-sensitive approach to SSR should be pursued in the security sector without simply emphasizing representation and retention of women (2010, 285). If the gender inequality assumed in the SSR is not recognized, then the policy of gender mainstreaming will just reinforce the gender
hierarchy without transforming the existing institutions and structures. The exclusion of women and the emphasis of men in the peace process also renders the issues of gender injustice, such as sexual violence, unresolved.

Militarism is also built on the insecurity of women after war. Kent and Kinsella (2015) also argue that although Timorese women have contributed significantly to the resistance against Indonesian occupation, they are not recognized as veterans in the veteran’s scheme, which could have identified women’s contribution to the resistance campaign and empowered women with pensions. The biggest beneficiaries of the scheme are men (Kinsella and Kent 2015, 483). Kent and Kinsella (2015, 483). Women who receive pensions are considered as “on behalf of a deceased male family member rather than in recognition of their own contributions” (Kinsella and Kent 2015, 476). Furthermore, they argue that the veteran’s scheme is used by political leaders as a political means to buy political stability through incorporating male ex-combatants to the governance scheme (Kinsella and Kent 2015, 482).

4. Militarism and women’s agency

Ironically, despite militarism strengthens the subordinate role of women or threatens women compared to men, it creates spaces for mothers and wives to engage in both formal and informal politics. On the one hand, militarism shakes previous gender order which suppresses women (Kinsella and Kent 2015, 474). While men go to the battle field, women are left home taking care of the families. Women find themselves need to take the economic and social responsibility, which allows women to have more opportunities to empower themselves (Grayzel 2002). On the other hand, militarism might highlight particular agency of civilians. Militarism has been embodied in people's life by excluding civilians and their needs. However, by understanding militarism in the broader social basis, the boundary between civilian and military is blurred, which shapes the survival tactics and strategies of civilians facing the restraint of militarism. For example, Amina Mama and Margo Okazawa-Rey have shown that women in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia have been involved in the combat economy as "fighters, commanders, heads of Small Girls Units, as well as the more conventional subordinate roles as porters, intelligence gatherers, food providers, spies and 'wives'" (Mama and Okazawa-Rey 2012, 116). This article develops a feminist perspective on militarism in Africa, drawing examples from the Nigerian, Sierra Leonean and Liberian civil wars spanning several decades to examine women's participation in the conflict, their survival and livelihood strategies, and their activism. We argue that postcolonial conflicts epitomise some of the worst excesses of militarism in the era of neoliberal globalisation, and that the economic, organisational and ideological features of militarism undermine the prospects for democratisation, social justice and genuine security, especially for women, in post-war societies. Theorisations of 'new wars' and the war economy are taken as entry points to a discussion of the conceptual and policy challenges posed by the enduring and systemic cultural and material aspects of militarism. These include the contradictory ways in which women are affected by the complex relationship between gendered capitalist processes and militarism, and the manner in which women negotiate their lives through both. Finally, we highlight the potential of transnational feminist theorising and activism for strengthening intellectual and political solidarities and argue that the globalised military security system can be our 'common context for struggle' as contemporary feminist activist scholars (Mama and Okazawa-Rey 2012, 116). In Argentina, in fighting against the junta for disappearing their children, some women gathered together at the Plaza de Mayo. The Mothers of The Plaza de Mayo (The Mothers of the Disappeared) gathered to express their dissatisfaction toward the violence of the junta, which eventually lead to the collapse
of the military government (Kurtz 2010). In Northern Ireland, although women are restrained by patriarchal structures as mothers and wives, they connect to other communities to protect themselves and children (Kaufman and Williams 2007, 171). Women from different communities formed Northern Ireland Women's Coalitions (NIWC) and helped the implementation of Good Friday Agreement, which indicates not only the existing vibrant activism of women at the communal level but also women's determination to participate in decision-making process, which excludes women from mainstream politics in Northern Ireland (Kaufman and Williams 2007, 183).

The above examples in West Africa, Argentina, and Northern Ireland demonstrated the agency and different forms of activism of women as mothers and wives in traditional patriarchal societies by supporting or protesting the ruling power within militarized societies. However, it is not easy to tell whether women's activism embodied in motherhood or maternal status is an embodiment of patriarchy or demonstration of women's agency, which might be perceived as evidences of women's oppressive and powerless experiences by Western feminists.

5. Uneasy relationship between motherhood, maternity, and feminism

Understanding women’s agency based on motherhood and maternal care in militarism raises important concerns about whether such an activism is only reflective of militarism, which reinforces the gendered ideology rather than disrupting it. In fact, feminism has had uneasy relationship with motherhood, because they consider that motherhood is the product of patriarchy. (Taylor 1997, 349). Good and pure women refined in the private sphere serve the interests of the patriarchal system, which make women end up with trapping in asymmetrical power relations. Moreover, motherhood tends to be defined as proxy of states and nations. Feminists argue that with such a symbolism, women are protected and attacked by states and nations at the same time. Kohn uses the example of Serbian military’s mass violation of Muslin women in Serbia to illustrate Serbian’s attempt to wipe out Muslin population through mass rape (Kohn 1994, 201–3). However, motherhood and feminism are not necessarily irreconcilable. Taylor argues that mothers need feminism just as feminism needs to recognize many political and social problems mothers face (Taylor 1997, 350). Moreover, motherhood can be redefined to unite women's sisterhood against the atrocities and violence conducted by the government or militias. For example, women in Argentina manipulated the image of the motherhood not only to ensure their security but also re-erect the motherhood to organize political movements. Motherhood can be political. Understanding political nature of motherhood can help us to differentiate motherhood as a construct of patriarchy as well as a source of peace-inclined feminist theory and movement, when we try to navigate the feminist strategies and movements through the gendered ideology and restraints posed by militarism.

Motherhood, nation-building, and nationalist movements

We should not forget that motherhood can be used as a powerful political tool or strategy for nation-building or nationalist movements. As an ideological construct, it can be manipulated to support nationalist movement. As a strategy, it can be mobilized to support women's movement, if not a feminist one. Carol Bardenstein (1997) argues that maternal image of women is a mode of Palestine resistance and nationalist movement. In the poetry, Palestine has been portrayed as a raped bride in the wedding, which signals the disassociation of Palestinian people from land and impregnation of Israel in the previous occupied land by Palestinians (Bardenstein 1997, 171). Meanwhile, discourses of mothers and sons are also reinforced through mobilizing mothers to protect or sacrifice their sons in armed struggles. In other words, women who were limited to
homes are able to participate in political life as the meaning of motherhood expands to communities and nations along the gender lines. On the other hand, women's identity given in patriarchal societies also helps organize women's movement beyond the diversity of women's organizations. In post-conflict societies, domestic violence levels can rise even when peace has been re-established (Bardenstein 1997, 94). However, existing political and legal systems cannot ensure women to represent themselves as well as gain enough remedies (Bardenstein 1997, 98). By incorporating motherhood against domestic violence, the discourse of protecting women can take new forms and embodiments in post-conflict societies. In fact, an umbrella organization of women's organizations, *Rede Feto Timor Loro Sa’e* (Timor-Leste Women’s Network) was formed at this Congress, which was the first post-conflict gathering of representatives of women’s organizations (Roynestad 2003, 4).

Seeing *malae nian* from a gender perspective not only directs our attention to the mutual constructions between women, militarism, state-building, but also helps problematize the politics of representation and categorization: Who are representative of Timorese or Timorese women? Failing to include some women in the process of representation and categorization invites questions about in which ways women are included and coproducing through social and discursive practices. Why are some women excluded?

Women who are *malae nian*, are not limited to women who are with peacekeepers. The concept of *malae nian* also refers to women who have no husband, women have to work, women who are not victims but possessions of peacekeepers, and women are not victims of domestic violence conducted by Timorese men. In other words, *malae nian* is a constructed ideal-type of Timorese women against an ideal of femininity to crystallize and essentialize the self of Timorese women who are obedient and submissive mothers and wives yet no longer exist in the post-intervention Timorese society. Moreover, such a construction helps erect a masculine self of Timorese identity. By degrading women who are *malae nian*, the purity of self can be sustained, despite that the content of the self is a vague and an empty rhetoric, which does not refer to real women but selected representation of women.

By problematizing the political nature of *malae nian*, the concept itself is not just descriptive but normative. Situating *malae nian* in the crux of women, state, nation, and militarism intersecting with gender requires us to ask who is represented while who is not. The fact that women who are morally corrupted or under-educated are excluded from the representation of Timorese women with the label of *malae nian*. The question about the absence and exclusion of these women cannot be addressed without digging into the dynamics of militarism, nation-building, and gender embodied through the semiotic and physical violence against women who are *malae nian* in the post-intervention Timor-Leste.

How does *malae nian*, women, and nation-building connect to each other in Timorese context? Nation-building, is “the processes of forming a cohesive national political community” (Leach 2017, 4) while nationalism is a kind of ideology. Michael Leach (2017, 3) claims that even though there are divergence among political parties which fight to resist colonialism, they are unified under the agreed idea of nation. Such a unified nation is militaristic in nature, since it is characteristic of anti-nationalism and realized through resistance. Despite the purpose of resistance against colonial power does not exist anymore after independence, nationalism still exists and
operates as an ideology to hold the elites together yet it changes its purpose from resistance to development. Since 2012, Timorese elites have started to orient the official values from “a core narrative of resistance, to one emphasizing the values of national development, and moving on from a past of conflict”. In fact, knowing that different parties have different ideas of nationalism, Timorese elites have been trying to unite their inner contested nationalism under a unified nation after they take over from the UN after 2002. According to Leach, after losing a common goal of resistance, the ideological divergence among anti-colonialism of elites emerged after Timor-Leste became independent. A national identity is required to be built to consolidate the whole nation where citizenships are diverse.

Although Leach conducts an extensive survey on the evolution of nationalism in history, he focuses on the ideology of nationalism formed among political elites. However, nationalism coupled with militarism is not only constructed but also performative, which requires military as well as civilians to perform it to sustain the idea of a unified nation. In this regard, Leach not only loses sight of the power of nationalism in mobilizing and constituting everyday experiences of ordinary civilians, but also how it is predicated on the body and sexuality of women. Leach misses the point that women are the cohesive of the divided elites and nationalisms in the process of nation-building. Women, who are half of the nation, are the building blocks of the family, community, and the whole nation. Therefore, the image of good women whose values and virtues equated to be cultural values and the identity of Timorese women became integral to the nationalist discourse. Such a gendered identity constructed in the nation-building projects is not new. In post-colonial India, the Hindu nationalists construct the image of traditional Indian women who stay home and protect home from “from colonial intrusions” by using their virtues of ‘chastity, self-sacrifice, submission, devotion, kindness, patience, and the labours of love’ (Kapur 2007, 547; Chatterjee 1990, 287). Such an image is different from “that of the Western women, as well as the ‘street women’ or ‘prostitute,’ who could undermine the nationalist project as well as disrupt the social order” (Kapur 2007, 547). Similarly, Katherine Moon demonstrates that Korean women who are fallen, kijich ‘on women, are constitutive of et are represented as detrimental to the home front as well as the whole nation, “the prostitute was cast as the enemy of the home front,… War propaganda presented prostitute as someone predatory and diseased, who ‘could do more harm than any German fleet of German airplanes’ to the men fighting the war’” (Moon 1997, 37). Women have to be good women with virtues in order to support and protect the nation. Within this context, malae nian is posed as an outcast of good Timorese women for this nation to be reborn by reaffirming the cultural and feminine values. By labelling, stigmatizing, and purging the corrupted bodies of malae nian, an image of authentic traditional women and a sense of new nation can be constructed from the situation where no modern nation exists or nation is weak.

Understanding malae nian and its role in sustaining state, militarism, and nation-building suggests that nation-building goal in post-intervention Timor-Leste cannot occur without mobilizing citizens and military to co-construct and perform national identity central to nationalism. According to Enloe, “the militarization of any nationalist movement occurs through the gendered workings of power” (Enloe 1993, 246). Note that even though feminists tend to interchangeably use militarism and militarization, they do not mean the same thing but mutually related: ‘In militarization, militarism is extended, in demilitarization, it contracts’ (Shaw 2013, 20). Swati (2018, 125) further points out that militarism does not mean that a society will heavily militarized but denoted by militarism in terms of its constitution. “Not only are many countries in the Third World
heavily militarized and ruled by military regimes, but also militarism is deeply entrenched in nominal and established democracies” (Parashar 2018, 125; Visweswaran 2013). In other words, even though citizens in a democratic society are not directly engaged in war activities or war preparations, they will also practice the masculine identities by internalizing the values, beliefs, and performing practices of citizenships.

During my fieldwork in Timor-Leste in summer 2017, I observed many forms of militarism embodied in everyday life of civilians. They existed and are performed by civilians in universities, streets, and households. In the universities, I attended a seminar organized by Annie Feith from Victoria University and UNTL on 5 July 2017. Dr. Feith asked us to sit in a circle and took turns sharing who our example of life is. Many students who went to UNTL attended along with a few expats and governmental officials. While some answered their fathers, many said “Xanana” inspired them most and remained their most respected figure. On the street, I saw many people still supported Fretl in wholeheartedly, which was the leading resistance force against Indonesian army emerging from the Indonesian occupation times and now biggest political party in the parliament. Right before the parliament election, many political parties mobilized their supporters extensively whenever they had political campaigns. I got to participate in a political campaign of Fretlin in Tasi Tolu, Dili. Fretlin supporters organized campaigns in different forms: by painting their bodies in red, wearing national flag and red shits printed “vota: hamutuk ita bele (vote: together we can),” marching on the main streets in groups by motorbikes, trucks, taxi, and mini bus. The party flag of Fretlin shares the same color with the national flag: red, yellow, and black. It seemed to me that Fretlin was the founding father of Timor-Leste. Without Fretlin there will be no Timor-Leste as a state. While our motorbike moved slowly with other on our way to Tasi Tolu, the place where Dr. Mari Arkatiri gave a speech, I also saw heavily armed police and military personnel standing on the street and watching Fretlin supporters closely. In addition to schools and streets, militarism also encroaches in the private sphere. When I travelled to Oecussi I lived in mana Inacia’s house. One night, her little sister was folding laundry on the floor while I was watching TV. She grabbed a red Fretlin T-shirt and covered herself, saying to me, “isin Fretlin (Fretlin body).” Her behavior suddenly got my attention because she was performing the identity of a then-military organization yet now political party. Militarism creeps into civil affairs and dictates civil life in all aspects.

Militarism not only requires civilians and militaries to perform altogether in a peaceful way, but also imposes violence on civilians who do not perform militarism accordingly. Veronica provided a story of bar fight where her Timorese girl friend who hung out with American soldiers but then was violently punished by men serving in Timor-Leste defense force. In her story, her friend is considered as a malae nian, who works with foreigners yet has no relationships with them. However, her rejection of Timorese men as well as the intervention of American soldiers to protect her from Timorese men’s harassment resulted in the backfire of Timorese men as well as further physical violence against her. This bar fight ended up punishing not only this woman but also Timorese men, which also caused further hatred of Timorese men against foreign men. This story shows that how women are negatively affected by militarism which shapes not only the gender identities of subjects but also their everyday experiences of women.

The tragedy of malae nian

“It happened in the beginning of 2010. It was very scary. We have a very bad night. A lot of Timorese went to Disco, danced with malae cause they didn’t
touch you. Only dance. But not Timorese guys. When they are drunk, they don’t respect you. They start touching you. One night Forcas defesa de Timor-Leste (FDTL) go there. They dance and they see my friend. She has a Timorese husband. They separate. She does not want to have Timorese boyfriend anymore. She only works with the foreign people, like army and police. She went out with three American army, three boys. After I finish work, I go dancing too. Four Timorese also go in. They see my Timorese friend dance on the table. They go in there, want to touch and dance. She tries to protect herself. She does not want to. The (Timorese) guy just kept pulling her to dance. He slapped her on the face. She turned around with a big Bingtang bottle and smashed him on the head. The guy turned around wanting to strangle her on the neck. The American army guy doesn’t like see girls get hurt like this. The Timorese guy started first. He (American guy) tried to get out. The FDTL come and start a big fighting. They fight with the army guys until they have a broken neck, something like this. They have to take him (American guy) to Australia. Timorese guys are very dangerous when they go out at night time. When they fight with someone. They all know you. They are together with their friends. My friend ran outside. They hit her really bad. They ran to the street. They pulled her and she fell down. After that (bar fight) they (FDTL) really hate Timorese who want to have relationships with foreign people. Bad luck for me. One night me and my husband want to drink at mall with his friends. When we come back home we start feeling hungry. We stop at a restaurant. They start pulling him (my husband) out. Luckily my husband had a Kiwi sticker on the back of the car. One (Timorese) guy walked to the back and saw the sticker. He said, “kiwi kiwi, peace kiwi.” They said, “ok ok, we think that you are American.” When I walk, they think I just want to sleep with malae. My husband wants to answer. I say “Don’t. Timorese if they have problems with you, they put their hands on two.” In 2009-10, I don’t like going out shopping. I go alone. A lot of men don’t have work. Now it’s better” (Almeida 2017).

This story demonstrates the power struggle between American and Timorese military masculinities over women, as well as the violence against Timorese women. In the fight, American masculinity has the upper hand compared to Timorese military masculinity. American soldiers are portrayed as protectors while Timorese soldiers as perpetrators of violence of women. Such a representation coincides with the narratives of war and colonial story: Because Timorese men are unable to protect their own women, foreigners have to intervene to help them. However, such a practice of this protector’s narrative becomes problematic when foreign men challenge the protector’s role of local men in their society. Military masculinity in the face of changing gender roles and identities has to reaffirm itself through subordinating women.

This story illustrates militarism in the intervened countries in two ways: On the one hand, such a narrative indicates the penetration of militarism in the society, which consequently reinforces the role of good women who should stay and protect her home/nation. On the other hand, it highlights the role of gender in constructing the hierarchy of military masculinities and the continuity of violence through interpersonal relations in post-conflict societies. In this story, there are different military masculinities. The fact that the Timorese military masculinity is challenged and loses to
American military masculinity shakes the gender identities and status of Timorese masculinity. Failing to assert its gender role of Timorese men, they have to reconstruct the norms which limit the roles and identities of women at home. The bar is not only a site penetrated by militarism where different military masculinities compete in the same nation, but also a platform where the masculine identity of Timorese nation is constructed by including and purging women who fail to live up to their gender roles and perform their identities.

**Conclusion**

The political underpinning and its consequences of *malae nian* need to be problematized from a gender perspective. Instead of a cultural or traditional interpretation, I argue that it has to be understood in the ongoing process of nation-building after the intervention, where particular groups of women related to competing foreign masculinities are incorporated yet excluded from this process for tarnishing the purity and integrity of the nation. The violence of naming and shaming these women as others demonstrates the anxiety and eagerness of a post-intervention nation failing to control its own nation from the hands of intervenors. I argue by depoliticizing women who are *malae nian* in the process of nation-building along with the logic of inclusion and exclusion, the masculinity of Timorese can be restored to support the central national identity constructed in the process of nation-building. This suggests that *malae nian* is not merely anti-colonial sentiment, but racialized and gendered subjects required to erect a masculine citizenship central to nation-building in post-intervention Timor-Leste.

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