

Mapping the mother tongue in Timor-Leste

Who spoke what where in 2010?

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2015

Introduction

This paper visually presents where each of the languages of Timor-Leste (East Timor) are spoken. It maps the dominant home language for each *suku* (village) according to the 2010 census, as well as the percentage of people claiming to speak each language at home in each *suku*.

Overview of languages

Based on the language names in the 2010 census, if one ignores obvious errors, there are about 18 native Austronesian languages on mainland Timor-Leste, as well as 5 languages classified as Papuan. There are additionally a few languages spoken on Atauro island, the lingua franca Tetun Dili (also known as Tetun Prasa), and some non-native languages such as Portuguese, Indonesian and Chinese.

The following table shows the total number of speakers recorded for each language in the 2010 census (Timor-Leste Ministry of Finance, no date), along with the percentage of the population that this amounts to.

Language	No. of speakers	% of speakers	Language name	No. of speakers	% of speakers
Austronesian mainland			Papuan		
Baikenu	62,201	5.9%	Bunak	55,837	5.3%
Bekais	3,887	0.4%	Fataluku	37,779	3.6%
Galoli / Galolen	13,066	1.2%	Makalero	7,802	0.7%
Habun	2,741	0.3%	Makasae	101,854	9.7%
Idate	13,512	1.3%	Sa'ani	4,763	0.7%
Isni	703	0.1%	Atauro island		
Kairui	5,993	0.6%	Adabe	181	0.0%
Kemak	61,969	5.9%	Atauran	147	0.0%
Lakalei	3,250	0.3%	Dadu'a	3,146	0.3%
Lolein	1,130	0.1%	Rahesuk	1,015	0.1%
Makuva	56	0.0%	Raklungu	2,220	0.2%
Mambai	131,361	12.5%	Resuk	1,691	0.2%
Midiki	9,586	0.9%	Non-native		
Nanaek	297	0.0%	Chinese	722	0.1%
Naueti	15,045	1.4%	English	773	0.1%
Tetun Dili / Prasa	385,269	36.6%	Indonesian	3,045	0.3%
Tetun Terik	63,519	6.0%	Malay	107	0.0%
Tokodede	39,483	3.7%	Portuguese	595	0.1%
Waima'a	18,467	1.8%	Other	495	0.0%

After Tetun Dili (36.6%), the languages with the most speakers are Mambae (12.5%), Makasae (9.7%), Tetun Terik (6%), Baikenu and Kemak (both 5.9%) and Bunak (5.3%). All others have less than 4%.

Note that the languages of Atauro have been little studied, variously named, and even variously classified as Austronesian and Papuan. It seems that Rahesuk, Raklungu and Resuk, at least, are dialects of the one - Austronesian language, with Dadu'a being closely related.

Two of the 'languages' listed in the census are actually names proposed by Geoffrey Hull for groupings of several closely related languages or dialects. One is Idalaka (with 259 claimed speakers), which Hull (2000)

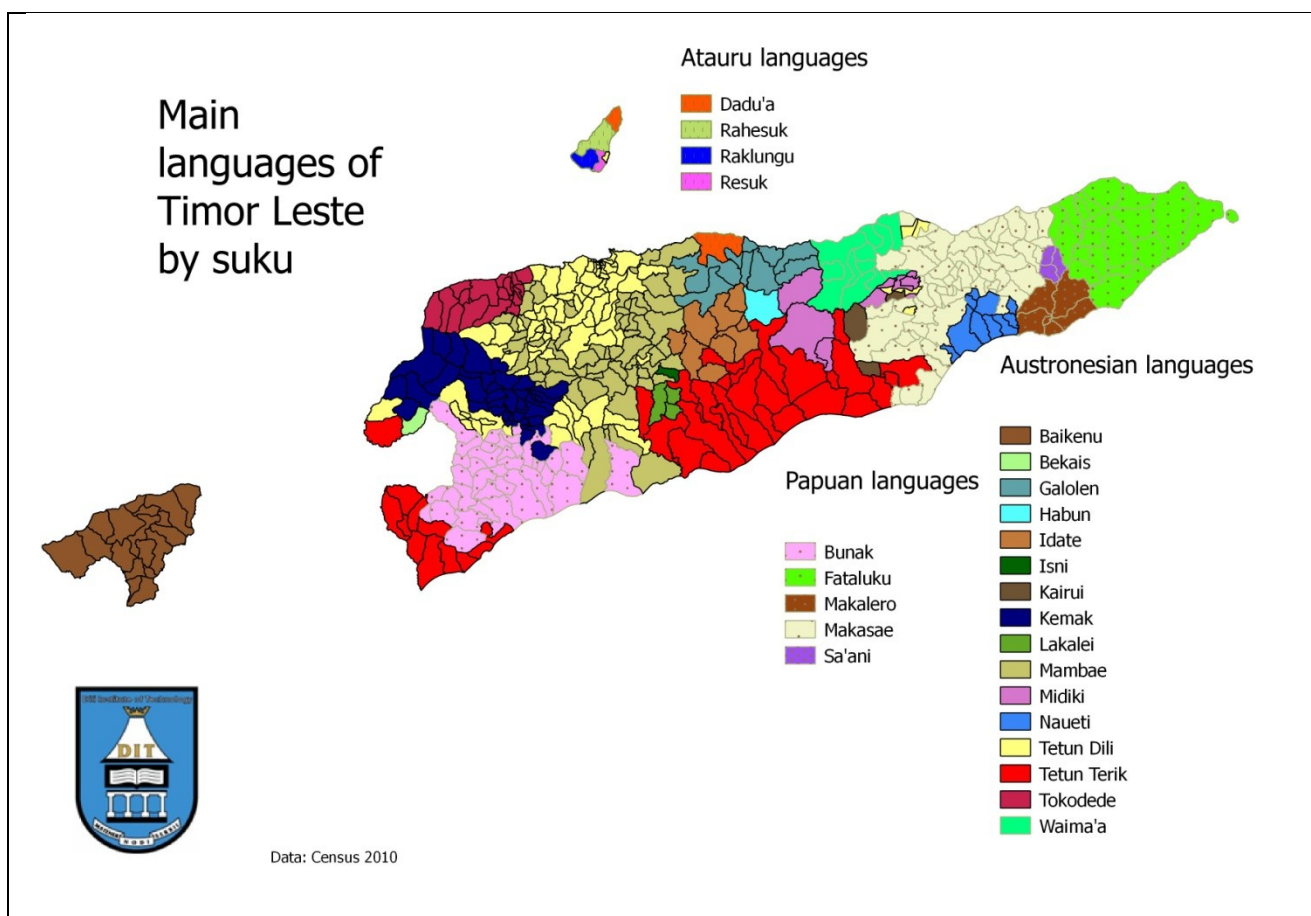
proposed as a cover term for Idaté and Lakalei, while Hull (2002) additionally included Isni. The other is Kaiwamina (with 5 claimed speakers), which Hull (2000) used as a cover term for Kairui, Midiki, Waima'a and Naueti.

Kairui and Midiki are listed separately in the census, but are often considered dialects of a single language, in the literature named Kairui-Midiki (e.g. Lewis et al. 2014).

The 5242 people speaking languages not native to Timor-Leste, as well as some of the 'other', would include some of the 10,983 foreigners in the census (NSD & UNFPA 2011:xxi). This means that over 5000 people identified as foreigners in the census are speaking Timorese languages at home. Many of these are presumably of Timorese descent or married to Timorese.

Overall map

This map shows the language with the highest number of speakers for each *suku*, according to the 2010 census data.



Distribution maps for each language

The following maps, presented in alphabetic order of languages, show the percentage of speakers in each *suku* who speak each language at home, according to the 2010 census.

These languages are not presented in the maps, as the numbers of speakers are so low, or the boundaries unclear:

- Lolein: spoken by 1130 speakers in Remexio, Laulara and Hera, close to Dili.
- Makuva: Van Engelenhoven (2010) hypothesises that Makuva, an Austronesian language, was the former mother tongue of some Fataluku clans, and has been retained as a ritual register in the Tutuala subdistrict. In the 2010 census, 56 people claimed to speak it at home; this included one or two in most districts, suggesting that it could have been random.

- Nanaek: spoken by 297 speakers, in the Metinaro subdistrict of Dili.
- Most of the Atauro languages: These are spoken only on Atauro island, and the classification is uncertain.

To avoid overcrowding the maps, boundaries and names are shown only for districts. A star represents a district capital, and a circle represents a subdistrict capital.

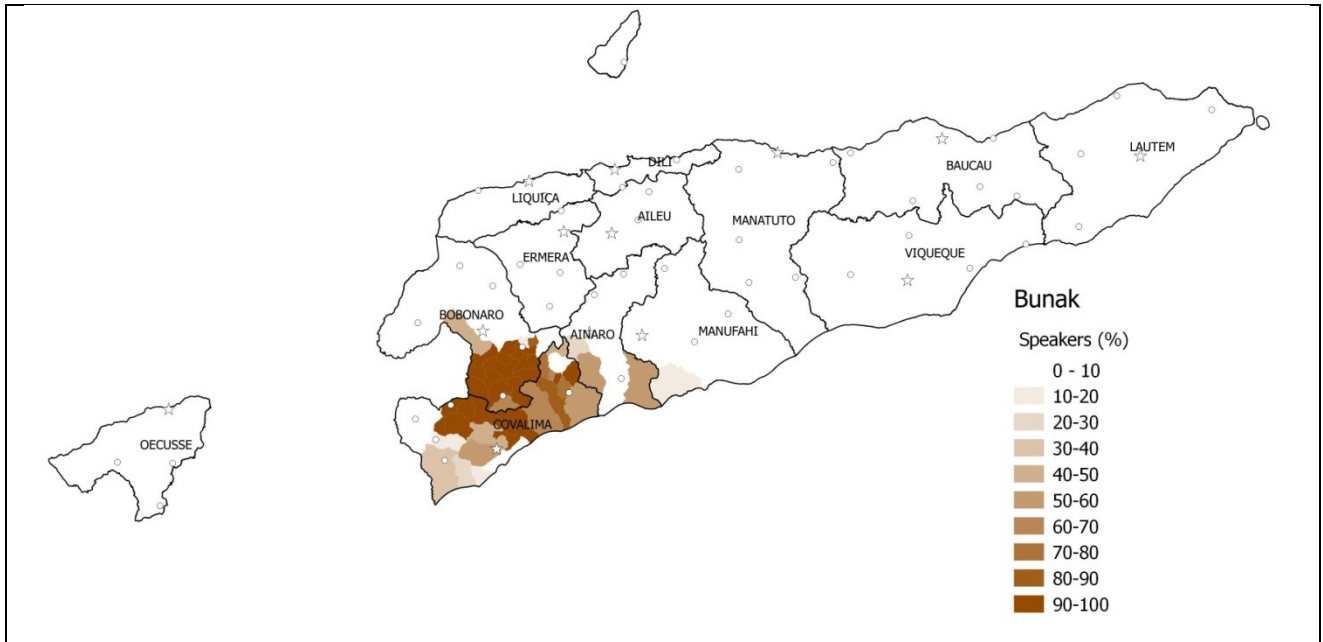
Baikenu



Bekais



Bunak



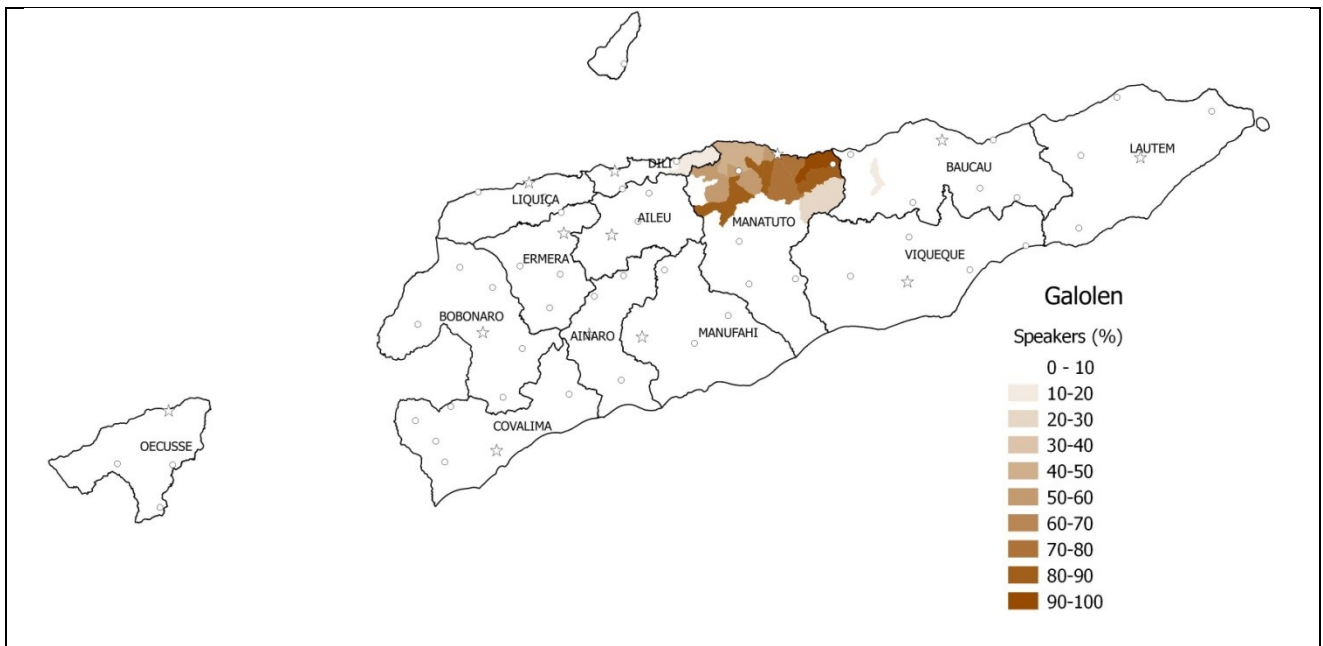
Dadu'a



Fataluku



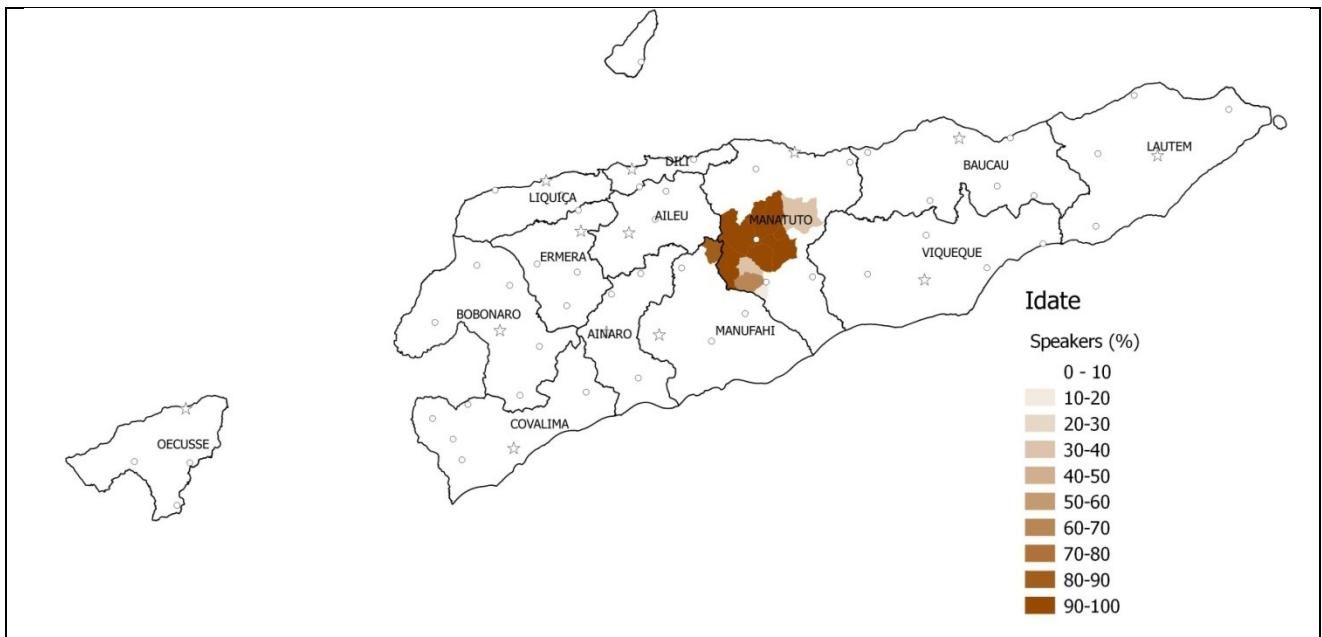
Galolen



Habun



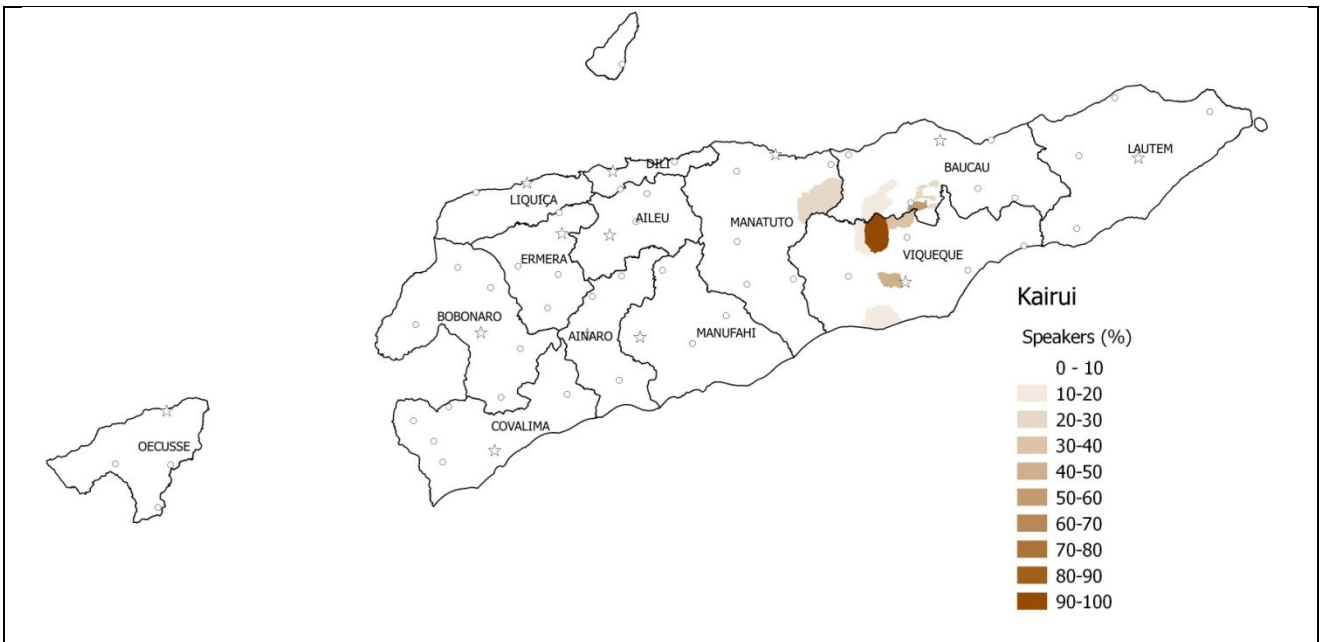
Idate



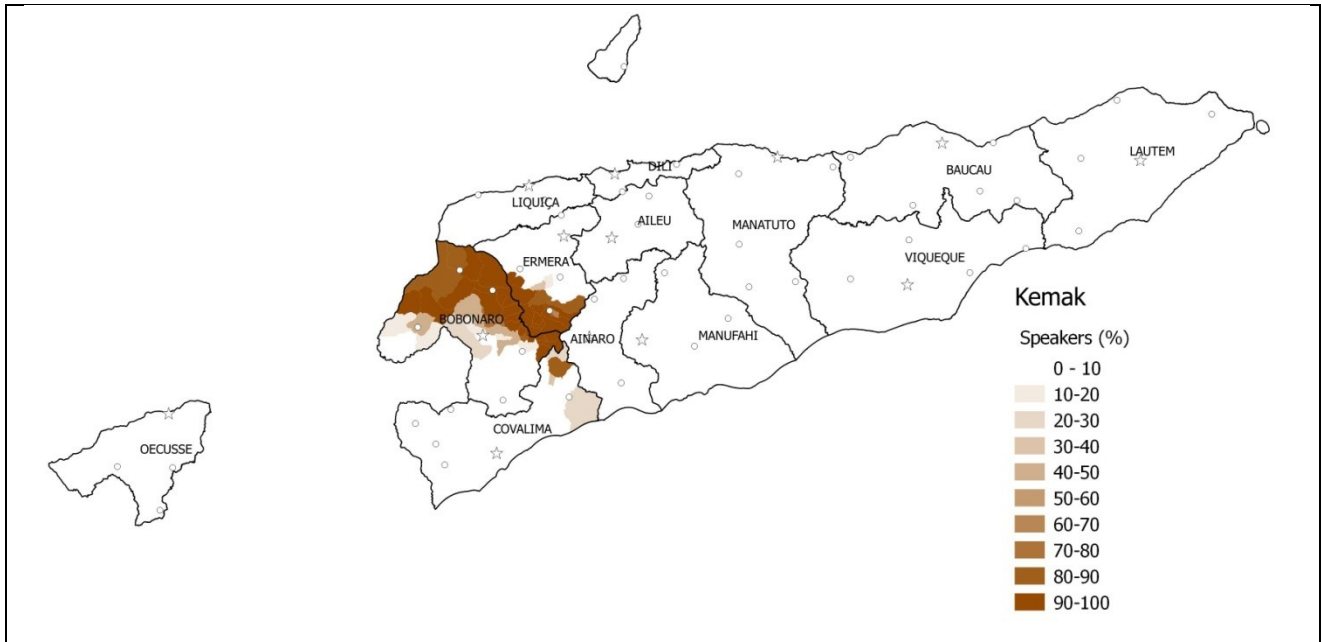
Isni



Kairui



Kemak



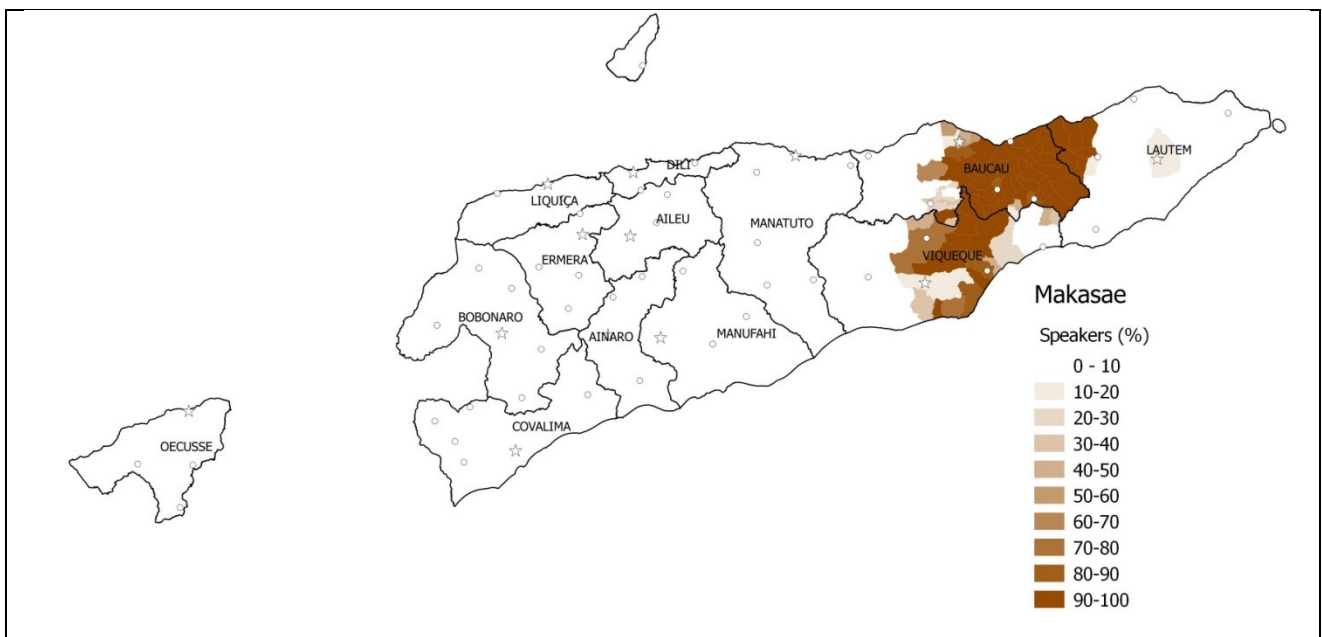
Lakalei



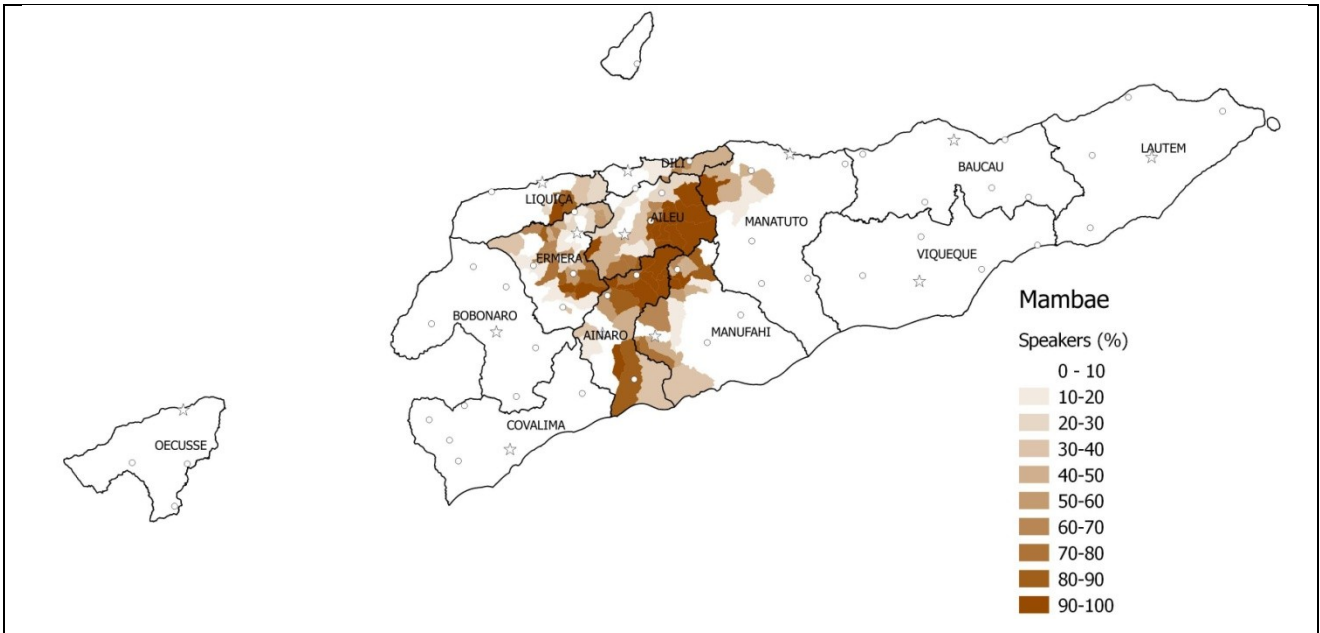
Makalero



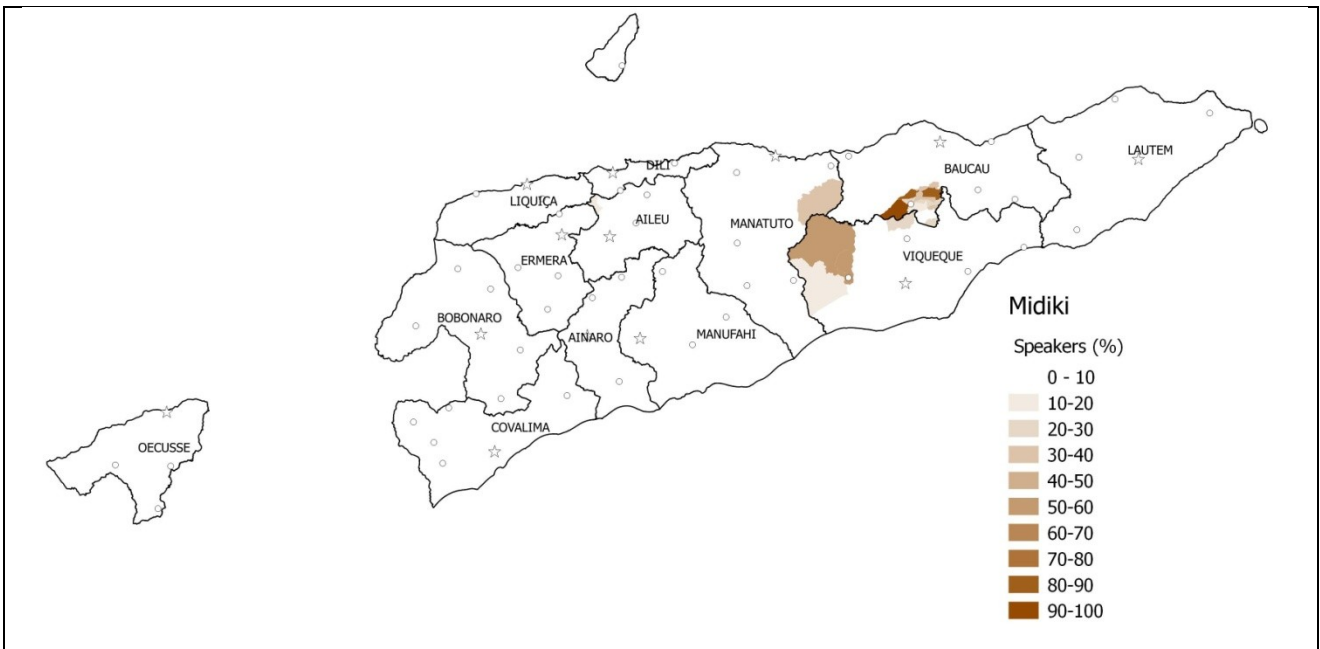
Makasae



Mambae



Midiki



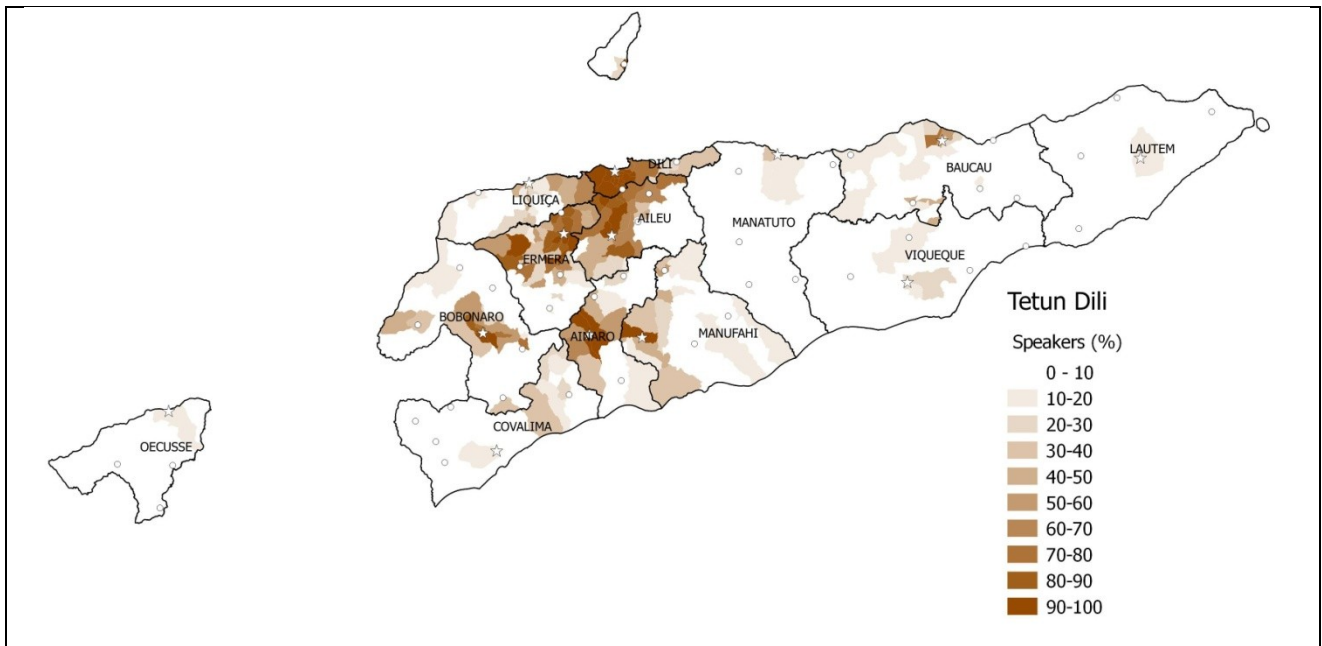
Naueti



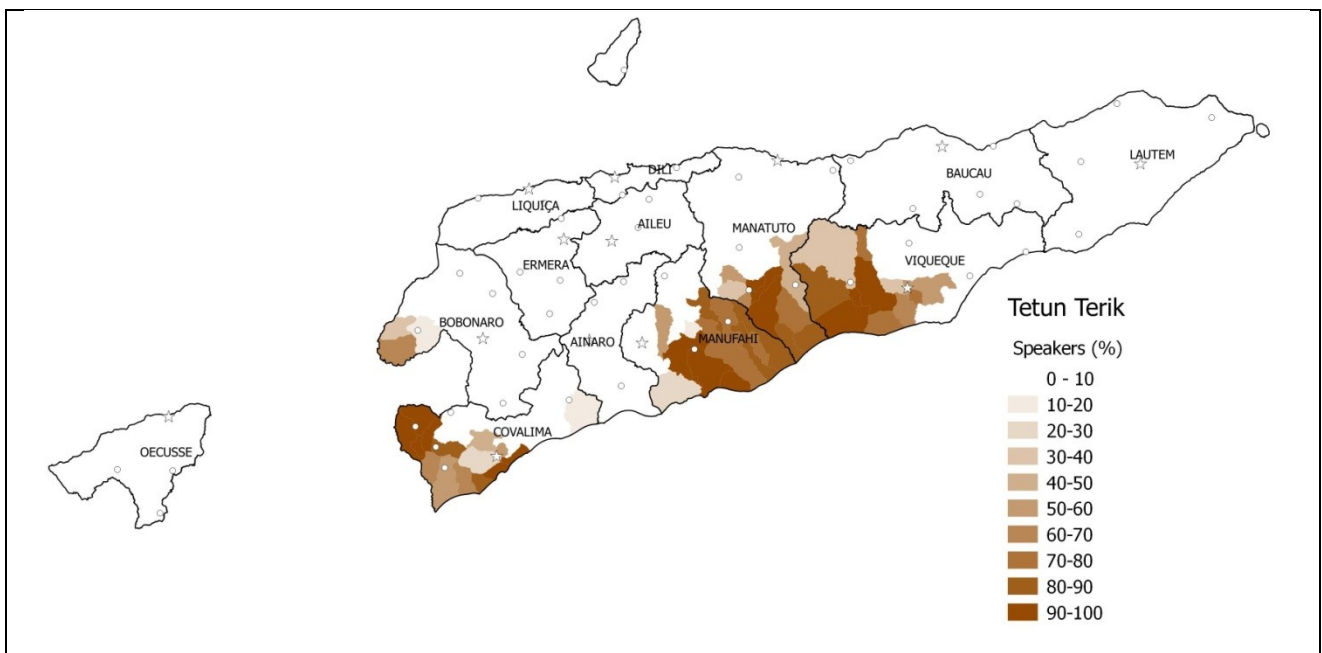
Sa'ani



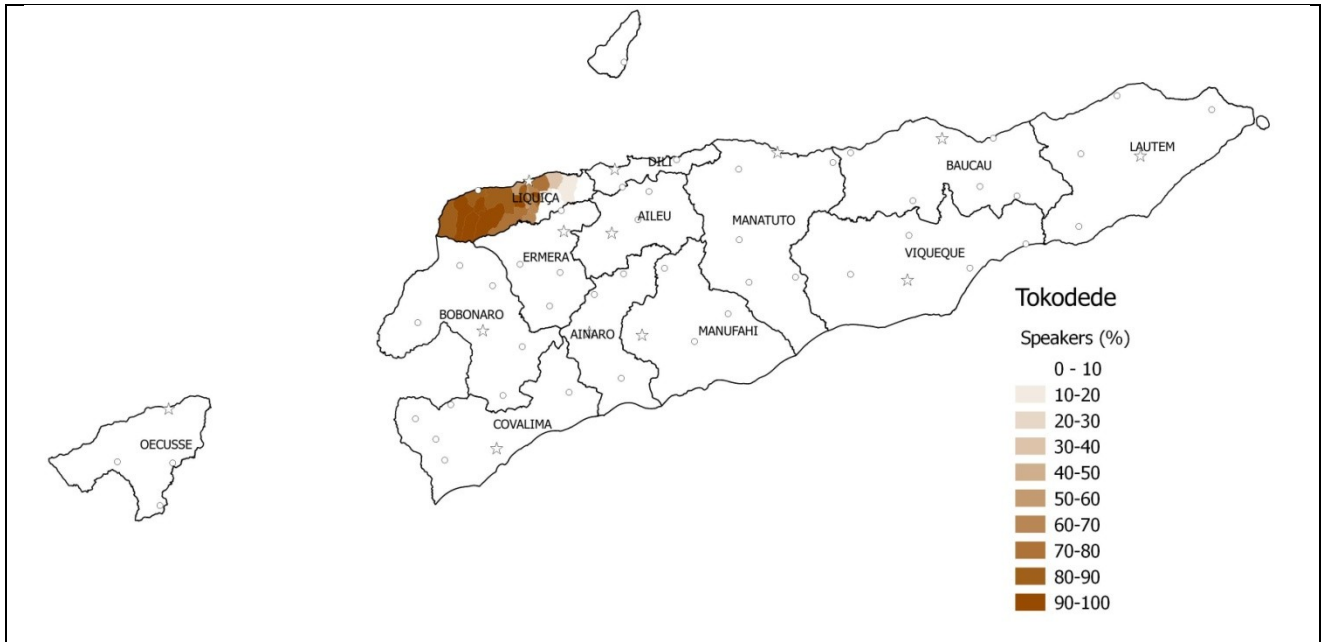
Tetun Dili



Tetun Terik



Tokodede



Waima'a



References

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