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Reconstructing contact between Alor and Timor: Evidence from language and beyond

Antoinette SCHAPPER^a and Emilie WELLFELT^b

LACITO-CNRS^a, University of Cologne^a, and Stockholm University^b

Despite being separated by a short sea-crossing, the neighbouring islands of Alor and Timor in south-eastern Wallacea have to date been treated as separate units of linguistic analysis and possible linguistic influence between them is yet to be investigated. Historical sources and oral traditions bear witness to the fact that the communities from both islands have been engaged with one another for a long time. This paper brings together evidence of various types including song, place names and lexemes to present the first account of the interactions between Timor and Alor. We show that the groups of southern and eastern Alor have had long-standing connections with those of north-central Timor, whose importance has generally been overlooked by historical and linguistic studies.

1. Introduction¹

Alor and Timor are situated at the south-eastern corner of Wallacea in today's Indonesia. Alor is a small mountainous island lying just 60 kilometres to the north of the equally mountainous but much larger island of Timor. Both Alor and Timor are home to a mix of over 50 distinct Papuan and Austronesian language-speaking peoples. The Papuan languages belong to the Timor-Alor-Pantar (TAP) family (Schapper et al. 2014). Austronesian languages have been spoken alongside the TAP languages for millennia, following the expansion of speakers of the Austronesian languages out of Taiwan some 3,000 years ago (Blust 1995).

The long history of speakers of Austronesian and Papuan languages in the Timor region is a topic in need of systematic research. The extent of the Austronesian influence on the Papuan languages of Timor has been treated in a few works (e.g., McWilliam 2007, Schapper 2011a, 2011b), but the exact timing and Austronesian sources for much of the

¹ An earlier iteration of this paper was presented at the panel on East Timor, the Portuguese, and the Indonesian Archipelago – Historical Sources and Methodological Reconsiderations at the International Convention of Asia Scholars 8, Macau, 24–27 June 2013. That paper, Wellfelt and Schapper (2013) was concerned with how the use of local ethnographic sources in particular oral traditions could be used in assessing the nature and impact of historical contact. This version of the paper places greater emphasis on the linguistic evidence for contact with Timor and its importance for understanding the linguistic history of the Papuan languages in the area. Many thanks go to Hans Hägerdal for sharing archival sources with us, to Douglas Kammen for drawing our attention to some of the Maubara oral traditions that he collected and that are reproduced in section 3. We are also grateful to Rachel Hendery who funded Schapper's fieldwork amongst the Tokodede on Timor in 2012, to Chuck Grimes who provided useful feedback of Schapper's reconstruction of the East Alor lexicon, and to Jesse Fogaca who provided insights into the place name Lacro in Timor. Schapper's research was supported by a Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research VENI project "The evolution of the lexicon. Explorations in lexical stability, semantic shift and borrowing in a Papuan language family", by the Volkswagen Stiftung DoBeS project "Aru languages documentation", and by the Australian Research Council project (DP180100893) "Waves of Words".

influence is still largely unknown. Much of the influence may be very recent. This is seen in that even in closely related languages we find that Austronesian borrowings have different sources. For example, Schapper (2017:17) illustrates the issue with an example from the Eastern Timor subgroup of TAP languages: both Makasae-Makalero and Fataluku have borrowings of reflexes of the Proto-Malayo-Polynesian (PMP) term *qaRta, glossed variously as ‘slave’, ‘outsider’, or ‘alien’ (ACD).² Fataluku *akan* ‘slave’ is a borrowing of *aka-* ‘slave’ from Meher or Makuva, nearby Austronesian languages that have the characteristic sound change of PMP medial *t > k, while Makasae-Makalero *ata* ‘slave’ is from the neighbouring Waima’a-Naueti languages *ata* ‘slave’, which preserve PMP *t as t. Failure to discern such parallel borrowings from different Austronesian sources in recent historical reconstruction on the TAP family has yielded confused results. At the same time, some Austronesian etyma in TAP languages appear to go back to Proto-Timor-Alor-Pantar (e.g., PTAP *bai ‘pig’ < PMP *babuy ‘pig’ (ACD) and PTAP *asir ‘salt’ < PMP *qasiRa ‘salt’ (ACD), Schapper et al. 2014). The waves of Austronesian influence that have lapped over the TAP languages are in need of careful unpicking.

In a first study, Robinson (2015) treats 57 Austronesian etyma borrowed into languages of Alor-Pantar (AP) subgroup of the TAP family with a particular focus on Straits-West Alor languages. She differentiates between older borrowings that were made potentially into Proto-Alor-Pantar, the ancestral language from which all modern Alor-Pantar languages are descended, and more recent borrowings. For the more recent borrowings, the author assumes that the source for Austronesian borrowings is Alorese (also known as, *Bahasa Alor*) or one of its near relatives, languages collectively known as Lamaholot (Keraf 1978). Whilst contact with Alorese-Lamaholot speakers has been undoubtedly felt across Alor (Gomang 1993), there is little reason to think that historically they were the only Austronesian-speaking groups to interact with the peoples of Alor.

In this paper, we consider interactions between Alor and Timor. Given their proximity, it would hardly be surprising to learn that contact existed between the peoples of Alor and Timor. Yet, the likely connections are yet to be investigated by the many linguists active in the area. We combine archival materials with data from ethnographic and linguistic fieldwork to establish the existence of a historical sphere of Timorese cultural influence in central and eastern Alor. We show that contact with peoples on the central north coast of Timor, namely, particularly speakers of the Austronesian languages, Tokodede, Kemak, Mambae, and Tetun, is reconstructable with evidence from song, place names and lexical borrowing. In this paper, we elucidate the nature of the contact relations between Alor and north-central Timor. We show that together oral traditions and linguistic evidence give us insights into the nature of contact relations between groups as well as pin-point village regions between which there was the most significant contact.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides background on the ethno-linguistic groups in Timor and Alor. Section 3 looks at the historical materials on Timor-Alor interaction, while section 4 looks at the oral traditions on the interactions.

² Throughout this paper, Austronesian (including Proto-Malayo-Polynesian) reconstructions are from Blust and Trussel’s (ongoing), Austronesian Comparative Dictionary (ACD).

Section 5 treats the evidence from contact between Timor and Alor as manifested in lexical borrowing. Section 6 concludes.

2. The ethno-linguistic setting

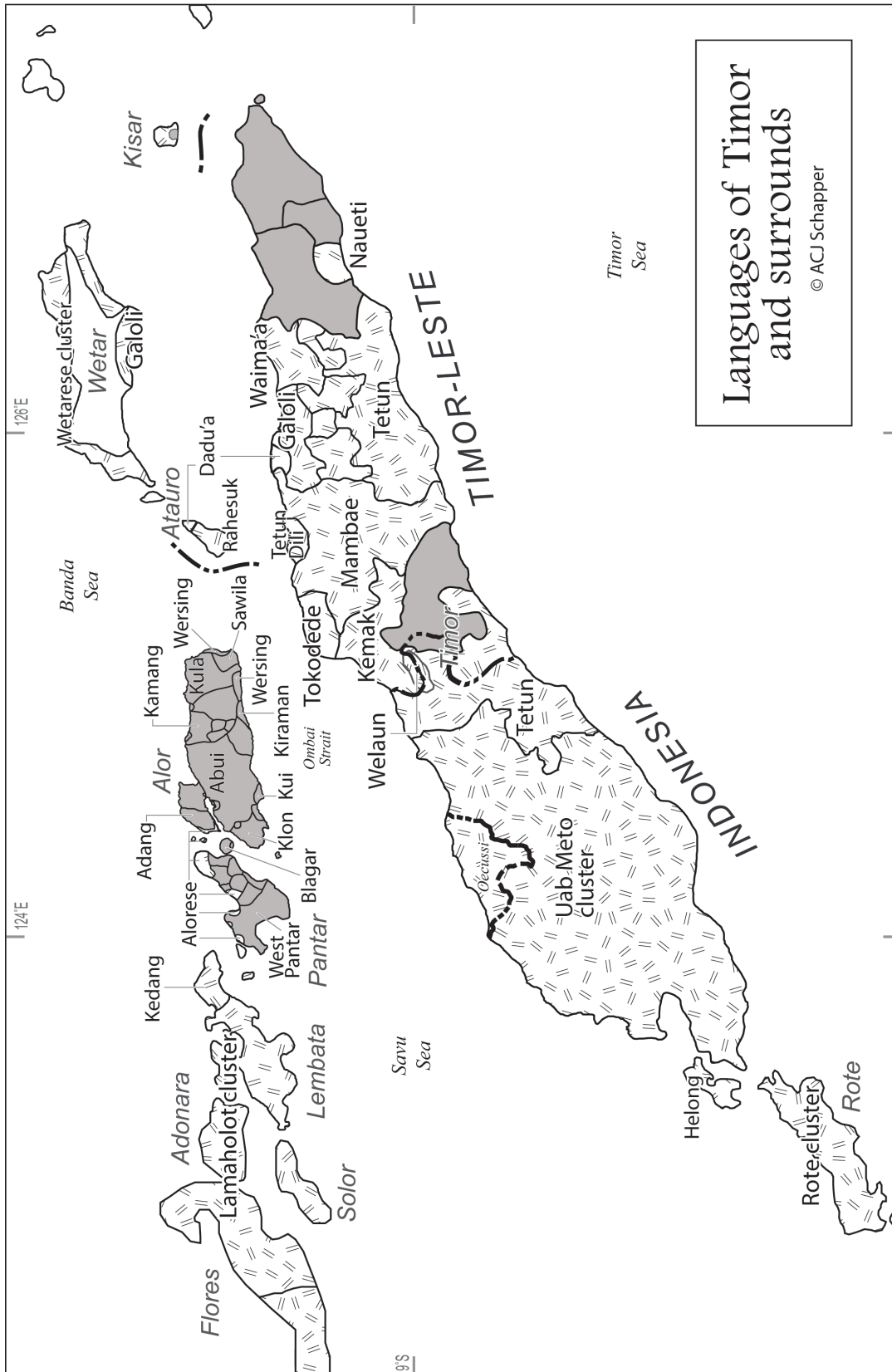
Timor and Alor are home to several dozen languages belonging both to the Timor-Alor-Pantar and Austronesian language family (Map 1). Today the islands and the people who inhabit them are separated and divided by international boundaries. Independent East Timor, a former Portuguese colony, claims the eastern half of Timor, the island of Atauro and the Oecussi enclave on the north coast on Timor's western side. The remaining western part of Timor and all other surrounding islands belongs to Indonesia, reflecting previous former Dutch colonial possessions.

The languages of the Timor-Alor-Pantar (TAP) family are the most westerly group of Papuan or non-Austronesian languages. The family is thought to divide into three primary subgroups that correspond to present day geographical groupings: the Alor-Pantar subgroup whose roughly 30 languages are spoken over the two islands of the same names and numerous small ones in between in the Pantar straits, the Eastern Timor subgroup whose four members are spoken at the eastern tip of Timor and in a small pocket on the island of Kisar to the north, and Bunaq, a single language spoken in the central mountainous region of Timor surrounded on all sides by Austronesian languages (Schapper 2017:8).

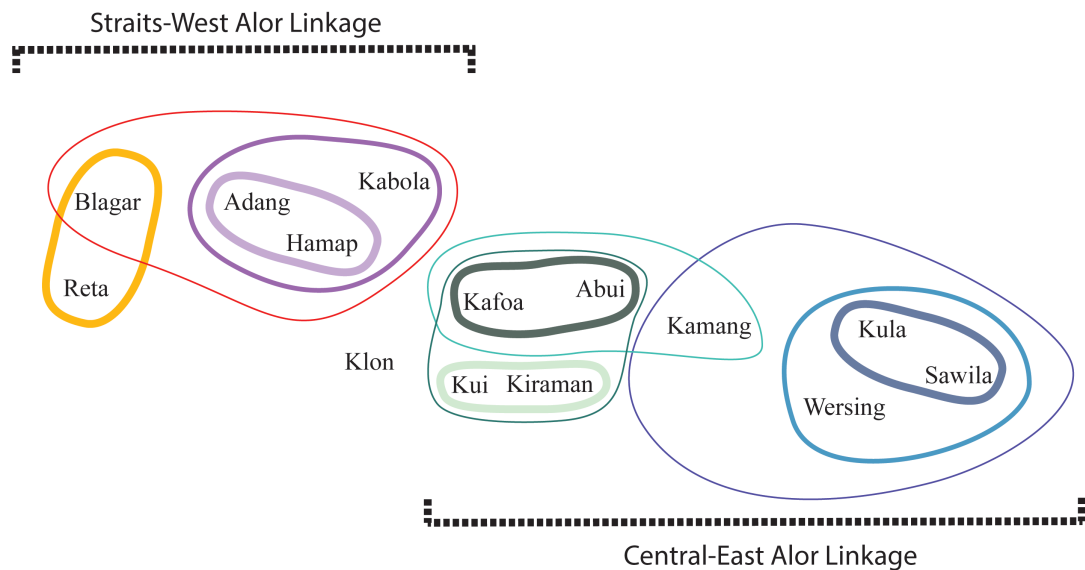
Members of the TAP family dominate almost all of the islands of Alor and Pantar. A single Austronesian language, Alorese, is spoken in pockets along the coast of Pantar, the Bird's Head of Alor³ and the small islands of Ternate and Buaya. Alorese forms the eastern-most part of Lamaholot language complex, a divergent dialect chain that extends from the eastern tip of Flores through the Solor archipelago, Pantar and to the western tip of Alor. Alorese settlements in Alor and Pantar are thought to be the result of expansions of trading communities out of the Lamaholot area in the early modern period (16th and 17th centuries). Until relatively recently, Alorese was still used as the language of intergroup communication (Stokhof 1975:8). The Kedang language spoken in the north of Lembata is related to the languages of the Lamaholot cluster, but not closely, and appears to be a remnant that persisted despite the Lamaholot expansion eastwards from Flores (Doyle 2010).

The languages of Alor which are the focus of this paper are in the central and eastern tracts of the island that make up the Central-East Alor Linkage (Figure 1). The linkage consists of two subgroups well-supported by numerous isoglosses: the Abui-Kafoa subgroup consisting of the two languages of the same name and the East Alor subgroup consisting of Wersing, Kula and Sawila. These subgroups are connected by overlapping isoglosses that take in the geographically intervening language, Kamang. Another low-level subgroup, Kui-Kiraman, is also weakly linked to the Abui-Kafoa subgroup.

³ The island of Alor is, at least implicitly, viewed as having the shape of a sitting bird. The peninsula at the north-west of the island is said to be the head of the bird. The Bird's Head of Alor is not to be confused with the much larger and more well-known Bird's Head of New Guinea (the *Vogelkop* of the Dutch colonial period). Schapper has proposed the alternative nomenclature of 'Duck's Head' for the Alor peninsula, but it has not caught on.



Map 1: Languages of Timor and surrounds



† Klon, a language of western Alor, does not share any innovations in common with other languages of Alor and likely constitutes a first order subgroup of the Alor-Pantar languages. There is some evidence to suggest that Kui-Kiraman may also share some innovations with the languages of the Straits-West Alor Linkage.

Figure 1 Wave diagram of relatedness of Alor languages (Schapper 2018)†

The languages of the Straits-West Alor linkage and the Klon language, which does not clearly subgroup with any of the other Alor languages, are mentioned where relevant, but are not the primary focus of this paper. See Holton & Robinson (2014) for a top-down treatment of Alor-Pantar sound changes and their overlapping distributions.

On Timor, Austronesian languages are intermixed with Papuan languages. But along the north coast of Timor across the Ombai Strait from Alor, only Austronesian languages are found and these languages are the focus of this paper. Like other Austronesian languages of south-eastern Wallacea, the Austronesian languages of Timor have been claimed to all belong to the Central-Malayo-Polynesian (CMP) subgroup (Blust 1982/3, 1993). The languages, however, do not form a single subgroup within CMP, but rather they are thought to divide into at least two, if not more, subgroups of CMP (Hull 1998, Edwards 2018:86–88).

Geographically closest to Alor are the Central Timor subgroup of Austronesian languages: Tokodede, Mambae and Kemak. While the Tokodede are sea-oriented, the Mambae and Kemak, although they now have some settlements on the coast, are traditionally mountain people and are still today focused upland. By contrast, speakers of Galoli and closely related dialects of the Wetarese cluster are frequent sea-goers and still today are active in the seas to the east of Alor. Historically, there were regular movements back and forth between these groups on Timor, Atauro and Wetar (Hans Hägerdal pers. comm.). For example, the Dadu'a language spoken by a small community in the Galoli-speaking region of Manatuto on Timor is the result of a historical movement of peoples from Atauro Island (Penn 2006:4).

The western half of Timor is almost entirely dominated by languages of the Uab Meto cluster (also known as Dawan and Atoni), both in the mountains and in important coastal centres such as around Kupang (Amarasi dialect) and in the Oecussi enclave (Baikeno dialect). Uab Meto is thought to be most closely related to languages of the Rote cluster, while Helong, spoken at the far western end of Timor, is a more distant

relative (Edwards 2016). Fox (1977, 1988) argues that speakers of Uab Meto expanded in the early colonial period eastwards towards central Timor fuelled by newly introduced rifles and maize. Previous language groups were assimilated; Helong is the only language remaining that hints of the previous languages of western Timor.

Of particular significance for the linguistic history of the eastern half of Timor is the rise of Tetun (also written Tetum in Portuguese orthography). By the time of first contact with Europeans in the 16th century, Tetun had spread throughout central Timor all the way to the north coast as well as eastwards along much of the southern coast of Timor (Thomaz 1981). Welaun spoken in a small pocket of central Timor (both in Indonesian West Timor and independent East Timor) appears to be a residual language that has withstood the northward expansion of Tetun. The Tetun language functioned as a contact language uniting the tributaries of the powerful kingdom of Wehali centred on Belu (Vroklage 1953, Therik 2004). At the end of the 18th century the Portuguese established a new capital in Dili and began to promote Tetun as an inter-regional language in the areas of Timor under their control. Out of this, a creolized form of Tetun (known today as Tetun Dili or Tetun Prasa) developed with simplified morphology and a sizeable adstratum of Portuguese vocabulary (Williams-van Klinken et al. 2002).

3. Historical setting

Timor and its surrounds have a chequered history of colonial possession and contact. The Portuguese and the Dutch first arrived in the region in the 16th century. In the 1650s, after years of trading with Timor out of Flores, the Portuguese established a permanent base at Lifau on the north coast of western Timor. At this, several rajas in Alor and other nearby islands aligned themselves with the Dutch based in Kupang in far western Timor.⁴ The Portuguese extended their settlements in eastern Timor throughout the 17th century and are known to have had some success selling metalwork to the people of Alor.

During the 18th century, the Dutch expanded their trade networks and sought to limit the influence and activities of the Portuguese. On Alor, they established a lively trade between merchants of Kupang and Alor and attempted to block the Portuguese from maintaining a post on the south coast of the island. The Dutch also significantly extended their territories on Timor, and crucially took control of Maubara, the district on the north coast of Timor directly across from Alor, from the 1750s. The commercial interest of Maubara is frequently mentioned in the colonial sources. Kessler (1891:241) notes that Maubara was a 'very fertile enclave' and that 'the coffee that is grown that is of good quality and greatly sought after in trade'. Similarly, the Dutch report of Brouwer from 1849–50 comments that Maubara was the richest land on Timor (H731, KITLV).

Towards the end of the century, Dutch capabilities waned and they lost territory. In 1813 some rajas from Alor and neighbouring Pantar asked to be accepted under

⁴ The Dutch used different nomenclature for local rulers in different parts of what is today Indonesia. In Alor, the position of 'raja' was introduced when colonial contracts began to be set up from the late 18th century. Administrative reforms in the 1960s turned 'raja' into a title without formal power. Nonetheless, raja families in Alor still today exercise considerable influence in local society.

Portuguese rule, with the Portuguese governor in Dili sending flags to reinforce the suzerainty. Seemingly in reaction to this, the Dutch set up a post on Pantar in 1820, but this and the post on Alor were abandoned again in 1831. On Timor, conflicts between pro-Portuguese and pro-Dutch groups flared up time and time again in the first half of the 19th century. The need for an agreement to settle colonial borders in the region became increasingly apparent. In 1851 the Portuguese agreed to hand over control of the pro-Portuguese areas in Flores, Solor, Adonara, Lembata, Pantar and Alor to the Dutch (Farram 2003:56–61, Wellfelt 2016:101–104). While there was in principle an agreement on the placement of the Timorese border, the border region in central Timor remained problematic (Schapper 2011a). The Dutch initially maintained Maubara on the north coast of Timor as an enclave, but in 1859 finally agreed to turn it over to Portugal.

From the archives of these colonial powers we get only a very limited view of the interactions of Timor and Alor islands. References to relations between the islands in the archival record are fleeting and are typically only made when the interests of the colonial powers are impacted. There are frequent notes in the 19th century archival sources about domains on Alor paying allegiance to Portuguese Timor even long after the official confirmation of Dutch rule in the 1850s. In 1864 the post-keeper in Alor filed a complaint against the raja in Liquiçá in Portuguese Timor for harvesting taxes in three domains on the south coast of Alor, namely Kolana, Erana, and Batulolong (ANRI, Timor, 1864:106, Monthly reports, January 1864). This continued for decades: In the *Memorie van Overgave, Timor* (1878, NA Open Collection microfiches), for instance, the Dutch *controleur* complains that two Wersing-speaking villages on the south and eastern coast of Alor remained allied with and paying taxation to Oecussi and Liquiçá, Portuguese possessions on Timor:

Allor Islands. By article 7 of the Governmental Decision, at 6 July 1876 No. 9, the undersigner of this was ordered to speak with the Governor of Timor Delie in a friendly way about the question of the petty states Kolana and Erana, which fly the Portuguese flag, and still perceive themselves standing under the sovereignty of Portugal; yes, even considering themselves liable to taxation from the Rajas of Likoesang and Oekoésie, also under Portuguese Timor. (*Memorie van Overgave, Timor*, 1878, Nationaal Archief Open Collection microfiches)

The raja of Kui sent tributes of beeswax to Oecussi as late as 1880 with a view to obtain assistance to fight people of the Alor interior (Mailrapport 1880:333, Nationaal Archief). From the point of view of the Dutch, the traditional ties between Timor and Alor should have been severed with the 1850s land exchange in which Alor became a Dutch possession. In the same report, the raja in Kolana is described as risking Dutch ire again by taking in a Portuguese man at the behest of the raja in Liquiçá, underlining the continuing dedication the allies on Timor and Alor had to one other.

The Dutch sources also record a persistent trade of slaves between Dutch Alor and Timor. This slave trade was lucrative and apparently condoned by the Portuguese. According to a Dutch report from 1879, for instance, captured people of the Alor interior were sent from Kui and Kolana to Liquiçá as slaves, many decades after the official abolition of slave trade in the Dutch East Indies:

Ohisololo [person's name] from Lamahala and Kia Kelake from Lamakera have apprehended matters concerning the import of slaves from Alor to Likisa. This happens before the eyes and with the complicity of the Portuguese commander at the place. He receives 3 Guilders in head fee for

each imported slave. The slaves are sold to the highest bidder. If no price can be obtained in the coastal kampong, the slaves are brought to the inland. Women and children walk unbound, while the men have a rope around their neck. The price for each slave is around 70 Guilders. [Kia Kelake] has certainly seen that four months ago, 20 persons, men, women and children from Alor (Peitoko, Mademang, Erana and Kolana) were offered for sale at Likisa via the Lamahala regent, [by] inhabitants of the kampong Lamahala on the Island Adonara. (NA Open Collection microfiches; *Kortverslag...*, October 1879, Mailrapport 38/1880)

The year after, in 1880, another report was highly critical of the raja in Kui, the raja in Kolana, and their allies in Portuguese Timor. Both Alorese regents were accused of having brought mountain people from Alor to be sold as slaves in Liquiçá (Wellfelt 2016:104).

The archival sources offer clear proof of the relations between Alor and Timor and are particularly useful in that they put dates to individual events. The flow of slaves between Alor and Timor comes out in the historical record because of the interest of colonial powers in trade and control. However, the sources do not provide any ethnographic information about the historical socio-linguistic interactions between peoples on Alor and Timor.

4. Oral traditions⁵

In contrast to written sources, the examination of oral traditions is more revealing of the ties of kinship that underpinned inter-island relationships, but are often little considered by historians or linguists because of their tendency to blend elements of myth into their accounts of the past.

The oral traditions of the Alorese, the Austronesian speaking groups settled on the Bird's Head of Alor and on Pantar, have been documented in several studies (Gomang 1993, Rodemeier 2006, Wellfelt 2016). These make clear the long-standing alliance of the Alorese with the raja of Manututu in the Galoli area on the north coast of Timor and associated groups on the island of Atauro (Gomang 1993:93) as well as the later-formed alliance with Mota'ain, a coastal village now located on the border between East and West Timor (Gomang 1993:94). These show, as the report on slavery in the previous section does, that the Alorese were involved in traffic between Alor and Timor, but still tell us little about the relations that existed between the actual groups settled 20 kilometres apart on either side of the Ombai Strait.

The connection between south-eastern Alor and north-central Timor is reflected in the founding myth of Maubara in the Tokodede-speaking district of Timor. According to this, following the primordial flood, the first human in Maubara rose out of the ground. He did not have fire with which to cook his food and his tongue was covered in hair. Only when a person came over from Alor and traded fire for a plot of land did the

⁵ Oral traditions from Alor were collected by Wellfelt and extensively reported on in Wellfelt (2016). Oral traditions from Timor were recorded by Schapper and Rachel Hendery in the Tokodede-speaking area in 2012. Additional oral traditions are recorded in Kammen (2015) as cited. Kamang songs were recorded in Alor by Schapper in 2010; Kiraman songs were collected by Wellfelt in 2009.

people of Maubara lose the hair from their tongues and begin to cook their food (Kammen 2015:25–28).

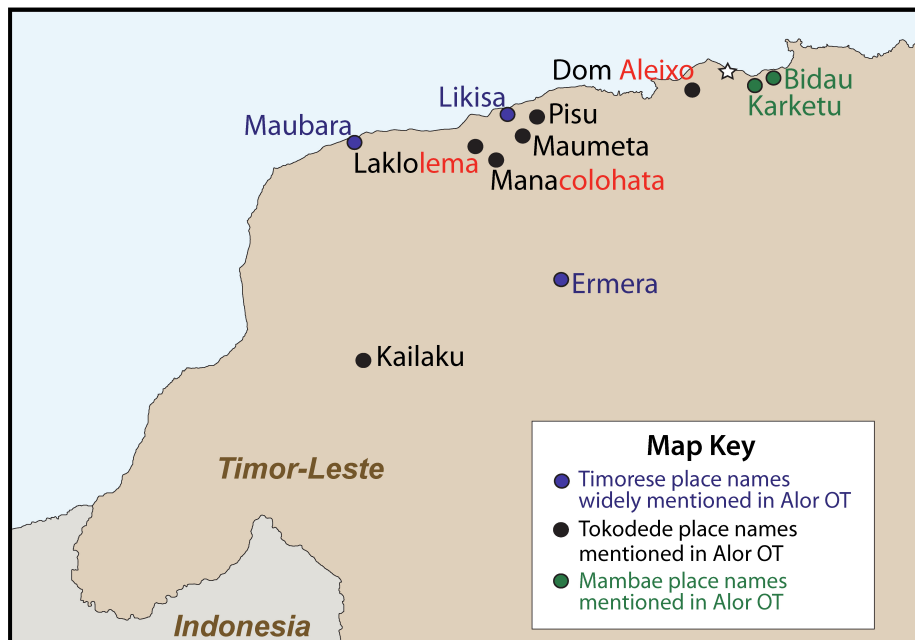
Whilst this particular myth suggests that Alor was central to the formation of the Maubara population, oral traditions on subsequent times in north-central Timor emphasise marriage and familial ties with Alor, typically by way of marriage or slavery. One tradition recorded in a hamlet of Likisa tells of how the people of Kolana and Likisa would go fishing together. They were often in each other's houses and so eventually a boy from Alor fell in love with a girl from Likisa. The boy took his girl to Alor and their descendants travelled back and forth between Alor and Timor. Only with the arrival of the white people, were the people of Likisa and Kolana divided, before that they were one. Another tradition in Likisa involves one Don Joakin who had travelled to Alor to give yams to his family's bride-givers in Kolana. Don Joakin stole a boy named Siku of the Korkora clan with the intention of sacrificing him at sea. However, the sea was calm and Siku was spared. He was sold as a slave, but then married and has many descendants in Likisa. Kammen (2015:39, pers. comm.) similarly records traditions about people in Maubara who are the descendants of slaves purchased from Alor.

Along the coast of southern and eastern Alor, the oral traditions contain repeated claims of Timor as the origin for the peoples. At least two large groups, the Talpi clan and the Kailesa clan, both located in East Alor claim their founding ancestors migrated from Timor. In these cases the founding ancestors from Timor are claimed to be the origin of the whole group. So-called 'stranger kings' from Timor are also part of the ancestral stories of the raja families of Mataru and Batulolong, both realms located on Alor's south eastern coast. According to oral tradition in Mataru, the autochthonous ruler of Alor in ancient times was a giant called Tolonban.⁶ The stranger king, Belamogenla from Likisa-Maubara in Timor, married Tolonban's daughter. Similarly in Batulolong, a stranger king, named Karlaukep (or Lipuikirik), was invited from Timor to become ruler in Batulolong.⁷ Later, when the 16th raja of Batulolong died without leaving male descendants, Timor was again the source of the new raja; Karimaleu Gapada, a man with Batulolong origins who had settled in Timor as a trader, was made the 17th raja. Another oral tradition has it that the lineage *Tangleeri*, meaning 'raja Tang', is the result of a migration from Manututu in today's East Timor to near Pureman on the south coast of Alor. The common theme in these traditions is Timor's formative significance in founding groups and lineages in Alor.

⁶ Van Galen's report of 1946 gives a different Timorese origin: 'The ancestor of the raja family of Mataru supposedly came from Timor, from the kampung Wuka in the vicinity of Atapupu' (Hägerdal 2010:34).

⁷ In a text from 1946 by the Dutch Controleur G. A. M. van Galen the first raja in Batulolong is called Kepamakani and his place of origin is given as "Luka Bekeka in the vicinity of Timor-Dili" (Hägerdal 2010a:32–33). Hägerdal (2010:32, fn. 93) comments that "Luka Bekeka seems to reflect the Timorese princedoms Luca and Viqueque in south-eastern Timor, which are actually far removed from [Dili]." In van Galen's version there were six brothers who dispersed: "The eldest fled to Alor Batulolong, the second fled to Likusan, the third to Liurai, the fourth to Watubora, the fifth remained in Luka, and the sixth to Oekusi" (Hägerdal 2010:32). Hägerdal (2010:32, fn. 95) makes the following interpretation: "These are places on Timor. Likusan or Likusaen or Liquiçá is a coastal town in north-western Timor Leste. Liurai may allude to the prominent princedom Wewiku-Wehali in Indonesian Timor, seat of the original Liurai (ruler). Watubora is Fatuboro in north-western Timor-Leste. Luka or Luca is a prestigious princedom in the south-east. Oekusi, more commonly Oecussi, is a princedom of Timor Leste which is situated in the enclave in western Timor."

The importance of Timor for the groups of south-eastern Alor can also be observed in cultural practices commemorating migrations from Timor. For example, the founders of the village of Kailaku where Manet, a Kamang-cluster language, is spoken, brought the name for their village with them from Timor. The place name shows clear signs of a Timorese origin, containing an Austronesian etymon *kai* ‘tree’ (< PMP *kahiw ‘tree, wood’) and *laku* ‘civet’ in Timorese languages such as Tokodede, Kemak and Tetun. Indeed Kailaku (often spelled Cailaco) is still a large village in the Kemak-speaking region of East Timor today. In Erana, a village on the south coast of Alor, Timorese origins are commemorated by the practice of naming pigs after the villages in Timor from which they are said to have migrated. There are two names: Pis Maumet and Bidau Keriket. “Pis Maumet” looks to be a minor corruption of the names of two villages close by one another in the Tokodede region just outside of Likisa: Pis = Pisu, and Maumet = Maumeta. “Bidau Keriket” are the two placenames Bidau and Karketu, both former villages thought to have been in the Mambae of the north-central coast, but now small neighbouring suburbs within the capital Dili. Such commemoration of Timorese place names in Alor points to the importance placed on Timor as an origin location and, in turn, the prestigious position of Timor within Alor.



Map 2: Timorese place names occurring in oral traditions in Alor

Today, the people of these groups in southern and eastern Alor know little about the geography or ethno-linguistics of Timor. Yet, oral traditions about migrations from Timor typically provide a series of Timorese placenames. For instance, both the raja families of Mataru and Batulolong have oral traditions in which the founding ancestor is associated with a Timorese toponymy, that is, a series of Timorese place names indicating the ancestor’s travels from his place of origin to his final destination (what Fox 1997 calls ‘topogeny’). We can make use of the placenames that are known from oral traditions to gain a better picture of the regions of contact between Alor and Timor. When we map the placenames from Alor oral traditions associated with Timor, we find that they are largely contained within the small region of the Mambae, Tokodede and

Kemak areas (Map 2).⁸ These indicate that there was intense contact between Alor and this region of Timor.

The final piece of orality reflecting Alor-Timor contact is the borrowing of songs from Timor by groups in central Alor. In Kiraman village (formerly, the rajadom of Batulolong) on the south coast of Timor, there are two so-called “lego-lego” songs both known as *Hoson Dai*.⁹ A further set of three work songs (i.e., songs sung whilst conducting a specific task(s)) are sung by the Kamang and related groups in central Alor.¹⁰ In both cases, the songs are in a language unknown to the groups who sing them; the language is identified simply as “the language of their ancestors from Timor”. The presence of clearly Timorese and Austronesian vocabulary in the songs (e.g., *manu* ‘bird’, *tasi* ‘sea’, *kole* ‘tired’ etc.) provided initial verification of the Alorese statement of the songs’ origins. We were able to confirm that the songs were indeed from Timor and in particular the Tokodede ethno-linguistic group by playing recordings of these songs as sung in Alor to Tokodede people in Timor. The songs were recognized although the Tokodede speakers interviewed stated that words in the lyrics had been changed or corrupted. One of the *Hoson Dai* “lego-lego” songs from Kiraman was identified by the Tokodede as a song sung at sea as an invocation to make the wind blow so that the singer(s) could sail home safely and quickly. The Kamang work songs were also identified as follows: The song sung by tired people as they return home from the garden or from a long journey on foot was identified by the Tokodede as a lullaby sung to soothe a crying child and lull them to sleep; the song sung by people heaving beams to the place where a house is going to be built was originally a Tokodede song about wanting to return home, and; the song sung by the Kamang in Alor by people harvesting rice is in fact originally a Tokodede song about relations between Likisa and Kolana.

What do these songs tell us about the past contact between Alor and Timor? First of all, their dispersal amongst different groups in Alor suggests relatively widespread contact with Tokodede people. Furthermore, in a casual, fleeting relationship, we would not expect that such songs would be passed between groups. It appears, however, that the flow of influence was unidirectional. We find no such songs from or about Alor amongst the Tokodede people. Their adoption also suggests that Tokodede songs were especially valued in Alor, and that the people of central Alor had some capacities in the Tokodede language. Yet, the discrepancies between the use of the original songs amongst the Tokodede and their borrowed application amongst the peoples of central Alor who sing them today, indicates that the people in central Alor have not had competency in Tokodede in recent times.

In sum, oral traditions in south-eastern Alor and north-central Timor make clear that there was historically a flow of people back and forth between groups on either side of the strait. There is also a notable asymmetry in the roles of descendants from either

⁸ Note in Map 2 that the name Lacro or Laklo is found in multiple places in Timor. For instance, it is known to be the name of a river as well as nearby villages in both Likisa and Manatuto districts (Jesse Fogaca pers. comm.). This is part of a pattern whereby river names are repeated across Timor, e.g., Babulu or Babulo is another river name that is repeated over Timor.

⁹ A lego-lego is a kind of circle dance accompanied by singing. See Rodemeier (1992).

¹⁰ For example, the *injak padi* or rice-harvesting song of the Kamang is also known in Langkuru. A version of the song can be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7jyF1Rm9n0>

island. Timorese descendants on Alor are frequently high status with roles as rulers and founding ancestors, while descendants from Alor in Timor are typically low-status, particularly slaves. Place names contained within oral traditions also reflect an asymmetry in relations. Whilst few Alor place names are remembered in Timor, there are numerous place names from the north-central Timor area preserved and commemorated in traditions in south-eastern Alor. Similarly, the maintenance of Tokodede songs by groups in central Alor reflects an ongoing tradition of Timorese culture in Alor that is not mirrored in Timor.

5. Evidence from lexical borrowing¹¹

Patterns of lexical borrowings can give important insights into the cultural and socio-historical circumstances of contact between languages. In this section we deal with borrowings into languages of the Central-East Alor linkage, with a particular focus on borrowings into the three East Alor languages – Wersing, Kula and Sawila. Borrowings in these languages have Austronesian sources that most likely originate in Central Timorese languages, and, to a lesser extent, in other Austronesian languages of East Timor. There are also a small number of Austronesian borrowings that possibly originate from West Timor languages, while the origin of others are not known.

There are numerous Austronesian borrowings found widely across Alor and Pantar that have regular sound correspondences and were likely borrowed into an early stage, possibly even Proto-Alor-Pantar. Examples of this kind are given in (1)–(5). It is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with such widespread borrowings, but it is important to note their existence and separate them from more recent borrowings.

- (1) #-baraŋ ‘shoulder, upper arm, branch’: Wersing *-baraŋ* ‘upper arm, branch’; Sawila *-ba:raŋ* ~ *-ba:raŋa* ‘upper arm’; Kamang *-baŋ* ‘upper arm’; Abui *-baŋ* ‘shoulder, collar’; Kafoa *-baŋ* ‘shoulder’¹² < PMP *qabaRa ‘shoulder; carry on the shoulder’ (ACD)
- (2) #buku ‘protuding part, most prominent part of something (in particular body parts); hill, prominent landscape feature’: Wersing *(-sese)buk* ‘knee’, Sawila *buko* ~ *buka* ‘senior, major’, *(aja)buko* ‘big toe, thumb’; Kamang *buk* ‘mountain, hill’, *(-taŋ) buk* ‘elbow’, *(-wa:) buk* ‘chin’; Abui *buku* ‘earth’, *(-bala) buku* ‘knee’; Kafoa *buku* ‘hill, mountain’, *-buku* ‘knee, throat’, *(-tam)*

¹¹ This section is predicated on a historical reconstruction of Central-East Alor Linkage and its lexicon using the comparative method. This is part of a larger ongoing project to reconstruct the lexicon of the Timor-Alor-Pantar family (Schapper n.d.). Unless otherwise noted, sources used in this section are as follows: Wersing, Schapper own fieldwork; Kula, Nick Williams pers. comm.; Sawila, Kratochvíl et al. n.d.; Kamang, Schapper own fieldwork; Kui, Katubi et al. 2013; Kafoa, Baird n.d.; Klon, Baird 2008; Abui, Kratochvíl, & Delpada n.d.; Nedebang, Schapper own fieldwork; Blagar, Steinhauer & Gomang 2016; Teiwa, Sir and Schapper in prep. Kemak, Mambae, and Tokodede data comes from Schapper’s fieldnotes. Tetun data is from Morris (1984), Galoli from da Silva (1905), Helong from Grimes & Balle (1995), Termanu from Jonker (1908) and Uab Meto Molo from (Middelkoop n.d). Lamaholot and Alorese data are from Robinson (2015). Where Austronesian etymologies are cited and adjusted from Robinson (2015) this information is listed in footnotes.

¹² The origin of the final nasal on Alor forms is not known. It may represent a 3rd person possessive suffix that was borrowed with the Austronesian root; possessive marking in TAP languages follows the GEN N word order and, where morphological, is prefixal (Donohue & Schapper 2008).

buku ‘elbow’ < PMP **buku* ‘node (as in bamboo or sugarcane); joint; knuckle; knot in wood; knot in string or rope’ (ACD)

- (3) #*isi* ‘body, meat, fruit’: Wersing *-is*, Sawila *isi*, Kula *-is*, *-isi*, Kamang *ih*, Abui *isi*, Klon *ih* < PMP **isi* ‘flesh (of humans, animals, fruits, tubers); contents; blade of a knife; inhabitants, residents’ (ACD)¹³
- (4) #*utan* ‘vegetable, leafy green’: Wersing *uten*; Sawila *iton*; Kula *itøn*; Kamang *wuton*; Kui *ton*; Blagar *utan*; Teiwa *wuttan* < PMP **qutan* ‘small, wild herbaceous plants; scrub-land, bush’ (ACD)
- (5) #*wasi*(ŋ) (n./v.) ‘paddle, row, oar’: Wersing *wa*; Sawila *wa*; Abui *wa:jan*; Nedebang *wahi* < PMP **beRsay* ‘canoe paddle, paddle a canoe’ (ACD)

In other cases we find that borrowings are widespread on Alor but that the sound correspondences show irregularities that indicate that there was more than one borrowing event. In particular, we see that East Alor languages frequently have Austronesian borrowings whose distinct forms marks them out as having different sources from Alor languages further west. The Austronesian borrowings in (6) represent examples of this kind. Borrowings of reflexes of Proto-Malayo-Polynesian (PMP) divide into two sets: those in which the source language maintained PMP **b* as *b* and those in East Alor where the source language which PMP **b* > *w*. Similarly, in (7) the East Alor forms of PMP **kawil* were borrowed from a source language in which initial **k* has been lost, while elsewhere in AP the initial velar is maintained. Neither the change **b* > *w* (before **u*) nor the loss of initial **k* are regular sound changes in East Alor and likely represent distinct borrowing events from a separate, but unknown Austronesian source than those elsewhere in AP. In the case of PMP **kawil*, we see that Kamang and Abui even have double reflexes (with some semantic specialisation), one reflecting a form with initial **k* and one reflecting a form without. This indicates that their central Alor location is at the intersection of two diffusion areas. In (8) East Alor forms originating in PMP **timuR* reflect PEA **t* initially, while the western and central Alor languages suggest a reconstruction reflecting initial **s*. Semantically, there is also a divide: while in East Alor PMP **timuR* reflexes denote a strong wind from the east, in central and west Alor the reflexes appear to denote ‘wind’ generically.

- (6) PMP **buni* ‘hide, conceal’ (ACD)
#*wuni*: Wersing *wuiŋ*, Sawila *wuni*
#*buni*: Kamang *-bun*, Abui *-buŋ*
- (7) PMP **kawil* ‘fish hook’ (ACD)
#*awil*: Wersing *awil*, Sawila *awili* ~ *awuli*, Kula *ag^wula(na)*, Kamang *awi*: ‘fishhook’, Abui *awela* ‘hook, probe (for fishing)’
#*kawil*: Nedebang *kawil*, Blagar *kawil*, Kui *gaiŋ* ‘to fish’, Kamang *kiwi*: ‘hook (e.g., for hanging clothes)’, Abui *kiwil* ‘hook’¹⁴

¹³ A range of separate etymologies have been confused with one another in some previous work. Kamang is illustrative as it has three lexemes of similar forms but with different etymologies. They are *ih* ‘fruit, body, fleshy contents of a fruit’ reflecting an early borrowing of PMP **isi* in Alor-Pantar, *uh* ‘classifier for fruits, small round objects’ reflecting PTAP **isu* ‘seed, fruit’, and *isei* ‘meat, game animal’ reflecting PTAP **[s]iser* ‘meat, game animal’. The similarity in form and meaning between PMP **isi* and PTAP **isu* may reflect borrowing into PTAP, but the reflexes are distinct in PTAP daughters and must be kept apart.

- (8) PMP *timuR ‘southeast monsoon’ (ACD)
 #tamur[a]: Wersing *tmur*, Sawila *tamuro* ~ *tamura*, Kula *tamr* ‘strong wind, particularly an easterly wind’
 #simur: Klón *nmer*,¹⁵ Kafoa *himor*, Abui *timoi*, Kamang *sumui* ‘wind’

Distinct borrowing events also pick out the Alor mainland as separate from the Straits-West Alor linkage, as illustrated by the two sets of reflexes of PMP *balik in (9). In non-Bird’s Head Alor languages, borrowing has taken place from an unidentified Austronesian language in which PMP *b > w and PMP *l > r, while PMP *b is maintained as such in Straits-West Alor languages and PMP *l is reflected as either *l* or *r*.

- (9) PMP *balik ‘reverse, turn around’ (ACD)
 #-wari ‘return, go back’: Wersing *-wari*; Sawila *-wa:ri*; Kamang *-wa:i*; Abui *-wai*; Klón *-war*; Kafoa *wai*; Kui *-wari*
 #bale[k] ‘return, go back’: Blagar *balek*; Reta *bale*, Adang *-bər*

Separate Austronesian etymologies are also responsible for the distinct forms of certain lexemes in East Alor. In the case of ‘comb’ in (10), for example, the East Alor forms appear to represent compounds of two Austronesian etyma as given, while elsewhere in Alor-Pantar the /i/ vowel in ‘comb’ is suggestive of a distinct source. A more straightforward example is ‘needle’ in (11), with a nominal Austronesian etymology in East Alor and a verbal one elsewhere in Alor-Pantar.

- (10) #kaikuri ‘comb’: Wersing *kaikur*, Sawila *ke:kuri*, Kula *kur* likely reflecting < compound of PMP *kahiw ‘tree, wood’, PMP *kuris ‘scratch’ (ACD)
 #kiri ‘comb’: Teiwa *kir*, Nedebang *kiri*, Blagar *kiri*, Adang *ʔil*, Klón *kir* < Alorese *kiri* ‘comb’, Lamaholot-Solor *kiri* ‘comb’, possibly < PMP *kaRiqit ‘sound of scratching’ (ACD)¹⁶ (cf., Manggarai *kerit* ‘scratch with hand, comb’ (ACD))
 (11) #damu ‘needle’: Wersing *damu*, Sawila *da:mu*, Kula *dam* < Tokodede *damu*, Mambae *dam* ~ *damu* (but not Tetun *daun*) < PMP *zaRum ‘needle’ (ACD)
 #batu(C) ‘needle’: Nedebang *batu*, Teiwa *beti*, Kaera *ba:ti*, Blagar *batul*, Adang *batu(ŋ)* < PMP *batuR ‘plait, weave’ (ACD)¹⁷

Where sufficient data exists, many distinctive East Alor forms of Austronesian etyma can typically be traced to languages of the Central Timor subgroup. This can be seen in (11) above. Further examples of this sort are provided below (12)–(14). The East Alor forms for ‘sew’ in (12) have matches in Central Timor, while further to the west Alor languages show forms with a final /t/ and a back vowel in the second syllable that indicates a distinct source for the west Alor forms. In (13) we see Wersing has a distinct borrowing of PMP *kulit that is sourced from Tokodede. The Wersing form of this

¹⁴ Robinson (2015:23) identifies this borrowing, but does not separate the reflexes into two groups.

¹⁵ The fricative *s has assimilated to the following nasal here, i.e., Klón *nmer* < pre-Klón *smer

¹⁶ Abui (*ket*)*kari* suggests a borrowing that ultimately reflects PMP *kaRiqit, but not mediated through Alorese/Lamaholot, which have lost the original *a vowel.

¹⁷ This etymology is from Robinson (2015:23). A reviewer found it doubtful.

borrowing maintains /t/ where it is lost elsewhere in Alor and shows the metathesis of /u/ and /l/ that is unique to Tokodede. In the same way, borrowings of reflexes of PCEMP **madar* fall into two sets (14): the East Alor set where **d* was present and is maintained as /d/ in Wersing, but has been regularly lost in Sawila/Kula, and; the Central and West Alor set where a reflex without **d* has been borrowed (otherwise we would expect it to be maintained, as /t/ in Kamang, /r/ in Abui, and /d/ in Klön).

(12) PCEMP **sora* ‘sew’ (ACD)

#*sora*: Wersing *sor*, Sawila *sora* ‘sew’ < Kemak *sora*, Tokodede *sor* ‘sew’¹⁸

#*sorut*: Blagar *horota*, Adang *harot*, Klön *horot*, Kui *serot* ‘sew’ (according to Robinson (2015:23), this reflects pre-Alorese *soru* > Alorese *horu*, but the origin of the /t/ in the AP forms remains unexplained)

(13) PMP **kulit* ‘skin, hide, rind, bark’ (ACD)

#*klut*: Wersing *klut* ‘skin’ < Tokodede *kluta* ‘skin’¹⁹

#*kuli*: Klön *kui*, Kui *kuil*, Abui *kul* ‘skin, bark’ (according to Robinson (2015:22), this reflects Lamaholot-Lewotobi *kuli* ‘skin’)

(14) PCEMP **madar* ‘ripe, overripe’ (ACD)

#*mad*: Wersing *mad*, Sawila *ma*, Kula *ma* ‘cooked, edible, ripe’ < Tokodede *mada* ‘ripe, edible’

#*maV*: Kamang *ma*·, Abui *ma*, Klön *mai* ‘cooked, edible, ripe’

There are also many cases of Austronesian etyma not known elsewhere in Alor being found uniquely in East Alor. In most cases, these items can be identified as borrowings either from Central Timor languages or from other languages of Austronesian languages of East Timor, in particular, Tetun or Galoli/Wetar. Examples are given in (15)–(17).

(15) Wersing *mli*, Sawila *mali* ‘happy’ < Tokodede *mali* ‘smile, laugh’ < PCEMP **malip* ‘smile, laugh’ (ACD)

(16) Wersing *mam* ‘chew (betel, in particular)’ < Tetun *mama* ‘chew without swallowing’ < PMP **mamaq* ‘chew without intending to swallow, as betel nut; pre-masticate food to give to an infant; pre-masticated food’ (ACD)

(17) Sawila *sa.ra*, Kula *sara* ‘broom, sweep’ < Tokodede *sara*, Mambae *sar*, Tetun *saar* < PCEMP **saRa* ‘sweep, broom’ (ACD)

Many lexemes that are found in Austronesian languages of East Timor have not (yet) been reconstructed to a subgroup of the Austronesian family. Examples of such lexemes that have been borrowed into East Alor languages include those in (18)–(29).

(18) Wersing *aluli*, Sawila *aluli* ‘holy, taboo’ < Tokodede, Tetun *luli* ‘holy, sacred’²⁰

¹⁸ Robinson (2015:23) lists the Sawila and Wersing forms but does not identify them as the result of a distinct borrowing event.

¹⁹ Robinson (2015:22) notes that the Wersing form is the result of a distinct borrowing event probably from Malay *kulit* ‘skin’. The vocalic metathesis that would be required for Malay to be the source, however, remains unexplained. The Tokodede form does not present such problems; the loss of final vowels is regular in Wersing.

²⁰ An initial prosthetic /a/ characterizes Austronesian borrowings with an initial liquid /l/ or /r/ in Central and East Alor. Aside from (7a) and (7b), examples include Wersing (*mi-*)*alar*, Sawila *alara* ‘sail’ < PMP **layaR* ‘sail’. It is unclear why this item appears, but it clearly sets the borrowings in these languages

- (19) Sawila *arada* ‘duck’ < Tetun, Galoli *rade* ‘duck’
- (20) Wersing *mus*, Sawila *muso* ‘kiss’ < Kemak *muusu*, Tokodede *kmus* ‘kiss, suck’
- (21) Wersing *kasu*, Sawila *ka:su*, Kamang *ka:h*, Abui *kat* ‘bean, pea’ < Tokodede *kasu* ‘bean, pea’²¹
- (22) Wersing *bali*, Sawila *ba:li* ~ *beali* ‘raise, bring up, take care of, feed’ < Tetun *bali* ‘to treat, to cure, to give or apply a remedy, to take care of (including to keep animals)’
- (23) Wersing *baniak*, Sawila *banijaka* ‘guest’ < Tetun *bainaka* ‘guest’
- (24) Wersing *beb* ‘palm top’, Sawila *bi:ba* ‘leaf rib’ < Tetun *bebak* ‘stalk or stem of a palm frond, used for buiding walls of houses and panels in fences’
- (25) Wersing *bit* ‘mat’ < Tokodede, Mambae *biti*, Tetun *biiti* ‘mat’
- (26) Sawila *luran*, *lurana* ‘road, street’ < Tetun *luran* ~ *loran* ‘highway, wide road’²²
- (27) Wersing *luku*, Kamang *laku* ‘civet’ < Tokodede, Kemak, Tetun *laku* ‘civet’
- (28) Wersing *-lol*, Sawila *-lo* ‘follow’ < Tetun *(ha-)lolo* ‘follow’
- (29) Sawila *o:san* ‘inheritance’ < Tetun *osan* ‘money, valuables’

More evidence of influence from the languages of East Timor in East Alor comes from Portuguese borrowings that have been mediated through Tetun and/or another north-central coast language.²³ Examples are given in (30)–(33). Malay *jendela* ‘window’ and *kopi* ‘coffee’ are also borrowings of the Portuguese terms in (32) and (33) and could be regarded as sources of East Alor forms. However, the phonological shapes of the East Alor make it clear that the immediate source of the borrowing is in East Timor and not Malay.

- (30) Wersing *sirwis*, Sawila *siribisi*, Kula *sirusa* ‘work’ < Tetun *serbisu* ‘work’ < Portuguese *service*
- (31) Wersing *spe*, Sawila *sape* ‘hat’ < Tokodede *sapio*, Tetun *xapeu* ~ *xapeo* < Portuguese *chapéu*
- (32) Wersing *dinel*, Sawila *diñel* ~ *dinel* ‘window’ < Tetun *dinela* < Portuguese *janela*
- (33) Wersing *kape*, Sawila *ka:pe* ‘coffee’ < Tetun *kafe* < Portuguese *café*

apart from those in West Alor languages (e.g., Kui *lar* ‘sail’ where no prosthetic /a/ is evidenced). It may be present in the Austronesian source language (but no such language is known), or it may represent phonological adaptation as part of the borrowing process. The latter makes sense for Austronesian borrowings with initial /r/, because that segment only occurs medially. By contrast, /l/ readily occurs initially and so the initial /a/ on borrowings of ‘holy’ and ‘sail’ cannot be explained by phonotactic constraints.

²¹ Hull (2006) suggests that the Tokodede form is itself a borrowing of Malay *kacang* ‘nut, bean, legume’. However, the sound change of Malay /a/ to Tokodede /o/ is unexplained.

²² Robinson (2015:23) lists this as a borrowing of Alorrese *laran*, but the vowel differences remain unexplained. Tetun with the correct vowels represents a straightforward source for the Sawila form here.

²³ There are other Portuguese loans in East Alor, but these lexemes represent borrowings that are found throughout Alor-Pantar, e.g., borrowings of Portuguese *espada* ‘sword’ are widespread in Alor-Pantar (Robinson 2015:25).

The Austronesian language Tokodede has a range of lexemes that are not shared with any other Timorese language, but which are found in Central and East Alor languages, (34)–(37). This shared vocabulary is certainly indicative of interactions between speech communities, but the directionality of borrowing is not certain. Given the known influence of Tokodede song culture in Alor, the most obvious conclusion would be that these items are borrowed from Tokodede. However, given that people from East Alor were also brought into Tokodede communities, unidirectionality of borrowing should not be assumed.²⁴

- (34) #kinai: Wersing *kinai*, Sawila *kine*, Kula *kine*, Kamang *kine* ‘knife, machete’; Tokodede *giniu* ~ *giniuturu* ‘knife’
- (35) #damat: Wersing *damat*, Sawila *da:mat*, *da:mata* ‘door’; Tokodede *damat* ~ *dama?at* ‘door’
- (36) #soba: Wersing *sob*, Kula *suba* ‘house’, Kamang *soba* ‘shack; temporary hut in garden’, Abui *tofa* ‘shelter, small house in the field.’; Tokodede Maubara *soa* ‘house’ (< *sowa, cf. Tokodede Likisa *soba* ‘sitting place made of slatted bamboo, typically placed under a traditional house’; PMP *b > w is regular in Maubara Tokodede)
- (37) #malosa: Wersing *mlos*, Sawila *malo:sa* ‘shark’; Tokodede *lomosa* ‘shark’ (Note metathesis of m and l; not clear if the metathesis took place in Tokodede or East Alor)

In addition to borrowings from East Timor Austronesian languages, there are also a number of borrowings whose most likely source is an Austronesian language of West Timor. Examples are given in (38)–(41). While Helong provides the closest match to the Alor forms, in most cases the match is imperfect, suggesting that Helong is not the source of the borrowing. We might speculate that these items were borrowed from an Austronesian language that was present in West Timor before the Uab Meto expansion (mentioned in section 2).

- (38) Wersing *lor*, Sawila *lo:r*, *lo:ra*, Kula *lura* ‘straight, correct’ < Rote (Termanu) *lodo*, Helong *lolo*, ‘straight’
- (39) Wersing *bik*, Sawila *biki*, Kula *biki*, *bik*, Kui *bik* ‘strong’ < Helong *biki*, Uab Meto (Molo) *be?i* ‘strong, capable’ ‘strong’
- (40) Abui *laka*, Kafoa *laka*, Kui *laka*, Kiraman *laka* ‘go, walk’ < Rote (Termanu) *la?o*, Helong *lako* ‘go’ < PMP *lakaw ‘to be in motion; go, walk’ (ACD)
- (41) Abui *dakun* ‘dirty’ < Rote (Termanu) *da?i*, Helong *dakin* < PMP *daki ‘dirt on skin; dandruff; tartar on teeth’ (ACD)

²⁴ The likely bidirectionality of influence between East Alor and northern Timor is exemplified by apparent convergence in numeral formation (Schapper & Klamer 2014). The additive operators (used to add digits to a base as in ‘twenty *plus* two’) of East Alor languages are unique in the Alor-Pantar subgroup, but they also show highly irregular sound correspondences (Kula *arisiŋ*, Sawila *garisiŋ*, Wersing *weresiŋ*) and are likely the result of borrowing of the Tokodede additive operator *geresiŋ*. At the same time, Tokodede and Mambae appear to have acquired their base-5 pattern for the formation of numerals ‘5’ to ‘9’ through contact with speakers of East Alor languages. The base-5 pattern was inherited in Alor-Pantar languages, but not in Austronesian languages (Schapper & Hammarström 2013). The localised nature of this shift is particularly clear when we see that Kemak, the more inland oriented relative of Tokodede and Mambae, has no base-5 numerals.

The idea that there has been contact with Austronesian languages that are no longer extant is supported by the presence of Austronesian borrowings in East Alor languages that have no Austronesian source that can be identified in the area. For the East Alor borrowings in (42)–(45), we have not been able to identify any nearby source which is semantically or phonologically plausible. For instance, in the case of (45) there are no known Austronesian languages in the region that have a reflex of PMP *ma-nipis that retains the stative prefix but where *p is lost and the vowels merge into a single syllable.

- (42) Wersing *bobuj* ‘peak, summit’, Sawila *bubuj* ‘hill’ < PMP *bubuj ‘ridge of the roof; ridge of a mountain, peak; deck of a boat; cover the ridgepole with thatch’ (ACD)
- (43) Sawila *bo:la*, Kula *bula* ‘blind’ < PMP *bulaR ‘cataract of the eye; hazy or blurred vision’ (ACD)
- (44) Wersing *lat*, Sawila *lata* ‘flat’ < PMP *dataR ‘flat, flat or level land’ (ACD)
- (45) Wersing *mnis*, Sawila *manise*, Kamang *manih* ‘thin, fine’ < PMP *ma-nipis ‘thinness (of materials)’ (ACD)

In short, we have seen that languages of the Central and East Alor show evidence of influence from Austronesian languages of different sources. The most substantial Austronesian influence came from contact with speakers of Austronesian languages spoken in East Timor, but there is also evidence of earlier contact with Austronesian languages, perhaps ones once spoken in West Timor. Although the number of identified borrowings is still small, the broad range of semantic domains that these are drawn from suggest that people in Alor likely had regular contact with speakers of Timorese Austronesian languages and had some degree of competency in their language.

6. Discussion

In this paper we have presented a first study on the contact between Alor and Timor using evidence from oral traditions, including song and place names, and lexical borrowing. We have shown that together oral traditions and linguistic evidence give us insights into the nature of contact relations between groups as well as pin-point regions between which there was the most significant contact. The evidence indicates that Timor was the dominant player in Alor-Timor relations and the prestige group from which influence flowed. The regions with most significant contact were the Tokodede region (Likisa-Maubara) on Timor and eastern Alor, an unsurprising result given the proximity of the two islands. The contact between the groups on both sides of the Ombai Strait appears to have been severed by the creation of international borders by colonial powers.

We further saw that there is evidence of borrowing from other Austronesian languages that are no longer extant. We hypothesised that these lexemes originate in the languages of West Timorese groups that were replaced during the Uab Meto and Tetun expansions that are thought to have occurred in the pre-modern and early modern period of European contact in Timor. Yet, this is speculative. Archaeology is increasingly making clear that the dispersal of Austronesian material culture in south-eastern Indonesia was complex and proceeded in waves (cf. O’Connor 2015). The presence of Austronesian vocabulary of uncertain origin in the Papuan languages of Alor could also indicate a wave of Austronesian migration that lapped over the island, but whose languages were then consumed by a subsequent wave of Austronesian migration.

Whilst this paper has focussed on presumed influence from Austronesian languages in Timor, it is important to note that more Austronesian layers are evident in the lexicon of Alor languages, particularly from the languages of traders from Sulawesi. From the 14th to 17th centuries groups in eastern Sulawesi such as the Banggai and Tolaki participated in regional trade networks, sourcing iron and shipping it to Alor and even northern Australia (Velthoen 2002:102). In the 18th century, groups from South Sulawesi, particularly the Makassarese, were increasingly active in the Alor-Timor area (Hägerdal 2010:234). Examples of probable borrowings from Sulawesi are: Wersing *dalaŋ*, Sawila *da:laŋ*, Kula *dalaŋ* ‘lazy’ < Makasar *dalaŋ* ‘slow, sluggish, lazy’; Wersing *ali*, Sawila *ali*, Kula *ali* ‘buy’ < Makasar *ali* ‘buy’; Wersing *laisoŋ*, Sawila *laisoŋ* ‘onion’ < Makasar *lasun* ‘onion’²⁵; Wersing *poloŋ*, Sawila *poŋala*, Kula *puŋka* ‘axe’ < Makasar *paŋkulu?* ‘axe’; Kamang *da?(si)*, Wersing *daka(r)*, Sawila *da:ka(ra)* ‘bamboo comb’ < Buginese *džaka* ‘comb’ possibly via Tolaki *daka* ‘comb’ (Mead 1998:493); Blagar *laba*, Klön *lab*, Abui *laba* ‘chisel’ < Banggai, Kulisusu *labu* ‘iron’ (Mead 1998:446). Identifying Austronesian sources for borrowings will create a picture of the layers of historical and prehistorical contacts of the Timor-Alor-Pantar languages.

Finally, this paper illustrates the general importance of understanding Austronesian influence for historical Timor-Alor-Pantar studies. The nature and extent of influence of Austronesian languages on TAP languages varies depending on the local contact situations between individual clusters of TAP languages and the proximal Austronesian languages, and numerous time depths of contact are evident from the borrowings. In previous historical work on TAP languages, there has been insufficient attention given to identifying Austronesian borrowings and their sources. A bottom-up reconstruction of the TAP languages that carefully sorts Austronesian loanwords is key to answering the basic questions of prehistory for this family, as for any other.

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²⁵ It is possible that these items were not borrowed directly from Makasar, but through an intermediate language on Timor. The ‘onion’ lexemes in East Alor, for example, have a diphthong in the initial syllable. This is not present in the Makasar form, but is widely found in the languages of Timor (e.g., Waima'a *lais'one*, Naueti *laehona* ~ *laihona*), suggesting that the immediate source of the East Alor lexemes is a Timorese language (but not Tokodede which has *lesona* ‘onion’).

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