

EAST TIMOR

Geographical names against a volatile background

History

1 European influence on the island of Timor began with the arrival of the Portuguese and the Dutch in the sixteenth century. The Portuguese initially settled in what is now the Oecussi enclave, the smaller of the two physically separate elements of current East Timor, and the two nationalities skirmished until the Treaty of Lisbon in 1859 divided Timor between them. However, the borders were not finalised until 1916. The island was subjected to Japanese occupation during the Second World War, after which the Netherlands and Portugal returned to claim their possessions. In 1949, the Netherlands granted independence to Indonesia, and West Timor became part of that new republic. East Timor remained Portuguese until 1975.

Peoples and Languages

2 Some 800,000 people live in East Timor. The principal ethnic group is the Tetum people, numbering in the region of 300,000. Tetum is the self-designation of this people; other ethnic groups know them by the name Belu, which means “friend” or “well-wisher”. Tetum as a language is one of the Amboino-Timorese branch of the Indonesian group of the Malay-Polynesian family of languages. It has been strongly influenced by the Papuan languages.

3 The remaining 500,000 people of East Timor are fragmented into many smaller ethnic groups, the most notable of these being the Mambai, the Makasai, the Kemak, the Galoli, the Tokodede, the Bunak, and the Fataluku, all with languages of the same name.

4 Portuguese was the language of administration until 1975.

The Period from 1975 to 1999

5 In 1974, the aftermath of a coup in Portugal precipitated a hasty withdrawal by that country from its various colonies. The withdrawal from East Timor created a political vacuum in which various internal groups fought for supremacy. A militarily strong Indonesia under President Suharto identified this as an ideal moment to bring about the incorporation of East Timor, and an Indonesian invasion began in late 1975. By mid-1976 Jakarta’s control was effectively secure, and in July of that year Law No VII/1976 formalised (in Indonesian eyes) the integration of East Timor into the Republic of Indonesia as a first-order administrative division.

6 The United Nations and the bulk of the international community did not recognise this 1976 incorporation, and the following 23 years saw the indigenous and largely Catholic population of East Timor living uncomfortably under the rule of Indonesian Muslims and the distant authority of Jakarta. And unlike other similarly far-flung outposts of Indonesia, East Timor had its separate Portuguese heritage to provide grounds in many eyes for a future independence outside Indonesia.

7 The end of President Suharto's rule over Indonesia in 1998 led to a loosening of Jakarta's grip on East Timor, and a concomitant rise in the demands of its people for independence. Perhaps as a compromise, the new President Habibie offered the people of East Timor autonomy status within the Republic of Indonesia, their decision to be determined by means of a referendum. This referendum duly took place in August 1999. Almost 80% of the voters rejected the option of autonomy, in favour of independence. In October 1999, the authorities in Jakarta, under President Wahid, ratified the result of the referendum and annulled the 1976 law which had claimed East Timor's integration into Indonesia.

The Present-Day Situation

8 East Timor is no longer *Propinsi Timor Timur*, the 27th first-order administrative division (province) of Indonesia that Jakarta had claimed it to be. Nor, however, is it yet a fully independent state enjoying international recognition. The name *Timor Loro Sae*, which means "Timor of the Rising Sun" (ie East Timor) in Tetum, and which will almost certainly become the country name in that language, is already widely in use. Indonesians used to refer to the area as *Timor Timur* (ie East Timor in Indonesian, and sometimes abbreviated to *TimTim*), but some are now inclined to acknowledge the changed circumstances and refer instead to *Timor Leste*, a more Portuguese form.

9 There are plans for a new government to move the capital from the north coast town of Dili to the central highland town of Aileu, and to divide the country into three provinces, named Eastern, Northern, and Southern. The physically separate Oecussi enclave will apparently become an autonomous zone directly dependent on Aileu. There are also plans to re-introduce the Portuguese unit of currency (the *escudo*) and to make Portuguese the official state language in the interests of providing a unifying identity for East Timor's people (who are known collectively as Maubere). However, only some 10% of the population speaks Portuguese, and in deference to the predominance of Tetum it is planned that the latter will become the national language. As a localised indigenous language, Tetum lacks a full modern vocabulary range, and it is interesting to note that to compensate for this Tetum constructs loan-words borrowed from Portuguese rather than from Indonesian.

Geographical Names

10 The geographical names of East Timor originate principally from the many languages spoken there. Colonially imposed Portuguese names were relatively few in number, and had mostly been dispensed with long before 1975. But the indigenous languages providing the geographical names do not have a standard written form, so the Portuguese alphabet has traditionally been employed to write them. When East Timor was integrated into Indonesia in 1976, the Jakarta authorities did not indulge in a wholesale process of name-changing. On the other hand, they did revise the spellings of some existing names better to reflect the orthography jointly agreed with Malaysia in the early 1970s for their almost identical languages, Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian) and Bahasa Malaysia (Malay). Thus, for a period at least, many characteristically Portuguese letters disappeared. In particular, the letter *c* and the letter combination **qu**, reflecting in Portuguese the **k** sound of Indonesian (and English) were frequently changed to **k**. Thus the town of Viqueque was re-written as Vikeke.

11 The United Kingdom endeavoured not to reflect these changes, and for example in a revision of the Hydrographic Office's *Indonesia Pilot Volume 2* in 1983, PCGN recommended a continuation of Portuguese spellings. And, in fact, Indonesian practice gradually altered over the years towards a reversion to the Portuguese style. Future East Timorese policy towards its geographical names is of course unknown, but assuming no substantial changes are made there ought to be little disturbance to pre-1975 names on UK maps. However, if UK maps have incorporated Indonesian material since that date, some change may well be necessary, partly for the reasons given in paragraph 10, and also because the Indonesians turned all the generic term elements of geographical names (eg "river") from Portuguese into Indonesian. These would need to revert to Portuguese. These points also apply to source material (frequently Australian) which has been produced by outside parties for use by Indonesia.

12 The following list, overleaf on page 4, records the known current variant forms of geographical names in East Timor. All names relate to settlements unless otherwise indicated. As explained in paragraphs 10 and 11, the differences are in the main relatively minor, principally comprising spelling variations reflecting the difference between Indonesian and Portuguese orthographies. **Recommended policy is to use the names and spellings found in the Portuguese column of this list.** The list overleaf is almost certainly incomplete; for example, any further names found containing the letter **k** cannot be in their preferred Portuguese forms.

13 Assistance from the following sources in the writing of this paper is gratefully acknowledged:

- (a) the British Broadcasting Corporation's daily publication entitled *Summary of World Broadcasts*
- (b) the 1998 Lonely Planet guidebook entitled *Indonesia's Eastern Islands*.

<u>Indonesian Name/Spelling</u>	<u>Portuguese Name/Spelling</u>	<u>Note</u>
Ambeno, Kabupaten [district]	Oecussi [enclave]	1
Barike	Barique	
Baukau	Baucau	
Fotolulik	Fatolulic	
Hato Builiko	Hato Builico	
Hato Hudo / Hotahudo	Hatudo	
Jako [island]	Jaco	
Kailoko	Cailoco	
Kambing, Pulau [island]	Ataúro, Ilha de	2
Kelikai	Quelicaí	
Kitrana	Citrana	3
Laklo	Laclo	
Laklubar	Laclubar	
Lakluta	Lacluta	
Lekidu	Lequidoe	
Likisia	Liquiça	
Oekusi /Oekussi / Okusi	Pante Macassar	4
Pantemakasar / Pantemakassar	Pante Macassar	4
Railako	Railaco	
Remeksio	Remexio	
Turiskai	Turiscái	
Vikeke	Viqueque	

Notes:

- 1 Under Indonesian administration, the Oecussi enclave was one of the 13 second-order administrative divisions (districts) of Propinsi Timor Timur. It was named Ambeno; the name Oecussi in any spelling was not applied by Indonesia to the district. Kabupaten is the Indonesian term for “district”.
- 2 Pulau is Indonesian for “island”. Ilha is Portuguese for “island”.
- 3 Citrana *may* have changed its name to Bene Ufe.
- 4 Pante Macassar is the principal town of the Oecussi enclave. As might be expected, some Indonesian sources wrote Pantemakasar or Pantemakassar instead. However, other Indonesian sources confusingly applied the name Oekusi, Oekussi or Okusi to this town, though not to the enclave. Even more confusingly, certain Indonesian sources applied one of these three spellings to a population symbol placed rather vaguely to the west of Pante Macassar, not apparently corresponding to any specific settlement.

P C G N
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